

Austin Quan Yin Newsletter

The Better Health News

Special Interest Articles:

- Folic acid protects the mother as well as the fetus
- Music helps with stroke recovery
- Bowel flora and rheumatoid
- Dysmenorrhea
- Hepatitis C and zinc
- B₁₂ and dementia
- Cinnamon and insulin

Anxiety and Meditation

A study appearing in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (1992;149:7:946-943) looked at the effect of meditation on 22 patients with anxiety or panic disorder. The patients were evaluated by self assessment forms and therapist ratings prior to and during the program. They took part in a relaxation program based in meditation. After 20

sessions, 20 of the subjects enjoyed reduction in anxiety scores. Improvement was maintained during the follow-up period. The authors felt that meditation can reduce the symptoms of panic and anxiety. The benefits experienced are when meditation is a regular practice and not used as a technique to reduce anxiety when it occurs.

Doodling and Memory

People who doodle during meetings are often accused of not paying attention. Recent research appearing in the journal *Applied Cognitive Psychology* (published online February 27, 2009) shows that they may actually retain more of what was said than non-doodlers.

The subjects were asked to listen to a two and a half minute long telephone recording that contained eight names of people who were to attend a party. Half of the subjects were asked to doodle while listening

to the recording, and half did not. The group doing the doodling retained 29% more information than the non-doodling group.

Lead researcher, Professor Jackie Andrade, of the School of Psychology at the University of Plymouth, believes that doodling helps to curtail daydreaming. Performing a simple task while listening to something boring, helps to keep people from being distracted and stay more focused on the task at hand.

Folic Acid Protects Mother as well as Fetus

Research appearing in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (January 2008, Volume 198, Issue 1) found that folic acid reduces the risk for pre-eclampsia.

We are all familiar with the research that shows folic acid to be valuable for preventing birth defects. It does even more than that to benefit both the mother and the fetus. Research appearing in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (January 2008, Volume 198, Issue 1) found that folic acid supplementation reduces the risk for pre-eclampsia. Pre-eclampsia exists when the blood pressure rises and there is excretion of protein in the urine.

Folic acid supplementation can also reduce the risk for

premature birth, according to a report presented at the 28th Annual Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine meeting. There was an observational study sponsored by the National Institute of Health. It involved 38,033 participants and found that folic acid supplementation for at least one year prior to pregnancy is linked to a 70% decrease in very early preterm deliveries (20 to 28 weeks in gestational age) and up to a 50% reduction in early preterm deliveries of 28 to 32 weeks."

Music Helps with Stroke Recovery

Research published in the journal *Brain* (3 March, 2008 131(3):866-876) found that listening to music can speed recovery from a stroke. The subjects were 60 stroke patients in Finland. They were randomly divided into three groups. One group listened to music (that they chose). One group listened to audio books, and the third group listened to neither.

The music chosen had lyrics that could be understood by the patients. Patients who listened to their favorite music for a couple hours each

day had more improvement in attention span and memory, and experienced less depression, when compared to subjects who did not listen to music.

Music helps to release dopamine, a neurotransmitter and enhances arousal of the part of the brain associated with feelings of pleasure. Dopamine increases attention, memory, alertness and speeds up information processing. Music also enhances repair to damaged areas of the brain.

Bowel Flora and Rheumatoid

Research appearing in the *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases* (1993;52:503-510) looked at the relationship between the overgrowth of bowel flora in the small intestine and rheumatoid arthritis. There were 25 subjects with positive rheumatoid factor who were compared to 23 controls; 11 of the control subjects had normal stomach HCl secretion and 12 of them were either achlorhydric (no stomach acid) or hypochlorhydric (low stomach acid) (as determined by pentagastrin stimulation). Both the controls and the rheumatoid patients were tested for small intestine bacterial overgrowth. The researchers noticed that a high percentage of the rheumatoid patients had small intestine bacterial overgrowth. Of the subjects with rheumatoid arthritis, 35% of those with normal acid secretion, and half of those with hypochlorhydra or achlorhydra, had bacterial overgrowth. None of the controls with normal acid secretion had small intestine bacterial overgrowth. Also, serum rheumatoid factor was higher in rheumatoid patients with bacterial overgrowth. The authors concluded that small intestinal bacteria overgrowth was found in great frequency in patients with RA and is associated with a high degree of disease activity.

An article appearing in the *Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology* (1995;6(101):207-

211) discusses the connection between bowel flora and arthritis. Various bacteria can cause reactive arthritis; and patients with inflammatory bowel disease often suffer from joint inflammation. According to the authors of the article, gut flora produce substances that are implicated in the arthritis associated with inflammatory bowel disease. T cells come into contact with these antigens and develop recognition and eventually become involved with joint inflammation. Research has shown vegetarian diets to be beneficial for both inflammatory bowel disease and for arthritis.

A commentary on the benefits of diet therapy on rheumatoid arthritis, appearing in *The Lancet* (1992;339:68-69) points out the patients benefit from a diet high in raw foods, while avoiding dairy and grains. The authors point out the absence of RA in prehistory, and that the differences between ancient diets and the modern diet include grains, dairy and cooking. The authors cited a study where 75% of rheumatoid arthritis patients experienced improvement utilizing such a diet. The authors of this article believe that RA is caused by bacterial peptides crossing the intestinal barrier and creating inflammation.

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Dysmenorrhea

A number of studies have shown natural therapies to be effective for women suffering with dysmenorrhea. Research appearing in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (February 2009, 15(2): 129-132) compared the effect of ginger, mefenamic acid and ibuprofen on the pain of dysmenorrhea. The subjects of the study were 150 students over the age of 18 suffering from primary dysmenorrhea. They were divided into three groups and given 250 mg of ginger rhizome powder, 250 mg of mefenamic acid or 400 mg of ibuprofen. They took the dosage four times each day for three days; beginning with the start of their menstrual period. Dysmenorrhea symptoms decreased in all groups, and there was no difference in the amount of relief experienced by the women taking the herb and the women taking drugs. Ginger was as effective as the drug therapies, and was free of side-effects.

Other research, appearing in the *Western Journal of Surgical Gynecology* (1954;62:610-611), demonstrated the value of a combination of niacin, rutin and vitamin C for alleviating dysmenorrhea symptoms. Eighty women between the ages of 15 and 44 took 100 mg of niacin two times each day, increasing the frequency of the dosage to every two or three hours when symptoms were present. About 90% of the subjects experienced relief from this treatment. A combination of 60 mg of rutin and 300 mg of vitamin C seemed to potentiate the treatment. The women experienced relief for several months after the treatment was discontinued.

Magnesium also has been shown to be useful. In the journal *Zentralbl Gynakol* (1989;111:755-760), a double-blind study was performed and over 80% of subjects receiving magnesium for six months experienced a reduction in symptoms. The group receiving the magnesium also had a reduction in prostaglandin F_{2a} (which inhibits progesterone production and may be implicated in dysmenorrhea). Other research appearing in *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology* (March 1978;21(1):139-145) suggests adding vitamin B₆ to the magnesium for improved results.

In a study appearing in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research* (April 1996;103:227-231), either thiamin or placebo was given to 556 girls between the ages of 12 and 21, all of whom suffered from dysmenorrhea. The subjects receiving 100 mg/day of thiamin over a 90 day period had very good results. Most (95%) were either completely cured or most of their pain was completely relieved.

Other studies have shown the value of spinal manipulation and dietary changes. Anyone who works in natural health care realizes that dysmenorrhea is one symptom that responds very well to natural therapies. A combination of dietary change, supplementation and hands-on therapy usually produces very gratifying results. The advantage that you have over a medical study is that you are not confined to one kind of treatment. Results from combining natural therapies are usually cumulative.

Hepatitis C and Zinc

The medical approach to hepatitis C is not very satisfactory. The antiviral drugs give spotty results at best and have serious side-effects. There are nutrients that may help with the side-effects of medical therapy, Carnitine supplementation may help prevent fatty liver caused by interferon therapy, according to research appearing in *Digestive Disease and Sciences* (Volume 53, Number 4 / April, 2008). Research appearing in

the *Journal of Nutritional Science and Vitaminology* (2007; 53(3): 213-8) indicates that taking zinc can prevent some of the damage done by interferon therapy, as well as improving response to that therapy. Other research appearing in *Biological Trace Elements Research* (1997;58:65-76) found that those with high zinc levels responded better to medical therapy.

Carnitine may help prevent fatty liver caused by interferon therapy, according to research.

B₁₂ and Cognition

Many earlier studies have linked high homocysteine levels to cognitive decline, and folic acid has some value for protecting mental capacity. It turns out that vitamin B₁₂ may be even more important.

Measuring methylmalonic acid is a way of determining a vitamin B₁₂ deficiency. Serum methylmalonic acid levels will be increased with a B₁₂ deficiency. Research appearing in the journal *Neurology* (2009; 72: 361-367) looked at the rate of cognitive decline as it relates to serum levels of vitamin B₁₂ and methylmalonic acid levels. Earlier studies have related homocysteine levels to cognitive decline, but homocysteine is not as specific a marker for B₁₂ deficiency as is methylmalonic acid.

This was a prospective study involving 516 subjects from the Chicago Health and Aging Project. The researchers linked vitamin B₁₂ status to scores on cognition tests over a period of six years (testing in year three and in year six). High serum methylmalonic acid level was associated with a faster rate of cognitive decline. Similarly, a high level of serum B₁₂ was associated with a lower rate of cognitive decline. The researchers concluded that, "Serum methylmalonic acid and vitamin B₁₂ concentrations may be the more important risk factors for cognitive decline when compared to serum homocysteine concentrations, particularly in older populations exposed to food fortification and possible supplements containing folic acid."

Healing...is not a science, but the intuitive art of wooing nature.—
WH Auden, "The Art of Healing", in Collected Poems 1967

Cinnamon and Insulin

Type 2 diabetes is a situation where the body produces plenty of insulin (actually excess insulin), it just does not respond to it. On the way to becoming diabetic, the patient goes through a condition known as insulin insensitivity. Producing too much insulin is a problem because excess insulin can cause inflammation, high cholesterol, problems losing weight and even hormonal problems including low testosterone in men and ovarian cysts in women.

Cinnamon may have an effect on insulin, according to research appearing in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2009; 89(3): 815-21). Supplementing rice pudding with three grams of cinnamon reduced postprandial blood glucose and serum insulin levels. Earlier animal research

appearing in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (2006; 25(2): 144-150) found that supplementing with cinnamon lowered blood pressure and insulin levels in spontaneously hypertensive rats.

A double-blind study that appeared in the *European Journal of Clinical Investigation* (2006; 36(5): 340-4). There were 79 subjects, averaging 63 years of age, with type 2 diabetes and being treated with oral medication to control blood sugar. Supplementation with cinnamon produced a mild reduction of fasting blood sugar (about 10%). The cinnamon did not reduce blood lipids or hemoglobin A1c levels. The affect was mild, but the dosage was small compared to the first study. The subjects were given three capsules containing 112 mg per capsule.

