

Table 1. Postmortem Disposition of Implantable Devices, as Reported by Embalmers and Funeral Directors.*

Method of Disposition	Respondents Who Reported Using the Method (N = 71)
	no. (%)
Put in medical waste	31 (44)
Donate for human use in medically underserved nations	13 (18)
Give to family	7 (10)
Keep on site	6 (8)
Return to manufacturer	3 (4)
Send to hospital where patient died	3 (4)
Donate for animal use	2 (3)
Unknown or no answer	17 (24)

* Some respondents reported more than one method.

ported that they used more than one method of disposition.

When queried about the possibility of routine device analysis, 80 percent of respondents thought it would be feasible to interrogate devices in the funeral home, and 87 percent said it would be possible to return all devices to the manufacturer. Although most respondents said that without the consent of the family, it would not be appropriate to interrogate devices (72 percent) or remove the devices for analysis (93 percent), 65 percent estimated that the majority of families would consent to interrogation, and 68 percent thought the majority of families would approve of the return of a device to the manufacturer.

The results of our survey of morticians dem-

onstrate that implantable pacemakers and defibrillators are rarely interrogated or returned to the manufacturer after a patient dies. Almost half of retrieved devices are treated as medical waste. However, funeral directors and embalmers believe routine postmortem interrogation and retrieval of devices would be feasible, assuming that proper consent could be obtained from the family. These results suggest that there is considerable potential for improved postmortem analysis of implantable devices.

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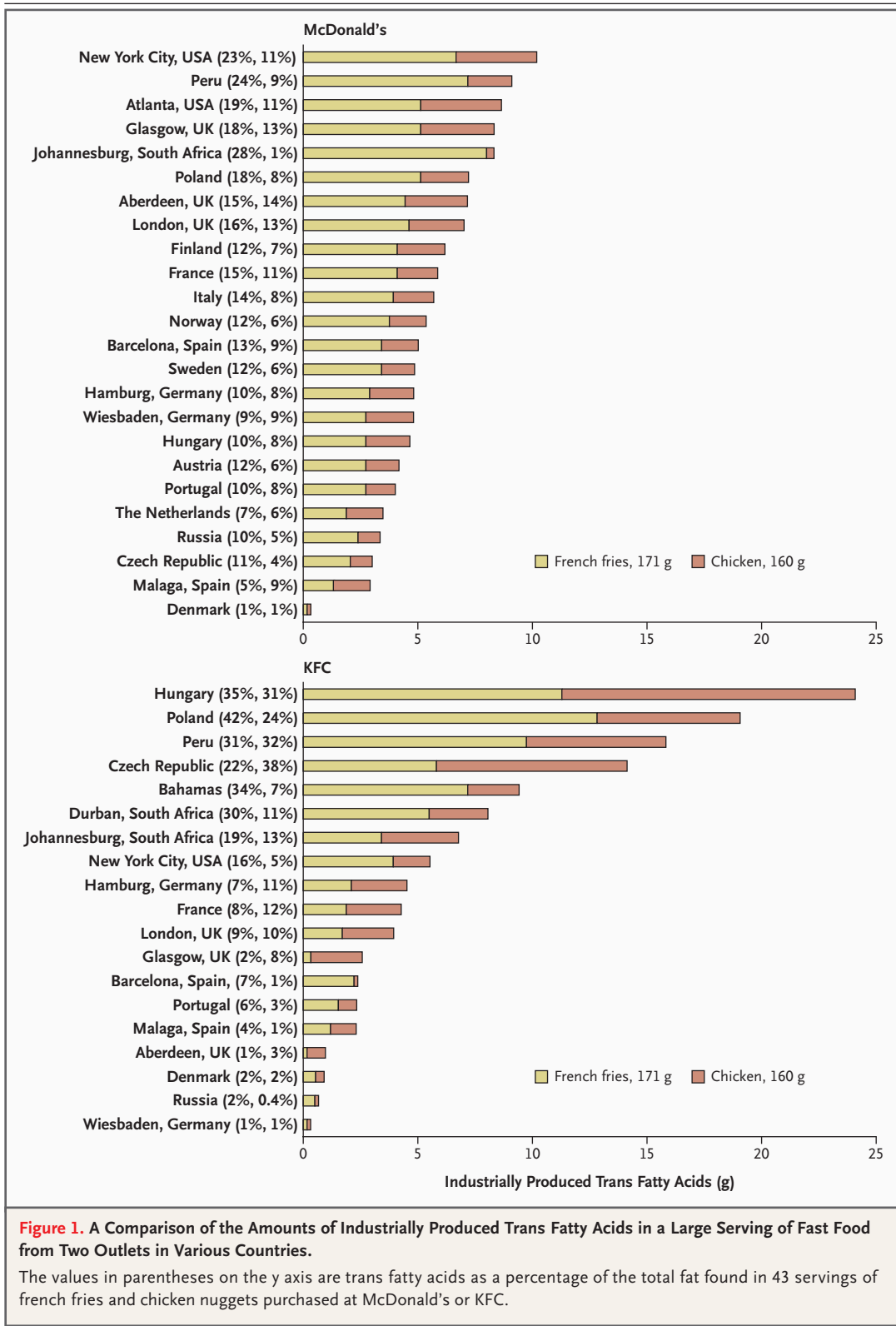
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High Levels of Industrially Produced Trans Fat in Popular Fast Foods

TO THE EDITOR: The daily intake of about 5 g of trans fat is associated with a 25 percent increase in the risk of ischemic heart disease.¹ For this reason, it is recommended that the consumption of trans fat be as low as possible.² We determined the content of industrially produced trans fatty acids in 43 servings of fast foods bought in 20

countries between November 2004 and September 2005. We and our colleagues decided which cities to include in the study on the basis of planned visits for other purposes. The foods (chicken nuggets and french fries) were purchased from McDonald's and KFC outlets.

The foods were homogenized, and the fatty



acid content was analyzed by capillary gas chromatography according to a method³ accredited by the International Organization for Standardization. For comparison, the amounts of trans fatty acids in the french fries and chicken nuggets were expressed as the amounts in a serving size equal to that of a large serving of the food from McDonald's (171 g of french fries and 160 g of chicken).⁴

The content of trans fatty acids varied from less than 1 g in Denmark and Germany to 10 g in New York (McDonald's) and 24 g in Hungary (KFC) (Fig. 1). Fifty percent of the 43 servings contained more than 5 g per serving — the amount of daily intake associated with a 25 percent increase in the risk of ischemic heart disease.

The cooking oil used for french fries in McDonald's outlets in the United States and Peru contained 23 percent and 24 percent trans fatty acids, respectively, whereas the oils used for french fries in many European countries contained only about 10 percent trans fatty acids, with some countries as low as 5 percent (Spain) and 1 percent (Denmark). At KFC, some values for trans fatty acid content were above 30 percent. Within the same chain in the same country, large variations in these values were observed — for instance, between KFC outlets in Hamburg and Wiesbaden in Germany and between Aberdeen and London in the United Kingdom.

Owing to the very high content of industrially produced trans fatty acids in certain fast foods, in many countries it is possible to consume 10 to 25 g of these trans fatty acids in one day and for habitual consumers of large amounts of this food

to have an average daily intake far above 5 g. This is a matter of concern, particularly for low-income people, who already have an increased risk of ischemic heart disease owing to other lifestyle factors.

Denmark introduced legislation, effective January 1, 2004, restricting the use of industrially produced trans fatty acids to a maximum of 2 percent of the fat in any food product.⁵ The experience with the Danish surveillance system and the results of our study demonstrate that this health risk can be eliminated without any noticeable effect for the consumer.

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