ANIL AGGRAWAL'S
Internet Journal of
Forensic Medicine and Toxicology
The world's first online journal devoted entirely to forensic medicine and toxicology · Published 1 January and 1 July

VOL. 3, NO. 1
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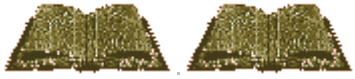

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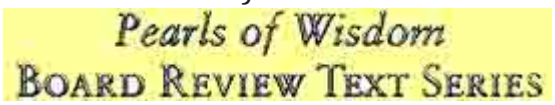
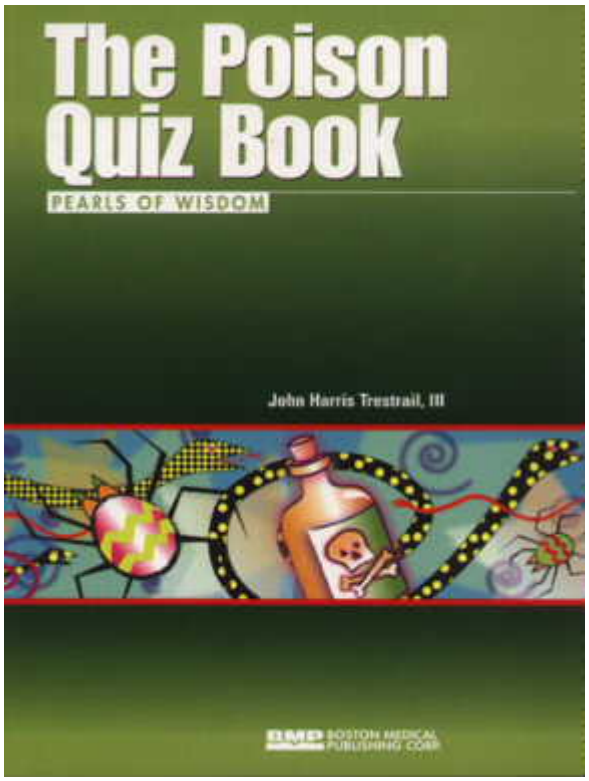
INTERESTING TRIVIA ON TOXICOLOGY

The Poison Quiz Book: Pearls of Wisdom (containing 1560 toxicology trivia questions) *by* John Harris Trestrail, III, RPh, FAACT, DABAT
Boston Medical Publishing, 4780 Linden Street, Lincoln, NE 68516, USA, , , (WEB: www.bmppearls.com), E-mail: bmp@emedicine.com: 217 Pages, Published October 2001, ISBN 1-58409-063-4: Price $32.00

Click cover to buy from Amazon





John Harris Trestrail, III



Did you know that once the mongoose was introduced to help control the snake population in *Martinique*? Or that the exotic poison Strophanthin played a part in 1966 famous novel *Eighty Million Eyes* written by Ed McBain? Did you know that the "*dry ice phenomenon*", where cold seems hot, and vice versa, is characteristic of Ciguatera poisoning? Or that Indonesia is one of those rare countries where police has been given permission to use poisonous snakes against rioters? Did you

know that Queen Cleopatra could not have committed suicide with the bite of an asp (as is commonly believed), because Asps are not native to Egypt? Or that "*Universal antidote*", which is considered to be universally worthless by most toxicologists is still available commercially as Unidote®, or Res-Q®? Did you know that it is actually cheaper to execute a criminal by lethal injection because it costs the government only $346.51, than by lethal gas which would cost $371.03 (according to 1998 economics). Or that at the time of the French Revolution, the most popular suicidal poison was Mercuric Chloride? Did you know that during the Franco-Prussian war, Napoleon III, proposed that the bayonets of the French troops be dipped in cyanide? Or that after July 3, 1863, many of the trees around Gettysburg, Pennsylvania began dying from lead poisoning, due to the large number of leaded foreign bodies which had been embedded in the wood (from shooting)? Did you know.....

View this book on Amazon

Welcome to *The Poison Quiz Book*, perhaps the most exotic book on poisons ever to hit the market. Written by the well-known toxicologist Trestrail, the book provides rare (and often astounding) information in the form of quiz questions - 1560 in all. If you get to read this book, you will find all the above information there.. and much much more. The book is divided in sixteen sections, which have been named alphabetically - from "Animals" to "Words".

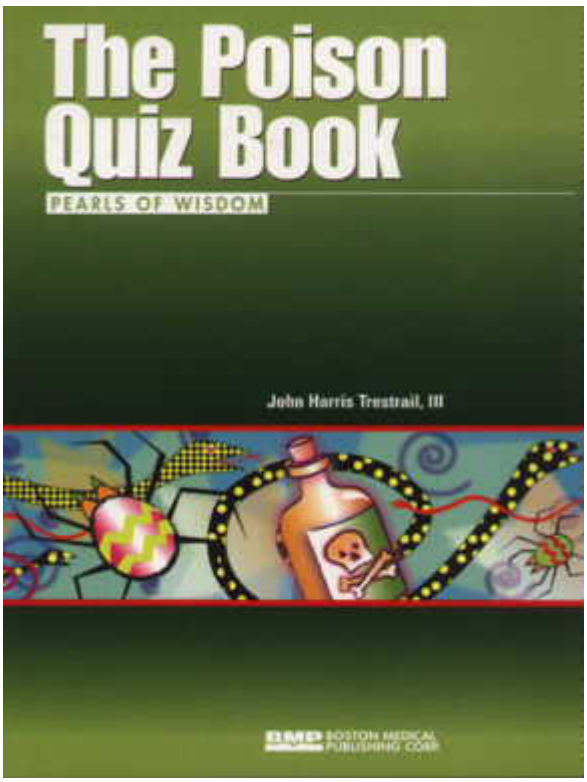
Table of Contents

S.no.	Topic	Questions	page
1	Animals	160	13
2	Authors and Books	160	31
3	Conditions: Physical and Mental	70	53
4	Epidemics and Disasters	100	63
5	Geography	60	77
6	History - Ancient	70	85
7	History - Military	90	95
8	History - Modern	30	107
9	Miscellaneous	90	111
10	Movies and Television	130	123
11	Music	40	141
12	Personages	150	147
13	Plants and Fungi	100	167
14	Sports	20	179
15	Substances	230	183
16	Words	60	211
Total questions		1560	

Trestrail is familiar to all of us. He never fails to surprise. Last year he co-authored *Toxicology Secrets*, another good quiz book on toxicology. Two years back, he came out with *Criminal poisoning*, in which he dwelt at length how poison has been used for crime. One of his missions is to collect rare and trivial facts related to poisons. Since 1986, he has been the creator, producer and moderator of the very popular *Toxicology Quiz Bowl*, sponsored annually by the *American Association of Poison Control Centers*, at the *North American Congress of Clinical Toxicology*. Majority of the questions appearing in this book, were compiled from actual toxicological trivia questions used in these annual competitions.

And this trivia includes all kinds of exotic information. Take for instance quotes related to poisons. Not many quotes related to poisons are known. However Trestrail has been able to amass an amazing number of quotes on toxicology, most of which find a place in this book in the form of questions. Sample these:
&Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece, and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case..... "It is Cocaine", he said, "a seven percent solution. Would you like to try it?" (page 31) (From *The Sign of Four* by Arthur Conan Doyle)
&"I know some poison I could drink; I've often thought I'd taste it; but Mother bought it for the sink, and drinking it would waste it." (page 32) (penned by the American writer Edna St. Vincent Milay in *The Cheerful Abstainer*)
&"A little poison now and then: that maketh pleasant dreams. And much poison at last for pleasant death." (page 32)(Frederich Nietzsche)

RATE YOURSELF ON TOXICOLOGY!



The book is packed with interesting questions and trivia on toxicology. Here are some questions (from various different sections) you should be able to answer after reading this book. You may want to try these questions right now. Give yourself 1 mark for a correct answer and 0 for the wrong one. Be honest. For answers see box below. And then see your rating according to this

reviewer. Take the quiz *NOW*.

From Chapter 1 (Animals)
Qu 1. Butterflies of genus *Heloconius*, are known as poisonous pollen feeders, which increases their chances of survival from natural predators. What type of plant compound are they able to incorporate which gives them this protection?

From Chapter 2 (Authors and Books)
Qu 2. What is the only item toxic to the hero Superman?

From Chapter 3 (Conditions: Physical and Mental)
Qu 3. If one is suffering from "*mahi-mahi*" disease, would the cause be animal, vegetable, or mineral?

From Chapter 4 (Epidemics and Disasters)
Qu 4. In the 1960s, in Great Britain, 100,000 turkeys perished from a mysterious disease known as "*Turkey X disease*". The cause of death was eventually traced back to their feed which consisted of moldy Brazilian peanut meal. This investigation lead to the discovery of what toxic group of compouds?

From Chapter 5 (Geography)
Qu 5. What Latin American country expelled three United States diplomats in 1983, for allegedly plotting to poison its defense minister?

From Chapter 6 (History: Ancient)
Qu 6. One of the first documented cases of poisoning by Carbon Monoxide, was in 364 A.D., and involved the death of what Roman emperor?

From Chapter 7 (History: Military)
Qu 7. When the German "*blitz*" began over England in *World War II*, what was done at the London Zoo to protect the general British population?

From Chapter 8 (History: Modern)
Qu 8. Catherine de Medici was such a notorious poisoner that when she married into the royal family of France, her uncle, Pope Clement *VII*, gave a gift to the French king to lessen the fear that she might practice her art on her husband's relatives. What was the gift?

Questions continued in box below and to the left

And can you identify the persons who made the following remarks?
&The strongest poison ever known, came from Caesar's Laurel crown.
&The surest poison is time.
&A man who can listen at doors - is worse than a poisoner.
&Confidence is a good thing.. but conceit is a mortal poison.
&Love is like a mushroom. No roots and deadly poison.
&The best way to kill a food taster is by poisoning his master's dish.
&One sickly sheep infects the flock. And poisons all the rest.

Some interesting quotes appear in the form of quips. Consider these two:
&What famous American writer, comedian, newspaper man, frequenter of the "*Algonquin Round Table*", and who died from alcoholism, once replied to a friend who said," what are you drinking is

slow poison", with - "so who's in a hurry? (page 31)"
&And sometimes people who are very hungry will even eat spoiled food, paying no attention to the potential for food poisoning. What Asian leader once said: "To a man with an empty stomach, food is God."? (page 157)

Much of the information appearing in the book is outright astounding. Consider these:
&In 1992, the New York publisher Ballantine Books had to recall all November 1991 copies of its "*Great Cakes*" recipe collection, by Carol Walter, because on page 499, it has suggested decorating the desserts with what toxic flower? (page 40)
&It has been speculated that the artist Vincent VanGogh's symptoms of anorexia, nausea, yellow-green vision, and hallucinations, were due to intoxication by what drug he may have received while institutionized at the *Asylum of St. Paul*, at St. Remey, France, around 1888? (page 152)
&The following personages all are said to have died from the ingestion of what poisonous source: Pope Clement VII, the Emperor Jovian, the Emperor Charles VI, Berronill of Naples, and the widow of Tsar Alexis? (page 153)
&What American president of the 1800s, believed so strongly in the antidotal power of a "*madstone*", that he took his son Robert to the possessor of such an item, when he had been bitten by a snake? (page 157)

There are a number of "Who am I" questions - another favorite format with quiz buffs. Sample these:
&As a third year medical student, I published my first medical article "*Gelsemium as a Poison*", in the *British Medical Journal*, in 1879. I went on to become famous as a writer of detective fiction. Who was I (page 33)?
&I won a Pulitzer Prize in 1966 for the book Live or Die. I was a friend of the tragic suicidal author Sylvia Plath, and in a similar way I ended my life in 1974, by gassing myself in a garage. Who was I? (page 40)

A number of questions provide clues to identify personalities. A sample from page 40: Here are three clues to the identity of a famous drug addicted author. FIRST CLUE: I was born on January 19, 1809, and was a literary figure of renown, but my life was adversely affected by my addiction to ethanol and opium. SECOND CLUE: I was expelled from the academy at West Point in 1831, because of my conduct. THIRD CLUE: I am described by many as the "father" of the detective story. Who was I?

RATE YOURSELF ON TOXICOLOGY! (CONT'D) Cont'd from the box above and to the right.. **From Chapter 9 (Miscellaneous)**
Qu 9. Most people are familiar with the near disaster of the *Apollo 13* flight to the moon. But there was a toxicological concern in the back of engineers' minds, if the space craft disintegrated upon return to earth. On board was 8.3 pounds of what very toxic chemical that would have been a disaster if released in the earth's atmosphere?

From Chapter 10 (Movies and Television)
Qu 10. In a episode of "*All in the Family*", Archie Bunker received what antidote when he believed he had eaten a can of *"Persined" Bronco Brand* mushrooms?

From Chapter 11 (Music)

Qu 11. Barely four feet tall, Thomas Quasthoff is one of Germany's most acclaimed bass-baritones. What toxic event caused the condition that inspired one spiteful critic to label him a "*gnome*"?

From Chapter 12 (Personages)
Qu 12. In 1980, after Los Angeles attorney Paul Morantz won a $300,000 settlement against the drug rehabilitation center *Synanon* for holding a woman captive in the 1970s, *Synanon* leader Charles Dederich attempted to murder the lawyer by putting what toxic agent in his mailbox?

From Chapter 13 (Plants and Fungi)
Qu 13. According to mythology, what poisonous plant, was created by *Hecate* (goddess of the underworld) from the saliva of *Cerberus* (the three headed dog that guarded the gates of *Hades*?

From Chapter 14 (Sports)
Qu 14. The year was 1904, and the Olympics were taking place in St. Louis, Missouri, with American Thomas Hicks, competing in an event. It was significant because this was the first known case of performance-enhancing drug use in the Olympic Games, when his supporters plied him with brandy and strychnine (used in small quantities as a stimulant). In what event was he competing?

From Chapter 15 (Substances)
Qu 15. A condition commonly known as "*blackjack disease*", is characterized by non-ulcerative eczematous dermatitis, and is found in card players who are in prolonged contact with the green felt on card tables. What toxic metallic substance in the material causes the condition?

From Chapter 16 (Words)
Qu 16. During the Roman period, what did the word "*alexipharmic*" mean?

For answers see box below and to the right

What is interesting is that Trestrail has been able to collect interesting toxicology questions on as seemingly unrelated areas as movies and television, geography, and even music! Consider these from Movies and Television section:
&On April 26, 1976, at the age of 65, the actor George Sanders, known for his roles as an urbane cad, took his own life by taking what barbiturate? (page 125)
&In 1970, the daughter of a popular television personality, fell to her death while experiencing a severe LSD flashback, which resulted in her father beginning a personal crusade against drug abuse. Who was this dedicated father? (page 126)
&In what 1987 film did the character Owen Lifts (played by Danny DeVito), try to kill his overbearing mother by adding lye to her soft drink? (page 133)
&In the 1954 classic, "*Creature from the Black Lagoon*", what toxic substance was placed in the water to capture the "gill-man" creature? (page 135)

Even from the world of sports, a number of interesting toxicology questions appear in this book. You would come to know of a number of sports personalities who died of poisoning: Vitas Gerulaitis the famous tennis player died of Carbon Monoxide poisoning; Kristi Mathewson, the baseball pitcher died of poisonous gas during World War I; Len Bias the basketball player died of cocaine abuse; Don Wilson the baseball player committed suicide with Carbon Monoxide; Chick Stahl, the manager of the *Boston Red Sox* committed suicide with carbolic acid; Eugene "Big Daddy"

Lipscomb, the football player died of a heroin overdose; and "Cannonball" Crane the baseball player died of chloral hydrate!

Some questions obviously can't be compartmentalized strictly in one or the other category. Take for instance the question, "What countries, IN ORDER, would you travel to, if you wanted to take a chartered tour of sites of famous toxicological disasters and your flight plan went from *Minamata Bay* to *Chernobyl* to *Bhopal* to *Seveso*? The correct answer is Japan - Soviet Union - India - Italy. The question has been placed in the section on "Epidemics and Disasters" (page 63), but it could equally well be placed in the geography section. Or take this question which appears in the section on *Substances* (page 201), "What antidote against an anticoagulant is obtained from the sperm of fish". The answer is Protamine. This question could probably come under the "animals" section too. What the author seems to have done in these cases is to take the stronger element of the two and placed the question in that particular section, which is quite alright.

Although the author says there are 1560 questions in all, in reality there are many hundreds more. Because quite often Trestrail asks several questions in one. I started counting the actual number of questions, but soon I lost count. At a rough estimate, the book must be containing close to 4000 *real* questions, if this grouping is removed. Sample this question on page 43:
&Agatha Christie was a prolific writer of detective fiction. In each of the following stories written by her, identify which poison was utilized: (a) The Body in the Library (b) And Then There Were None, (c) The House of Lurking Death, (d) The Pale Horse (e) The Cretan Bull.

Answers (Rate Yourself on Toxicology)
Here are the answers to the questions asked in the two boxes above. Page numbers on which these answers appear are given in (brackets):
Ans 1. **Cyanide Compounds**. (*Page 24*)
Ans 2. **Kryptonite**. (*Page 33*)
Ans 3. **Animal. The "*mahi-mahi*" is the dolphin fish (NOT the mammal) of Hawaii, which can cause ciguatoxin poisonings**. (*Page 53*)
Ans 4. **Aflatoxins. *Aflatoxin B1*, is one of the most powerful carcinogenic compounds known today, being about 75 times as powerful as dimethylnitrosamine**. (*Page 68*)
Ans 5. **Nicaragua**. (*Page 77*)
Ans 6. **Jovian**. (*Page 91*)
Ans 7. **All the venomous snakes were killed, to prevent any accidental escape**. (*Page 96*)
Ans 8. **A "unicorn's horn"**. (*Page 109*)
Ans 9. **Plutonium, in the SNAP-27 equipment used to supply energy for experiments on the lunar surface**. (*Page 119*)
Ans 10. **Botulinus Antitoxin**. (*Page 138*)
Ans 11. **Born in 1960, Quasthoff was a Thalidomide baby**. (*Page 145*)
Ans 12. **A 54 inch diamond rattlesnake, which bit the victim's thumb**. (*Page 149*)
Ans 13. **Monkshood**. (*Page 168*)
Ans 14. **The *Marathon***. (*Page 180*)
Ans 15. **Chromium**. (*Page 184*)
Ans 16. **Complex medicines that were considered to have antidotal properties against poisons in general**. (*Page 216*)

YOUR RATING ON TOXICOLOGY
Total Marks = 16
Your marks:
15-16: You probably don't need this book.
10-14: You are very good in Toxicological trivia, yet would gain something from this book.
5-9: You are average. This book strongly advised.
0-4: You surely could do with some knowledge in toxicology. This book Essential for you.

These are really five questions in one. Or consider these following questions, which are all four to six questions in one:
&Give the title of each of following movies in which the actor's dialogue involved the theme of poisons: (a) "For a gallon of elderberry wine, I take one teaspoonful of arsenic, then add a half teaspoon of strychnine and then just a pinch of cyanide.", (b) "Oh, I see.. .the pellet with the poison's in the flagon with the dragon; the vessel with the pestle has the brew that is true.", (c) "Back where I come from, folk call that love stuff a quick poison, it hurts you all over real bad, like a shot of electricity. But if it's slow poison, well it's like a fever that aches in your bones for a thousand years.", (d) "The one without the parsley is the one without the poison.", (e) "I'd hate to take a bite out of you. You are a cookie full of arsenic."? (page 136)
&During history some individuals have been given nicknames which included the word poison. Identify the given name of the following individuals: (a) He was called "*Poison Ivy*" by the striking miners of Colorado, for his misrepresentations of the Ludlow Strike of 1913-14, (b) This 19th Century murderess estimated to have claimed 31 victims, was called "*Queen Poisoner*" and "*The Modern Lucretia Borgia*", (c)Teamster Union President Jimmy Hoffa, referred to this government official as "*Poison Snake*", (d) The son-in-law of Benito Mussolini who tried to keep Italy out of World War II, was referred to as "*That Poisoned Mushroom*", by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. (page 154)

&And now to test your knowledge of the use of poisons in capital punishment in the United States. Answer each of the following: (a) On February 28, 1924, the poisonous gas Hydrogen Cyanide was first used to execute a criminal, of Chinese origin, who was convicted of a gang-style killing. What was the name of the gas chamber's first victim, (b) In what state did the first execution by gas take place, (c) On December 6, 1982, Charles Brooks, was the first criminal to be executed by "lethal injection". In what state did this execution take place? (d) What three different chemicals or drugs were used in the lethal injection process? (page 200)

&Combinations of street drugs have very unusual names. Indicate what chemicals or drugs are found in each of the following street named combinations: (a) "Black Dust" (b) "Dynamite" (c) "Fours and dor's" (d) "Killer Weed" (e) "OJ" (f) "R and R". (page 200)

Questions like these take the real tally of questions in this book to 4000, or perhaps even more.

I can go on and on, but then I would perhaps end up writing the whole book here. The best way to get to know this book, would be to read it. It is marvelous value for its price. It would be immensely useful to toxicologists, clinicians, writers, speakers, trivia buffs, quizzers and to any one interested in information related to toxicology. People who are looking for the unusual, bizarre and astounding would find this book particularly rewarding.

How would I rate this book? In one word "Intoxicating"! I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and if you love toxicology as much as I do, you would certainly thank me, I recommended this book

to you. And yes, I know I have left some of the above questions unanswered. You might enjoy digging up their answers yourself in the book.

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Contact the author of this book by clicking here

Other Books by Dr. Trestrail reviewed in previous issues of this journal:

- *Criminal poisoning* First Edition, 2000, (Humana Press) by John H. Trestrail III (Volume 1, Number 2, July-December 2000)
- *Mithridata: The Newsletter of the Toxicological History Society - The first ten years (Jan 1991-July 2000),* First published as a bound edition, 2000 by John H. Trestrail III (Volume 1, Number 2, July-December 2000)
- *Toxicology Secrets* First Edition, 2001, (Hanley and Belfus) by Louis J. Ling, Richard F. Clark, Timothy B. Erickson and John H. Trestrail III (Volume 2, Number 2, July-December 2001)