Editorial

Vitamins are Becoming Respectable

All Orthomolecular physicians, you may now come out of the closet, our work is gaining respect. Several reports have appeared in the establishment literature including JAMA, New England Journal of Medicine and the American Journal of Psychiatry. Here are two examples.

Folic Acid–When the Scottish physician had the temerity to suggest that folic acid might decrease the incidence of spina bifida you would think that the profession would explode. An issue of *The Lancet* carried seven letters all vigorously condemning him and claiming that people could not tolerate these enormous doses of folic acid that were being recommended (less than 1 mg daily). Several million-dollar studies later, in my opinion a waste, merely confirmed what he had reported. *Canadian Medical Journal* carries a commentary (August 2, 2002, Vol. 167) by Drs Kadir and Economides, from Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, London, England. They comment on two recent articles which report impressive findings in the same journal. The addition of tiny doses, 400 mcg of folic acid daily decreases the incidence of spina bifida by about 50%. It also decreases the incidence of other types of congenital abnormalities. This does not surprise me. Since 1955 I have not seen a single mother on vitamins give birth to a defective child. These authors also point out that the excuse used by the establishment to avoid folic acid, that it will cause pernicious anemia, is grossly exaggerated and not substantiated. Each spina bifida child will cost health plans about $50,000 by the time they are twelve. A few pennies worth of folic acid thus will produce enormous savings. Had the original report been taken seriously, think of the millions of dollars Canada and United States could have saved had they not had to a wait for those expensive double blind experiments.

Vitamins and Behaviour–Several years ago Patrick Holford invited me to share my views on nutrition and psychiatry at the Institute of Optimum Nutrition in London, England. At the meeting attended by several hundred students and other interested people Holford asked me to give their Linus Paulng Award to C. Bernard Gesch. The government had given Gesch a substantial grant to study the effect of adding nutrients to the diet of offenders in prison. It would be a controlled experiment located in one of their prisons. The results of this study have been published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, July 2002, and this has aroused a good deal of interest in the press and hopefully in the nutritional establishment. Prisoners were given the supplements or placebo for 142 days. Compared to the control group, the group given the supplements committed about 26% fewer offenses. The greatest reduction occurred in the most serious incidents. There were no side effects. *The Economist*, June 27, 2002, asked "Could food supplements keep Britons out of trouble?"

This double-blind controlled therapeutic study arises out of orthomolecular psychiatry where it was found decades ago that vitamin supplements had a dramatic effect on behavior including, of course, schizophrenic behaviour. The history of this relationship is very interesting and I want to give credit to the pioneers who opened up this field but were ignored for so many years.

One of the first was Alexander Schauss, who published his book *Diet, Crime and Delinquency* in 1980. Working with criminals, Schauss observed a direct link between good nutrition and better behaviour. Barbara Reed, Chief Probation Office, working in one of the courts, found that offenders in her care who followed the principles of good nutrition had a much lower recidivism rate. These and other findings were reviewed by L.J. Hippchen. These important books included chapters from many of the pioneers of orthomolecular psychiatry. The

first major studies in prisons were conducted by Stephen Schoenthaler and his colleagues who found that young adult offenders given dietary supplements in California showed a 38% decrease in serious rule violations.

Much of this earlier work was ignored. It seems with this Oxford study, recognition has finally come.

References

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The Long Term Effects of Nutritional, Psychological and Physical Stress

Man's inhumanity to man knows no bounds when it is driven by the ideology of hatred. Two examples of this are what happened during WWII to the soldiers captured by the Japanese armies who were kept in prisoner-of-war camps for up to 44 months, and in Europe to those in the extermination or concentration camps. Canadian soldiers captured in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Veterans and the Ex POW's from England and the United States all were exposed to shocking physical brutality, to extraordinary psychological abuse and to starvation diets lacking almost all of the essential nutrients. They suffered from the classical deficiency diseases such as beri beri, scurvy, pellagra, from chronic diarrhea, from infections and of course from a very high death rate. Hans Selye, expert on the effect of stress on the body, defined the level of stress by the death rate of the animals exposed to that stress. A ten percent mortally was his measure of severe stress.

The Japanese prisoners, by the time they were released, suffered a death rate from 35 to 50%. The Canadian soldiers who were saved were very ill, had lost about one third of their body weight. When they were returned and were placed on the only nutrient supplements known 55 years ago, i.e rice bran polishings, they appeared to recover but a major proportion remained sick thereafter. I described this in this journal in 1974 and also reported that in the Hong Kong Veterans, treatment with high dose niacin reversed most of these damaging changes induced by that severe stress. I suggested that the stress had caused a vitamin dependency. I also concluded that one year in these camps had aged each prisoner about four years.[1] Four years in camp had aged them 16 years,

In my practice I also saw a few concentration camp survivors. The stress endured by these survivors was greater than that endured by the soldiers since the death rate was over 90%. The few survivors who were treated with niacin also showed the same beneficial therapeutic response.

In 1976, Alzheimer's disease was not as prevalent as today and was given much less attention. I did not think that Alzheimer's could be one of the consequences of concentration camp stress but if Alzheimer's is really a disease of aging I should have considered that as a possibility.

I am reminded of this by the *Globe and Mail* article, September 21, 2002, written by Jan Wong. She reports that in Baycrest Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged, 50% of the demented patients are Holocaust survivors. This surely is a much higher proportion than one would expect from patients of the same age range who have not been exposed to these terrible camps.

This suggests that had these Holocaust victims been given nutritional supplements, including large doses of niacin, they might have been spared the onset of their dementia. In this journal a number of authors have suggested a nutritional compo-

nent and treatment for Alzheimer's.[2] A therapeutic trial using niacin for Holocaust survivors who are not suffering from Alzheimer's must be conducted.

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