

# Addiction Harris Labs' only threat

By Mark Baldrige  
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I've had too few hours stoned out of my mind, watching cable TV on a big screen.

I've had hardly any free games of pool.

I feel a real need for confinement with crazy people.

In short: I haven't spent nearly enough time at Harris Labs this summer.

For those not already in the

know, Harris Labs is a pharmaceutical testing gig — and Mecca to the indigent of Lincoln.

In the name of science and big business the fine folks there will dope you to the gills and plop you down in front of "Earnest Goes to Camp" or one of the other quality HBO reruns, for days on end.

And how much do you pay for this high? NOTHING! In an American day-dream come true, Harris Labs pays you, the participant, to expand your consciousness and

contribute to the welfare of future cold sufferers, amnesiacs, heart transplant donors and other unfortunates.

All they require from you in return is that you wait in line, a lot; that you eat everything on your plate (They feed you too. Ain't that a kick?); that you stay overnight (and overnight and overnight) in their comfy cubicles; and blood. Lots of blood. Rivers and oceans of blood — every quarter of an hour.

What's the catch? Well, the reason companies are testing these particular pharmaceuticals is that they are not sure what they will do. Oh, don't get me wrong, they're pretty sure. They've tested them on, oh, I don't know, rats and things. And you know the FDA, always nagging, nagging.

If a new analgesic causes all your hair to fall out, the FDA probably will complain. You've got to list those nasty side effects on the label, preferably in big letters, "Warning: Use of this product will cause all your hair to fall out. Before taking, consult a beautician."

So what they do at Harris is watch for side effects. If you take a drug and keel over or turn blue, they want to know that. They want to write that down.

And say maybe they didn't give you a drug, they gave you a placebo. Then if you keel over or turn blue, why, they write that down too. It could be catching.

If the term "guinea pig" comes to mind, well, what if it does? A guinea pig is a respectable creature. A less appealing word to have sloshing around in there is "prostitution."

I couldn't resist the urge to look up the "P" word in Uncle Webster's Big Book of Words. I won't trouble you with the sordid details; suffice it to say that "to sell one's self" falls under the general heading.

Far be it from me to stoop to moral judgement. Prostitution is a time honored trade. It's legal in places, parts of Nevada for instance.

And each of us must do as our conscience dictates. Heck, I don't even know why it's illegal. Does the penicillin cartel have a lobbyist in Washington? What would we lose by taxing and regulating this, the third largest business in America? (I made that up.) Fodder for another rant, dear friends, on another day.

The point is: Harris Labs. If you can hurdle or skirt the moral issue (if there is one) then you have only to face the mind-numbing boredom, the bizarre and frightening people you will be locked up with and the loss of blood.

After a little while, a few visits to Harris, you will develop scar tissue; you will hardly feel the needles. After long enough you may become one of the scary people, and will have no need to fear the weirdos. And as for boredom, there's always television. Always.

In fact, the only real peril from Harris, the largest anyway, is addiction. Not to the drugs, no. To easy money.

If you are going to be in the lab for a week or three you may find that the boss at your regular job resents it. You quit your job. Heck, you'll be making more in those three weeks than in a couple of months at work.

So you do your stint at Harris and go home. When the money runs out and you have no job, you will go back to Harris. But one day, One Day, you will go there and they will be having a slow week or a slow month. The study you volunteer for will be canceled. You will be broke and jobless, and pretty soon you will be out on the street.

That's what happens; and that's why I just haven't spent nearly enough time in Harris Labs this summer.

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