Could an Island of Béisbol Strike Out Lung Cancer?

Wired Magazine | Cuba has for several years had a promising therapeutic vaccine against lung cancer. The 55-year trade embargo led by the US made sure that Cuba was mostly where it stayed. Until—maybe—now.

The Obama administration has, of course, been trying to normalize relations with the island nation. And last month, during New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s visit to Havana, Roswell Park Cancer Institute finalized an agreement with Cuba’s Center for Molecular Immunology (CIM) to develop a lung cancer vaccine and begin clinical trials in the US.

Essentially, US researchers will bring the Cimavax vaccine stateside and get on track for approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

“The chance to evaluate a vaccine to its core, the Highland ER is an informal place. Its staff feels more like family than like coworkers. We can be more ourselves here than anywhere else, in large part because those of us who

Life, Death and Pride in a Last-Resort ER

San Francisco Magazine | “Hey, Doctor Snowmobiles!” C.J., the Highland Hospital emergency room’s “greeter-in-chief,” sashays over and offers up one of the hundred hugs that she’ll dispense to patients and staff today. As I move through the triage area and cross the threshold into the ER, I hear another four or five variations of my name called out: Snowman, Snowballs, Snooty, even Snoop Dogg, a throwback to my Highland handle in the ’90s. Those who stick with the more formal construct of Dr. Snoey are usually the newer staff—ex-military types or East Coasters for whom calling a colleague by a nickname runs too hard against the grain.

The joke goes that the only person who calls me Dr. Snoey is my mother, and then only when I do something wrong.

To its core, the Highland ER is an informal place. Its staff feels more like family than like coworkers. We can be more ourselves here than anywhere else, in large part because those of us who

The Nightmare That Lurked Beneath Agriculture Street

Times-Picayune | After 22 years, Joan Davis finally received the letter. It arrived in January, informing her how much she would be getting under the terms of a class action lawsuit settlement filed against the city, the Housing Authority of New Orleans and the Orleans Parish School Board.

No matter the amount, Davis knew

Party Advice for These Women: Chill (Their Eggs)

Los Angeles Times | If you peeked in on a recent party at the Viceroy Santa Monica, you might have noticed that the guests, almost all female, were chatting quietly, hesitantly, in pairs or trios. This wasn’t a group of good friends—Prosecco and hors d’oeuvres aside.

The women were there to consider an investment: spending thousands of dollars to retrieve and freeze their eggs in case they need them one day to try to become a parent.

Egg-freezing parties — this one called On Ice — are a thing now. The idea is that not enough women are thinking about this procedure and are not thinking about it

48 Hours That Changed the Future of Rainforests

Grist | Glenn Hurowitz sat down for his Thanksgiving meal discouraged. He’d spent 2013 flying halfway around the world to cultivate a fragile relationship with Kuok Khoon Hong, CEO of the world’s largest palm oil corporation, Wilmar. Kuok was the linchpin, Hurowitz believed—a single person who might turn the entire palm oil industry around. Wilmar buys Rainforests, continued on page 2

The May 2015 issue of Vital Signs looks at the health of Hispanics.
Eggs, continued

soon enough. “Everyone who can afford to freeze their eggs should freeze their eggs. Women should take this seriously,” Dr. Vicken Sahakian said at the Viceroy hotel party. “The older you are, the more eggs you need. The older you are, the fewer eggs you produce.”

Egg freezing, or oocyte cryopreservation, is neither a sure thing nor cheap — running $10,000 or more a cycle, not to mention hundreds of dollars a year in storage fees, and rarely covered by insurance or employers (Facebook and Apple being among the exceptions). And there is plenty of cultural debate over whether egg freezing takes advantage of women desperate to have a child or is a way to empower them.

But doctors and women who’ve done it call it insurance; women say it enables them to establish a career, travel or find the right partner before becoming a parent.

“It will be absolutely the greatest gift you can give yourself because it will give you the opportunity to create the family of your dreams, and you will never regret it,” Dr. Carrie Wambach said at the Viceroy, where there was a raffle for free medication needed for the process.

At the Viceroy, and at parties on other nights at Boa Steakhouse on the Sunset Strip and in the Beverly Wilshire hotel, doctors explain the procedure and answer the nervous questions: I’m 39 — or 37 or 35. Is it too late?

Read the story, more about lung cancer, and the CIM.

Who We Are

Hollywood, Health & Society, a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, is a free resource for entertainment writers working on storylines about health, health-care coverage and climate change. Funders have included the CDC, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Grantham Foundation, the Barr Foundation, The California Endowment, the Energy Foundation, ClimateWorks and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.
Rainforests, continued

Palm oil from 80 percent of the world’s suppliers. If Kuok committed to buying only from farmers who promised not to cut down the rainforest, it would set off a chain reaction that might save hundreds of species from extinction and squelch one of the world’s biggest sources of carbon emissions. But after months of progress, the signals he’d been getting from Kuok were not encouraging.

Hurowitz emailed his co-workers at Forest Heroes, the nonprofit he’d founded, telling them to prepare for a protracted struggle.

“I said, ‘Suit up, we’re going to war’,” Hurowitz told me. Then he got into bed, deflated. As he was settling in, his iPhone chimed a new text message. It was Scott Poynton, head of The Forest Trust, who had been working closely with Hurowitz and Kuok. Kuok was ready to make a commitment, the text said.

Hurowitz rushed to book a flight to Singapore. That Monday, he was on the airplane.

It takes 24 hours to fly from Washington, D.C., to Singapore. By the time Hurowitz got off the plane, he saw he had another email from Kuok. Perhaps the time was not right, the palm oil exec was saying now; he wasn’t going to make any commitments unless the other palm oil companies did the same.

Hurowitz knew that wasn’t going to happen. Negotiations had been proceeding for years and had consistently failed to stop the chainsaws. He fired back an email with a picture of protesters holding banners outside the Kellogg’s headquarters in Battle Creek, Mich. (Kellogg’s bought oil from Wilmar.)

Read the story, and more about carbon sinks and the important role that rainforests play on Earth. ■

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