

## Working moms: Stressed to excess

Working women with children—at least mothers in full-time clerical and customer service jobs—tote a particularly heavy load of mental strain. This strain increases production of a critical stress hormone that may, in turn, promote heart disease, a new study finds.

All sorts of mothers endure this burden in the workplace, reports a scientific team at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. Stress weighs just as heavily on married women who have a decent family income, plenty of contact with friends and family, and only one or two kids as it does on single women who scrape by financially and spend most of their time outside the workplace caring for a handful of youngsters.

A combination of pervasive pressures at work and at home exacts a unique physiological toll on women raising children, contend Linda J. Luecken and her coworkers in the July-August *PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE*. Single and married working moms who hold midlevel jobs over which they have little control also perform most child-rearing and household tasks, the researchers note. Moreover, working mothers must tackle unexpected family problems, such as a child's illness, on a moment's notice.

Luecken's team studied 109 women age 21 to 61 who hold clerical and customer service jobs at a large company. The researchers collected urine samples on two consecutive workdays. For the premenopausal women, the samples were taken in the first week of the menstrual cycle.

Women who had at least one child living at home excreted substantially more of the stress hormone cortisol in their urine than did their counterparts without kids at home, regardless of marital status or number of social contacts. Independent studies indicate that long-term elevations of cortisol contribute to heart disease, the Duke scientists note.

Working women with children reported more demands on

their time and more mental strain at home, but not on the job.

Other indications of stress, such as depression, anger, and negative feelings about the workplace, that have been linked to physical ailments also occur in both single and married working women (SN: 7/5/97, p. 11).

Even if their husbands perform a fair share of household tasks, working women still take responsibility for seeing that the work gets done, comments psychologist Kathleen C. Light of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine.

"[The working woman's] sense of vigilance and being on call is virtually constant, whereas her spouse more often does his assigned chores and then relaxes," Light contends. —B.B.

## Therapy bonds and the bottle

Successful psychotherapy for depression and other mental ailments hinges on the establishment of a working alliance, also known as a therapeutic alliance. Most definitions of this concept emphasize a collaborative relationship between therapist and client that includes an emotional bond and shared opinions about the tasks and goals of treatment.

Alcoholism treatment, at least in outpatient programs, may also benefit from the establishment of a working alliance, according to a study in the August *JOURNAL OF CONSULTING AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY*.

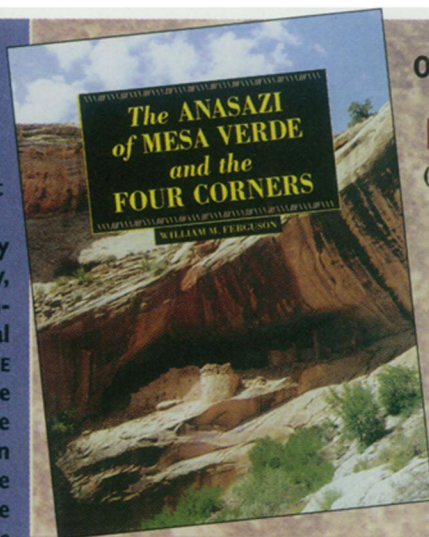
The results come from a national study that previously found comparable improvement in alcoholics completing any of three 12-week treatments (SN: 1/25/97, p. 62).

For 992 alcoholic outpatients, a strong working alliance—as documented by a 36-item questionnaire completed by both clients and therapists—was reported more often among those who attended therapy sessions regularly and drank smaller amounts of alcohol a year after therapy ended, psychologist Gerard J. Connors of the Research Institute on Addictions in Buffalo, N.Y., and his colleagues found. —B.B.

The spectacular ruins of the U.S. Southwest are the legacy of one of North America's most advanced pre-Columbian civilizations, the Anasazi. Today, nowhere is the Anasazi's presence felt more keenly than in Mesa Verde National Park and the Four Corners region of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, where thousands of ancient cliff dwellings, pueblos, and rock art panels can be found.

What is known about the Anasazi people comes primarily from the study and analysis of their architecture, pottery, rock art, and other artifacts, as well as from their descendants, the modern Pueblo Indians. Combining regional maps, striking photographs, and an engaging narrative, *THE ANASAZI OF MESA VERDE AND THE FOUR CORNERS* explores Mesa Verde National Park in detail, while also presenting the more remote and less accessible ruins of the San Juan River basin in southeast Utah. The photographs are the result of years of firsthand exploration, and the many aerial shots place the ruins in the larger context of their physical surroundings.

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