THIS WEEK IN HISTORY



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

THE TYLENOL MURDERS

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On Sept. 29, 1982, seventh-grader Mary Ann Kellerman complained to her parents of a sore throat. In turn, she took an Extra-Strength Tylenol to ease her symptoms. However, her condition became much worse. Adam Janus, a postal worker, similarly took Tylenol and was unable to wake up from his nap. He was taken to the emergency room in critical condition and unfortunately passed away in the hospital. Janus' brother Stanley and his sister-in-law Theresa went to comfort other family members at his house, where they both had headaches. After taking some Extra-Strength Tylenol, they both passed away shortly after. Three others fell victim to these mysterious circumstances: Mary Reiner, Mary McFarland and Paula Prince.

This week in history, we are going to take a look into the Tylenol Murders in Chicago and how the unfortunate loss of seven people led to massive changes in the packaging and distribution of drugs.

Richard Keyworth and Philip Cappitelli were firefighters in Chicago and the first to connect the deaths, realizing that all seven took Tylenol shortly before their passing. This would eventually lead to the discovery that several bottles of Extra Strength Tylenol were laced with cyanide.

Cyanide as poison works by disrupting the electron transport chain in the mitochondria of the cell. It binds to an enzyme, preventing cells from using oxygen and hindering the production of ATP, according to this Factsheet by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

After the connection between Tylenol and the deaths was made, a nationwide recall occurred, according to the article, "How the Tylenol murders of 1982 changed the way we consume medication" from PBS News. Tylenol would work with the media to issue mass warnings and offer replacement capsules to those who had turned in pills already purchased. Other tainted capsules were discovered in the Chicago area still on shelves; fortunately, they had not yet been purchased. After an investigation, it was determined that the products were tampered with after the pills had already left the factory and most likely occurred by removing the bottles from the shelf and returning them laced with poison to be later purchased.

To this day, the killer has not been discovered. While one man wrote a ransom note to Johnson & Johnson claiming responsibility, it was determined that he had no connection to the case.

In response to the situation, Johnson & Johnson developed "tamper-proof" packaging, adding foil to seal the bottles and changing the capsules from gelatin to something much harder to tamper with.

It worked, using these measures Johnson & Johnson was able to regain the trust of the public within a year, and "tamper-proof" packaging would become the industry standard for all manufacturers of such products.

While these products are now safer for consumers today, it's unfortunate that those deaths had to occur for these measures to be put in place. I truly hope that someone will one day come clean about the deaths to provide closure to a sad chapter of history.



A bottle of Extra Strength Tylenol sits on a desk. In 1982, several bottles of Extra Strength Tylenol were laced with cyanide.

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Holster Scholars present months of hard work at symposium



University of Connecticut Honors Program hosts the Holster Scholars Program Symposium in the Dodd Center for Human Rights. Seven third-semester students presented their work on Friday

PHOTO BY JAYLYN DAVIS, STAFF WRITER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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The University of Connecticut Honors Program hosted the Holster Scholars Program Symposium on Friday at the Konover Auditorium in the Dodd Center for Human Rights. Seven third-semester students presented their work.

According to Vin Moscardelli, the director of the Holster Scholars Program, the Holster Scholars Program is an enrichment opportunity for first-semester Honors students. In the program, a select number of students pursue an independent research project under the supervision of a faculty mentor. The students complete the projects over the summer, and they showcase them at the symposium.

At the beginning of the event, Moscardelli and UConn President Radenka Maric gave opening remarks. Maric described the Holster Scholars Program as a distinctly unique opportunity.

"This award is for you to think of the opportunities that you have as an Honors student, the opportunities to do the research, the opportunities to be curious and the opportunities to work in many internships and have great mentors," Maric said.

After opening remarks, Alissa Christensen, a psychology and English student, presented her work, "Subjective Time Estimation in Rats: Seconds to Minutes."

To begin her presentation, Christensen discussed subjective time and the temporal bisection task. According to Christensen, subjective time is one's perception of how fast or slow time passes, and the temporal bisection task is a process that examines how animals and humans perceive time. Using the temporal bisection task, Christensen examined subjective timing in 16 rats.

The second presenter was Aileen Liu, a molecular and cell biology student on the pre-medical track. Her work was called "Investigating the Role of Gαf in Sperm Storage in the Spermathecae of Female Drosophila Melanogaster."

Liu said she pursued her project because she was interested in how scientists test different genes. She mentioned she really loved the research she did for her project, which focused on the significance of the G-protein alpha subunit in paraovarian secretory cell function and sperm storage in fruit flies.

After Liu was Nadia Ratib-Eixarch, a political science student who is a Presidential Scholar in the Special Program in Law. Her project was called "I, Too, am America: Latino Men, American Identity, and Support for Conservative Immigration Policy."

In the beginning of her presentation, Ratib-Eixarch discussed some changes in Latinos' ideology on immigration policies.

"Latinos have been identifying more and more with the conservative immigration policy position," Ratib-Eixarch said. "In 2016, 21% reported that they aligned, but in 2026, 32% reported that they did."

The statistic contributed to one of Ratib-Eixarch's hypotheses, which was that Latinos who switched identities would be less likely to support pro-immigration policy.

In her presentation, Ratib-Eixarch discussed data she collected from examination cooperative election study surveys. According to the data, her hypothesis that Latinos who switched identities would be less likely to support pro-immigration policy was insignificant. However, other factors affected one's support for pro-immigration policy, such as religion and heritage.

The next presenter was Maya Vallejo, a Stamps Scholar majoring in mathematics and chemistry. Her work, "The Missing Pieces: Filling in the Auditory Gaps of Noise Exposure Habits in College Musicians," discussed college musicians' exposure to high noise levels and their breaks from them.

Before sharing her data, Vallejo shared some hearing loss statistics. According to Vallejo, 19% of young adults have some form of hearing loss, and the estimated prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss among college musicians is 45%.

To conduct her project, Vallejo collected data from a Skoe Lab dataset that investigated headphone noise exposure within college musicians and whether college musicians took breaks from high noise exposure levels during the semester break. When discussing her results, Vallejo indicated that the dataset reported that college musicians were exposed to higher noise exposure levels and were less likely to stay away from those levels during the semester break.

After Vallejo was Theja Suresh Nagan, a molecular and cell biology student and STEM Scholar who ison the pre-medical track. Her project, "Direct-to-Consumer Pharmaceutical Advertising and the Historical Construction of Women as Consumer Patients in the U.S.," focused on pharmaceutical advertisements and their influence on female patients in the U.S. A total of 38 advertisements were analyzed.

The next presenter was Phillip Purcell, a Stamps Scholar majoring in economics. His work was called "Public Rhetoric and Private Strategy: The World Bank's Relationship with Mexico Through the 1980s Debt Crisis."

According to Purcell, his project was inspired by his first-year Honors seminar class. The course's content intrigued him and propelled him to conduct a more in-depth analysis of it.

Purcell's project consisted of archival research that included loan statements, New York Times articles, and many other documents about the World Bank. The project also included background information about Mexico's economic crisis in the 1980s and the assistance the World Bank provided to Mexico during that time frame.

The last presenter was Kylie Kiefer, a molecular and cell biology and history student who is a STEM Scholar and premed student in the Special Program in Medicine. Her work, "Scientific Innovation, Institutionalization, and Moral Dilemmas: From Chemical Warfare in World War I to AI in Modern Conflict," had two parts: chemical warfare in World War I and Artificial Intelligence usage in the military today.

In her presentation, Kiefer shared the similarities between chemical warfare and AI, affirming that both are dangerous to civilians and military soldiers.

At the event's conclusion, audience members were given the opportunity to ask questions to the presenters. Afterwards, Jennifer Lease Butts, the director of the Honors Program, gave closing remarks.

Ben Boldue, a first-semester chemistry student, said he enjoyed the Holster Scholars Program Fall Symposium.

"It was nice attending the symposium to see what people did for their research opportunities," Boldue said.

Boldue also said the symposium inspired him.

"It was also nice to be inspired by these people, who clearly worked so hard on these rigorous research projects," Boldue said.



Seven third-semester Honors students at the University of Connected presented their work at the Holster Scholars Program Symposium in the Dodd Center for Human Rights.

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