



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Doctor gives coke pain killer for famous, regular patients

NEW YORK -- Cocaine may not have been in Marcus Welby's black bag, but it has been the drug of choice for decades at Dr. Milton Reder's practice - a balm for Marvin Mitchelson's headaches, Sonny Bono's sciatica, Whitey Ford's sore shoulder and David Brenner's bad back.

The state says cocaine is not good medicine, and told the physician to stop. He has refused.

"These days cocaine has a bad name. What can I do about that?" asked Reder, who said Monday he has been treating patients with small amounts of cocaine for 40 years. "I say it's the best local anesthetic."

Brenner, the comedian, accused the state Health Department and county medical society of "a witch hunt... They can't get Noriega, they can't get the crack dealers a few blocks away, but they're going after an 89-year-old humanitarian."

Reder uses cocaine, legally purchased from pharmaceutical companies, to treat a variety of maladies. A liquid solution, about 13 percent cocaine, is applied with metal swabs inserted through the nostrils against a nerve center at the base of the brain. Reder, his patients, and some doctors say the procedure relieves pain, although no one is sure why.

Reder's treatment was no secret. He has participated in medical studies and been the subject of newspaper and magazine features,

which invariably focus on his many celebrated patients.

The Health Department's objections boil down to these: Reder doesn't always examine patients before treating them; he doesn't make sure they are not former cocaine addicts; and he uses too much cocaine.

Reder says most of his patients have been examined many times before they come to him, and that he examines those who have not. And he says he administers too small an amount of the drug to hook anyone.

He vigorously denied a report in the New York Daily News that state investigators "found about a half-dozen patients who went to Reder's office just to get high."

"Prescribing cocaine for non-specific pains is like taking a sledgehammer to a tack," said Thomas Coffey of the Health Department.

The state cites the New York County Medical Society's conclusion that Reder's procedure has "no basis in scientific medicine" and should not be covered by insurance. But the society also conceded the procedure "appears to help some patients" and urged a study of it.

Such an experiment is planned by two Yale Medical School pain specialists.

Dr. Kuntala Sinha, director of the pain clinic at New York University Medical Center, said she and her colleagues experimented

with the treatment on patients who, for example, had headaches that weren't helped by conventional treatment. "In our experience, about 50 percent of the patients did show some improvement," Sinha said.

"There are certainly a group of patients who benefit from those treatments," she said. "Not everyone, but there probably is a role for this kind of treatment."

She said she has known for years about Reder and a number of other New York City area physicians offering similar treatment, including some at New York University, whose names she would not reveal.

Reder came to the attention of the Health Department because of his large orders of pharmaceutical cocaine. After an investigation, the department on March 1 ordered him and 20 other physicians to stop using the drug.

At first Reder agreed, but he later wrote the department a letter saying he had changed his mind and wanted the medical society to review its opinion. On Wednesday, the society said it had done so in 1987 and planned no change. It also said it was not considering legal or disciplinary action against Reder.

State officials say they are still investigating and won't move against Reder until they confer with the medical society.

Elections announced

Official denies ties to Bolivia drug trafficking

ASUNCION, Paraguay -- Gen. Andres Rodriguez, who seized power in a violent coup last week, denied links with the drug traffic and announced Monday that elections will be held May 1, with only communists excluded.

Four cronies of ousted President Alfredo Stroessner, who ruled Paraguay for nearly 35 years until the coup, were accused of using public funds and graft to obtain "luxurious mansions, expensive apartments abroad and sumptuous automobiles."

Reporters asked the general about casualties during eight hours of fighting Thursday night and early Friday that ousted Stroessner.

"Believe me, total casualties - dead plus wounded - do not exceed 50," Rodriguez replied. Earlier estimates by embassies and civilian witnesses put the number of dead alone at nearly 300, but no official figures have been released.

Rodriguez also said Congress has been dissolved and that the new president would take office immediately upon election. Some opposition leaders said they didn't have enough time to prepare for the election.

Stroessner was given asylum in neighboring Brazil and was staying in Itumbiara, a remote city 270 miles southeast of Brasilia. He is living in a house owned by the government power company, which operates a dam on the nearby Paranaiba River.

At the first presidential news conference Paraguayans could remember, Rodriguez said rumors of his involvement with the drug trade "were spread by people trying to defame me."

"I detest drugs," he told reporters let into his office in small groups. "I swear as a Catholic and as a family man; I swear on my children, I have

no connections with drugs."

Paraguay has become a way station for cocaine produced in neighboring Bolivia. Foreign diplomats, academics and media reports have linked Rodriguez with traffickers, but no proof has been presented and no charges have been filed.

Asked whether he would cooperate with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, he said Paraguay "will cooperate with all foreign governments and agencies, including the United States, and the more help we get the better. We will fight together."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Charles Redman said U.S. relations with Paraguay will depend on the actions of the government on creating democracy, respecting human rights and suppressing narcotics trafficking and cultivation. "We will be watching closely the extent to which the provisional government allows opposition parties to campaign and the media to broadcast the positions of the candidates and their parties," he said.

Rodriguez, a 65-year-old cavalry general, said Stroessner "was not a dictator."

"If the Colorado Party elected him for so many years, it must have been because of confidence in him," he said. After seizing power in 1954, Stroessner held elections every five years and won by landslides.

Asked what prompted the coup, Rodriguez said: "In recent times he was not producing good results for his party, which had trusted him."

Rodriguez did not explain the remark, but he appeared to be speaking of an internal struggle between Stroessner supporters and "traditionalists" who wanted to draw a distinction between the 101-year-old party and the dictator.

Bush calls for superpower synergy in Central America

WASHINGTON -- President George Bush said Monday there is a chance for "a new spirit of cooperation" between the Soviet Union and the United States in solving Central American problems.

Bush was asked at a news conference if he foresees a deal with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to resolve the region's problems, which include a superpower dispute over leftist ruled Sandinistas.

The Soviets help supply the Sandinistas while the United States provides aid to the anti-Nicaraguan Contra rebels.

Bush said he wouldn't make a deal on Contra aid, but added, "I can see a possibility of cooperation in Central America."

The Soviets don't have "substantive interest in that part of the world, certainly none that rival ours. So I would like to think they would under-

stand that," Bush said. "And there are so many areas where we could demonstrate a new spirit of cooperation and this would clearly be one of them."

The United States has an "unshakable" commitment to democracy, freedom and free elections in the five-nation region, he said.

Bush hasn't spelled out his Central American policies, particularly the Contra aid question and the fighting

in neighboring El Salvador between the U.S.-backed government and leftist rebels.

Bush said he is reviewing the policy of his predecessor Ronald Reagan, which involved unwavering support for military aid to the Contras.

But officials have said no Contra aid will be sought in the near future and the administration is willing to support regional efforts toward a

diplomatic solution to the Contra war.

Bush and Secretary of States James Baker haven't yet named a new assistant secretary of state for Latin America.

Baker has settled on Bernard Aronson, a Democrat who helped the Reagan administration win Contra aid, but the appointment hasn't been announced, said the sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Report cites violations on West Bank

WASHINGTON -- The Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to a "substantial increase" in human rights violations by Israeli authorities last year, the State Department said Tuesday in its annual report on rights conditions worldwide.

The report, covering conditions in 169 countries and territories, praised the Soviet Union for "remarkable changes" in the human rights field, including the freeing of all prisoners detained for political or religious offenses.

The section on Israel was one of the harshest on that country since the State Department began issuing human rights reports in the mid-1970s. It said the actions of Israeli authorities "resulted in many avoid-

able deaths" among Palestinians since they began their uprising 14 months ago.

The Palestinian uprising caught the Israeli army "by surprise," the report said. The armed forces, "untrained and inexperienced in riot control, responded in a manner which led to a substantial increase in human rights violations," it said.

Shortly after the report was made public, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Binyamin Netanyahu defended the actions of Israeli forces.

"Israeli soldiers ... maintain as best they can, apart from a few exceptions, the standards of proper conduct that no country in the world could maintain," he said in Jerusalem.

In a separate statement, the Israeli army's chief prosecutor defended the

legality of Israeli operations, saying Palestinian prisoners were given due process of law.

Since the December 1987 start of the uprising, 374 Palestinians have been killed and thousands wounded, most by army gunfire.

From time to time since the violence started in the occupied territories, the State Department has expressed criticism of Israeli efforts to bring it under control, but the report appeared to go beyond the earlier statements.

In a report to the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, Amnesty International said that while both sides have used violence in the Palestinian uprising, there have been excesses on the Israeli side.

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