

MARCH 2008 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first edition of the Toronto-Centre Naturopathic Medicine Newsletter. We plan to produce an edition each month for those of you who indicated that you were interested in receiving them, but would also be happy for you to forward them to family and friends if you feel they would be of value to them.

Our motive for writing a newsletter is to share what we know about wellness and healthy living with a wider audience than we are able to in the context of our work as clinicians.

The term “doctor”, as in naturopathic doctor, is derived from the Latin *docere*, to teach or to show. From this perspective, health is the result of actions taken by the patient - eating well, exercising, managing stress, etc. The role of the professional is to guide or coach the patient towards these goals. There are of course active interventions made by naturopathic doctors, but the focus of these is to support the body in its own action, not to “take over” the healing process. Health is always in the power of the patient. (“Physician”, the other term for medical professionals takes its meaning from the root *physic*, which means “to cure”, implying that health is the result of the action of medicines and the “curer”.)

To keep with this principle of teaching, we plan to devote a section of each newsletter to the discussion of recently published, controversial or interesting research studies, an editorial section for discussing various topics of health interest, and a “Health Tip” section in which we make simple suggestions you can integrate into your lifestyle, that over time and taken together can result in dramatic improvements in over-all wellbeing.

IN THE NEWS ...

Flu season has started and incidences of flu infection are expected to increase in the next weeks. On February 11 WebMD reported that this year’s flu vaccine doesn’t match two of the three main types of flu bugs now in circulation.

There are many strains of flu virus, and every year, the World Health Organization makes recommendations on which strains are expected to provide the greatest threat to human health the following year. Vaccines are then prepared against these specific flu strains.

The vaccine prepared against this year’s type A virus is from the “Wisconsin” strain, but 83% of the type A virus circulating this year is of the “Brisbane” type. This year’s type B vaccine is from the “Victoria” lineage, but 93% of the type B illness this year is caused by the “Yamagata” type.

Practically speaking, this means that vaccinated persons, although not protected against infection, will experience milder disease than they might otherwise. Prevention, however, remains the best way to avoid the discomfort associated with catching the flu. Minimizing spread of the disease through frequent hand washing; minimizing stress effects and consumption of sugar, caffeine and alcohol which depress immune function; and maintaining a healthy diet and adequate sleep to optimize general health will help you enjoy all the season has to offer.

HEALTH TIP

When planning to make improvements to one’s health, “goals that are set are goals that are met”. Having the vague idea that “I’ll just do better” or “be healthier” tends not to work. As a rule, goals should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (i.e., have a deadline).

This month, spend some time reflecting on what changes in your life would improve your health or quality of life in general. Apply the S.M.A.R.T. criteria to your goal. Want to spend more time with your family? Be specific on what kind of time - for example eating dinner together on weekdays or not bringing work home on weekends (both measurable goals). Make the goal attainable and realistic – dinners together may be attainable for a teacher, but not for an associate at a law firm. Lastly, make it timely. A tax specialist may decide to embark on this plan after tax season, but the date should be definite – otherwise you’ll notice that tomorrow never comes.