

Rats may help NU students find the best time to study

By William Lauer
Staff Reporter

Students could take a lesson from some rats at the University of Nebraska Medical Center to help them prepare for late-night cram sessions and early morning finals.

Lynne Farr, associate professor at the UNMC College of Nursing, and Catherine Todero, an assistant professor, are using rats to aid them in their research of circadian rhythms.

Circadian rhythms are the cycle of biological rhythms; the metabolic, glandular and sleep patterns that occur in the human body over a 24-hour period, Farr said. The timing of the cycle determines whether a person is a day or night person, and when their peak performance hours are during the day.

Todero said if people recognize the cycle of their rhythm, they can take advantage of it.

"If a student has problems in the morning... if they can't study or write a paper, they might want to schedule all their classes in the afternoon," she said.

But circadian rhythms can be altered, Todero said.

"Fifty percent of the population are in the neutral category, not exclusively day or night people," she said. "They respond to stimulants in their environment."

Farr and Todero's research deals with changing a patient's biological clock before surgery to help them recover more quickly from the trauma their body undergoes.

Surgery alters patients' circadian rhythm in a way similar to jet lag, Farr said.

The research attempts to set the patient's biological clock ahead anticipating that the surgery will reset it.

Farr and Todero used rats in their research to

establish a method to alter circadian rhythms. They woke the animals early to feed them and give them caffeine.

To alter a patient's circadian rhythm, they worked with them days before surgery by placing them on a dietary schedule, Farr said.

"On alternate days we use a fast-feast regimen," she said. "Some days we cut their calories to 1,000 a day."

No medication is used to prepare the patient, Farr said.

"They are given no more than the equivalent of a couple cups of coffee and high protein" to stimulate them, she said. "The body is a lot more amenable to natural cues."

They also monitor the patients blood-pressure, temperature and urine to track the rhythm, Farr said. But so many variables makes it difficult.

"The temperature curve is a very accurate way to monitor a patient," Farr said. "A person's temperature doesn't stay at a constant 98.6 degrees throughout the day. It is higher during their peak performance hours."

By knowing when a person peaks, they can adjust their treatment accordingly, she said.

Neutral and night people have proven to be the most flexible, Todero said. Morning people have a stricter routine that is harder to disrupt, she said. As a person gets older they tend to become more day oriented, she said.

Farr and Todero have been working in Omaha with patients referred to them by cooperating physicians.

The process is slow, Farr said. Monitoring an animal in a controlled laboratory environment is more accurate than monitoring a human being, she said.

"Just the anticipation of surgery can alter a person's rhythm," she said.

Union gives RHA office space

By Anne Mohri
Senior Reporter

Nebraska Union Board members granted space next fall to all student organizations that applied, said Frank Kuhn, assistant director of the Nebraskans unions.

Seven new organizations, including the Residence Hall Association, will use office space in the unions next fall.

Kuhn said RHA has tried for several years to get office space in the Nebraska Union and until now had been rejected by the Union Board.

Union Board members said RHA could find space in residence halls, he said. The Union Board was afraid that another organization would have to be rejected if RHA was given space, Kuhn said.

RHA requested office space next to the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic

Association offices.

However, Kuhn said, this year RHA applied for space in the union so they could have a better opportunity to communicate more closely with IFC, Panhellenic and the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska.

"It's an opportunity for the organizations to get to know and understand each other," Kuhn said.

Also, RHA said the space they are currently using is not large enough to accommodate their activities, he said.

Kuhn said giving RHA space may be a turning point in correcting the problems between residence hall and Greek students.

"The Union Board felt it was important enough to give up one of our meeting rooms to try to get the improvement in the relationship between the two organizations," he said.

Bookstore officials doubt exchange will succeed

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Bookstore won't be affected because if the program does not work well, then not many books will be exchanged.

He said students will not want to spend time finding a buyer for their books.

"My experience has been that students want money for their books now," Lewis said. "The book exchange will take some time for a seller to find a buyer. The students that need books will worry about books for next semester then." Lewis said getting a buyer and seller together will be a problem.

"That's why there are bookstores. There is a lot less hassle," Lewis said.

If the book-exchange program does decrease the number of books sold back to the

bookstores, both managers said, it will have no effect on the prices of the textbooks sold next semester.

"That type of thing doesn't affect the prices of books," Lewis said. "We buy used books from wholesalers, and they have enough available."

Correll said the ASUN office will not make any money from the program.

"It doesn't cost anything to the students," Correll said. "The ASUN office will lose a little money because of the materials that are needed. We have to buy the files and the paper."

Correll said the program will be in operation by the end of this semester. Any book that will be used in the fall semester can be sold through the program.

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