

Abscess Almost Brings Down Secretariat

The great Secretariat had been winning and winning. Just before the Kentucky Derby, Penny Tweedy decided to enter him in the Wood Memorial race.

Beside the prize of winning, things could not have been dicier, because (at least in the dramatic Disney film) failure to perform would undermine the investment consortium Tweedy had finally put together, and that money was keeping her farm intact.

Despite the urging of jockey Ron Turcotte, the valiant stallion only eked out a third place.

Reverberations, of course, went through the management. Recriminations followed.

It was a tough time.

Finally, a trainer volunteered that the horse might have been having a bad day and was 'off his feed'.

Eventually, someone dared to look in the skittish animal's mouth and found a big tooth abscess.

Taking care of it in time for the Derby got Big Red back on his feed and powered up enough to set a course record in the first of the Triple Crown races.

We don't know what caused the abscess in the case of Secretariat, probably from gum disease or food trauma.

What is clear, though, is the profound systemic effect of the toxins seeping into the brave animal's bloodstream.

Oddly enough, though, many in dentistry are focusing on the chronic poisoning from gum disease and forgetting caries can lead to severe, acute abscesses as well.

And these infections are a mere two inches from the base of the brain. What's worse, the vessels of the head don't have the one-way valves seen throughout the rest of the body.

Every time someone with a tooth abscess bends over, the blood can head BACK toward the brain rather than continuing on toward the heart. This can readily carry germs and germ waste products directly to the brain. And, as we say, you can get permanently dead from this.

Meanwhile, it may not even be the direct infection that can get you. Just the poisons seeping away from the infection can bring on inflammatory reactions and cascades of other biochemical effects, none of which is very good for the owner of the body.