



Asheville Integrative Medicine



James Biddle, M.D. Anne Walch, MHS, P.A.-C.
Sudeshna Dasgupta-O'Brien, M.D. John Paul McNeil, PA

Healthy Notes

Spring 2009

Spring!

Have you noticed? The trees are blooming and flowers are popping up everywhere!

Our office has had many calls about seasonal allergy treatment in the last week and we are very busy helping people learn about Integrative Medical treatments for allergies. Allergy Choices sublingual allergy drops (SLIT) have proven to be a great addition to our practice and we are now better able to treat patients affected by food allergies.

According to a recent report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children with food allergies are two to four times more likely to have other related conditions such as asthma and other allergies, compared with children without food allergies. Another interesting report states that 90%

of allergic kids have a marked improvement in allergic symptoms within one week of eliminating food allergies (*Ann Allergy* 1977;39:8) (*Ann Allergy* 1980;44:273).



Get out and enjoy the warm sun and let us help you eliminate those allergies!

GUT HEALTH

By Dr. Sudeshna Dasgupta-O'Brien

Digestive disorders are on the increase. About 38 million Americans suffer from a variety of digestive problems such as GERD, irritable bowel syndrome, celiac disease, food allergies, diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn's disease. Approximately 25 million Americans have daily heartburn and it is estimated that 20% of the adult population have irritable bowel syndrome. Celiac disease, once considered rare, is now thought to affect 1 in 133 people, and food allergies have increased alarmingly.

Why is this happening? Several reasons come to mind: stressful lifestyles, environmental pollution, and the American diet are a start. The standard American diet tends to be high in carbs and sugar and low in fiber and healthy fats. Not only can this contribute to digestive problems and also to obesity,

diabetes, heart disease and cancer, as we know.

Another factor in the increase of digestive disorders is an imbalance of gut microbes. In recent years we have come to appreciate our body's amazing ecosystem, the balance of friendly and potentially harmful microorganisms that live in our gut. This balance can be disturbed by antibiotic therapy, birth control pills, steroids, chemotherapy, heavy metal toxicity and physical and emotional stress. When out of balance, harmful bacteria, yeast or parasites can overgrow. This is called intestinal dysbiosis. Friendly bacteria in our gut are of prime importance in keeping our digestive tract as well as our immune system healthy.

What is not always easily recognized is that poor gut health also greatly contributes to many systemic conditions: such as allergies, asthma, eczema, ADHD, autism, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, arthritis, headaches and insomnia. Focusing on improving digestive function often results in noticeable improvement in these conditions.

In ADHD, for example, food allergies and yeast overgrowth in the intestine can exacerbate or cause hyperactivity and attention deficits. There are many studies that show an improvement in ADHD behaviors when allergies are addressed by elimination diets or desensitization. And according to parent rating surveys collected from thousands of parents by the ARI (Autism Research Institute), a gluten-free casein-free diet resulted in improvements in 66% of autistic children, food allergy treatment caused improvements in 64% of autistic children, and an anti-Candida diet had good results in 55%.

What are some things we need to maintain good digestion, absorption and elimination? Adequate stomach acid is very important to sterilize food, start the breakdown of proteins and act as a signal for the release of bile when the acidic food bolus reaches the small intestine. Chronic use of antacids and an infection called H-pylori can cause low stomach acid. If stomach acid is low, proteins are only partially broken down, and food allergies can result. Also,

minerals like iron and calcium are poorly absorbed without adequate stomach acid. Low stomach acid is also associated with increased inhalant allergies, asthma and skin conditions like eczema.

Other factors needed for adequate digestion are bile, enzymes, normal peristaltic action (movement of the gut muscles to help the food bolus travel down the gut), a healthy intact gut lining, plenty of friendly bacteria, adequate fluid and fiber in the diet and healthy eating habits. Avoiding or minimizing environmental toxins is also extremely important. Heavy metal toxicity, mercury in particular, affects digestive capacity by poisoning enzymes and chelation therapy to remove heavy metals can have marked benefits for a wide range of conditions, among which are autism and ADHD.

More on beneficial bacteria - a wealth of research has been conducted in the last several years on the use of probiotics or good bacteria for gut health in both children and adults. It seems that without friendly bacteria our immune systems would not develop. We don't often think of our gut when we think of the immune system, yet 80% of our immune tissue actually resides in the gut and is called gut-associated lymphoid tissue or GALT. A newborn baby's gut is sterile. It acquires microorganisms during delivery, and then from the environment, which then colonize the gut. Experiments done on monkeys have proven that without these friendly bacteria the immune system does not mature.

One of the common types of harmful overgrowth in the gut is yeast or Candida overgrowth. Intestinal yeast can cause a variety of gut symptoms such as bloating, indigestion, constipation, diarrhea, and leaky gut. Yeast also produce toxins which can get absorbed and cause systemic symptoms such as sinus congestion, joint pains, headaches, foggy, fatigue, and depression to name a few.

Fortunately, many of these conditions can be improved with treatment. At AIM we pay attention to your gut health. We offer dietary advice, look for and treat nutritional deficiencies, low stomach acid, intestinal dysbiosis including yeast, food allergies and heavy metal toxicity.

Another area of emerging interest is the enteric nervous system or the "brain in the gut". The gut contains a 100 million neurons, more than the spinal cord, and makes many messenger chemicals such as neurotransmitters. Look for more on this topic in our next newsletter. *Dr. Sudeshna Dasgupta-O'Brien*

April is Autism Awareness Month

Did you know:

- *1 in 150 children is diagnosed with autism.
 - *Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the US.
 - *Autism costs the nation over \$35 billion a year, a figure expected to increase sharply in the next several years.
- (facts according to www.autismspeaks.org)

Please take a moment to visit the website www.act-today.org and donate if you can. Act Today is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase access to effective autism treatments.

If you are a parent of an autistic child, or know someone with an autistic child, applications are being taken for grants!



Planting a garden is good for our soul, our wallet and our environment!

Dimensions of healing, psychological development and physical wellbeing are all part of the spirit of gardening. We become attuned to life's struggles for renewal, richness and balance. Through the seasons, we keep in touch with the cycle of life; we can see plants each day that are thriving, dying, seeding, fruiting, healthy and battling with disease. Our busy lives sometimes are not conducive to a balanced lifestyle. Gardening helps ground us and connect us to life.

Hot topics these days include the economic value of growing your own food, the slow food movement, which includes locally grown food and the health and flavor benefits of fresh, organic produce. Home organic gardens have become increasingly popular over the last several years. Incorporating organic practices into your gardening benefits both you and the environment.

Alice Waters, credited with being the mother of the slow food or locavore movement in the U.S., envisions an America that eats and cooks local, organic and sustainable food. "When people become real and you learn about your compost and how easy it is to make, you feel like you're empowered to do an everyday act that's good for your family and friends and the environment."

You can learn how to grow your own vegetables at the Organic Growers School. The 15th annual conference is scheduled for March 21st and 22nd this year. More than 800 attendees per day are expected. Visit their website for more information at www.organicgrowersschool.org.

Dr. Dasgupta is available to speak to your group or organization on a multitude of topics. For information or to schedule a talk, please contact Jayne at 828-252-5545.

Taken from an article written by Deepak Chopra, MD with input from Andrew Weil, MD and Roy Rustom, PhD

One *sine qua non* for any future sustainable U.S. health system is the necessity to empower, rather than undercut each citizen's right to choose health care and take responsibility for his/her own wellness. Countless chronic diseases result from the neglect of basic wellness measures. The blame for underutilizing such proactive, cost-saving approaches lies directly with the official policy of blind reliance on drugs and surgery, whatever the cost. The public has been lulled into medical apathy on the false assumption that if something goes wrong, fix-it mechanics will tune up your body the way a garage tunes up your car.

A new integrative medicine system would marry the superb options of high tech emergency care, its brilliant surgical achievements, the tried and least harmful pharmaceuticals, by empowering and educating its citizens to maintain wellness and prevent disease, through improved nutrition, exercise, stress-management, and a wide range of other proven integrative approaches. Sadly, mainstream medicine largely ignores these viable health approaches, because they're not financially lucrative.

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Asheville Integrative Medicine
832 Hendersonville Road, Asheville, NC 28803
(828) 252-5545 ♦ www.docbiddle.com

From Nutrients Etc.

With the balmy breezes and blue skies of spring also come seasonal allergies. At Nutrients Etc., we have several aids to relieve many symptoms of these allergies.

Petadolax (butterbur) has the ability to mediate symptoms of allergies. It also assists in the prevention of migraines.

Sinus Buster which, of course, relieves sinus pressure and nasal congestion, also aids in the relief of allergy symptoms and chronic headaches.

Another nasal allergy symptom controller is Nasalcrom, which prevents and relieves without drowsiness. It also helps runny and itchy nose, sneezing, and allergic stuffy nose.

Finally, Similasan Dry/Red Eye Drops stimulates the eye's natural ability to moisturize, soothe, and clear red eyes caused by environmental factors as well as by other factors. This sting-free formula has no known side effects, contra-indications, or drug interactions... The formula contains no harsh chemicals and will not cause reliance or rebound.

To enjoy the beauties of springtime, prepare yourself to fight allergy symptoms with some or all of these products.



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YOUR HEALTHCARE CIVIL RIGHTS IN JEOPARDY

An update from Citizens for Health Care Access (CHCA)

www.caroliniansforhealthcareaccess.com

The bill "Due Process to Protect Patient Choice" will be introduced to legislature within the next three weeks. The purpose is to tighten the Medical Practice Act and to make it more difficult to harass any physician without cause, including those practicing Integrative Medicine. Things are looking optimistic that the bill will be acted upon favorably in the legislature, based upon CHCA's representative's actions thus far. Sponsors are Senators Martin Nesbitt and Fletcher Hartsell and Representatives Julia Howard and Susan Fisher, bipartisan support. (Our office will send an email with the bill number when it is assigned).

Legislators need to realize that there are voters back home concerned about freedom to choose our medical treatments. **It is important that patients in as many counties as possible talk to their legislators.** You can help with letters, phone calls, emails, or by joining a group of patients and physicians to meet your county delegation. Email Janis@ramquist.com to volunteer to join a group and enter "volunteer" in the subject line and include your county in the email.

Please do your part. Contact ALL your State senators and representatives for the General Assembly located at <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/RandR07/Home.html>. Ask legislators to require due process for all physicians by the NC Medical Board and support the bill "Due Process to Protect Patient Choice".

Talking Points: Use any of the following points you wish.

- Your personal health experience outlining the importance of your Integrative Healthcare choice and its effectiveness.
- Many patients have sought treatment by multiple physicians before finding an Integrative Medicine physician with successful treatments. Tell your experience.
- Discuss how much you and your medical insurance spent for prevailing treatments that didn't work before you found an Integrative Medicine physician.
- Research shows that a majority of prevailing conventional treatments are not scientifically proven to be effective. In 2008, the British Medical Association's Clinical Evidence assessment of prevailing treatments: only 36% beneficial; or likely beneficial; 64% are a trade-off between benefits and harm, unlikely to be beneficial, likely to be ineffective or harmful, or of unknown effectiveness.
- The National Health Institute continues to identify Integrative Medical treatments as effective; many of which the N.C. Medical Board has overlooked for more than 23 years.

General Information about Contacting Elected Officials:

- Refrain from giving your opinion on any other issues, such as healthcare reform.
- Do give concrete information; state facts about your experience.
- We will provide the bill number when it is introduced.
- If they ask a question you don't know, email Janis Ramquist at Janis@ramquist.com with the question and she will get back to the legislator.