A warm welcome to the Millhouse Community and other readers,
Winter is now here with shorter days and cold driving rain. I hope you have prepared for winter. Keeping warm, washing hands frequently after being in public places where others have contaminated surfaces from their colds and flu. Do supplement with Vitamin D, especially if you have avoided the summer sun by living indoors or have used protective sunscreens; Vitamin D enhances the body’s immune function and helps protect against winter respiratory infections.
Don’t forget the healing properties of turmeric which I have mentioned on numerous occasions. Curcugel, the concentrated form of turmeric, is available for purchase at 128 Reception.
The Flu Vaccine is still available and you can make an appointment with the Practice Nurses for this immunisation.

Millhouse News

Free Under 13 Year Doctor & ACC visits commence 1 July
For normal 15min consultation only. Please note: Extended consultations beyond 15min, requests for repeat medication prescription and extra procedures, like liquid nitrogen for wart removal, will all be charged an additional service fee.

Medical Student Training
Four times each year a 4th or 5th year medical student visits our practice for a month of practical learning. Thank you to the many who have willingly shared your story, and given more time than was planned, to participate in a student-learning consultation. Students report that their General Practice attachment is the most challenging and enjoyable part of their university clinical training. You are under no obligation to participate when asked to allow a student to observe or interview you during your appointment. Don’t feel guilty if you say NO as the student is prepared for this response.
Having medical students at the practice is also a positive learning experience for the medical team and a challenge to maintain high standards of care. Each practice participating in teaching is visited and approved by the University of Auckland Medical School. Students during their attachment undertake a learning assignment that benefits the practice. This month 5th year student John Sison has contributed to the newsletter by writing about the usefulness of Ginseng, a traditional Chinese herb that has been used for over 2000 years, as a tonic to improve health.

At-Risk-Individual programme (ARI)
It is nearly a year since we began enrolling patients into the new ARI – At Risk Individual - programme. As I mentioned previously ARI has been welcomed by many who have major health issues, giving an opportunity to explore improved lifestyle choices through eating nutritious meals, undertaking regular exercise, sharing life’s stresses, and accessing community and specialist support. Those continuing in the programme will again undertake the Partners in Health questionnaire and redefine their health goals with the Practice Nurse.
Practice Nurse Jacqui is on vacation at present but on return will continue to assist the many prediabetics - those with an hba1c blood test between 45 and 49 - to encourage them to adopt healthier living strategies and decrease disease risk. Learn more...

Service Fee for medical information may apply
Middlemore Hospital doctors are increasingly asking patients to follow-up their investigation results with their GP; this process may take up considerable nurse time searching electronically in hospital records. We have decided that if our nurse team spends longer than 10 minutes in this endeavour, then a service charge will apply. This will be discussed when the initial request for information is made.

Appointment Cancellation
We are still receiving late cancellation of doctor appointments where insufficient time does not allow their reallocation to other needy persons. Please give at least 2 hours’ notice if you cannot attend. We are sympathetic if exceptional circumstances prevail, but if only minutes’ notice is given, your Doctor may invoice you for the consultation. Patients who ‘Do Not Arrive’ for their appointments on more than two occasions will be charged for the consultation.

Ginseng: The Wonder Herb - by John Oliver Sison, 5th yr Medical Student
Ginseng is a slowly-growing perennial herb, belonging to the genus Panax of the plant family “Araliaceae”. It is typically found in cooler climates, such as in North America and East Asia. It is characterised by the presence of ginsenosides and gintonin.
There are two main types of ginseng: Asian or Korean ginseng (Panax ginseng) and American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius). Studies have found that these have different benefits - American ginseng provides fewer benefits compared with the Asian variety.
Dried ginseng root has a traditional reputation to lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels, protect against stress, act as a tonic boosting energy levels, and contribute to relaxation. Ginseng which is steamed before drying is called red ginseng, as opposed to the unprocessed white ginseng. The steaming process is believed to increase its bioactivity, and when red ginseng is treated with micro-organisms and enzymes to produce fermentation, it becomes even more easily absorbed and healthful. The active medicinal components are called saponins or ginsenosides. These compounds act on the gastrointestinal tract to promote better gut function and, aided by micro-organisms, lead to improved intestinal absorption and decreased toxicity. Fermenting red ginseng transforms the ginsenosides to more potent forms, such as Compound K, which is effective in boosting the immune system and fighting against tumour cells. In addition, fermentation with lactic acid bacteria helps in killing tumour cells, reducing inflammation and preventing allergic reactions.

**Ginseng and Diabetes:**
In recent years studies have shown the blood sugar and lipid-lowering effects of Ginseng. In 2014 a double-blind randomised control trial was published on 42 patients, with impaired fasting glucose or type-2 diabetes, who were given Korean red ginseng supplementation for four weeks. The study demonstrated that those on ginseng had a significant reduction in glucose levels, and had increased insulin levels after meals compared with those not supplemented. This suggested that fermented red ginseng promoted insulin release in the pancreas, improving blood sugar levels. Similar results were found in a 12 week clinical trial of 60 patients given ginseng where blood sugar levels after meals improved. In other longer studies ginseng supplementation has led to improvement in blood lipids with decreased triglyceride (white fat) and increased good HDL cholesterol levels.

**Ginseng and the brain:**
Like turmeric, ginseng has an effect on cognitive–thinking function and appears to prevent brain damage when taken long-term. The active ginsenosides improve brain function by binding to oestrogen receptors and/or growth receptors. This can decrease the inflammatory pathways in the brain's limbic-motivation and emotional-centres that contribute to depression. Studies have reported that the ginsenosides, such as Rg1, Rb1, and Rg3, decrease brain cell death (apoptosis) and reduce neuronal toxicity associated with excessive (stress) glucocorticoid activity. This decreases the harmful inflammation that occurs in the brain cells leading to depression. Other studies have also shown ginseng is neuro-protective on brain cells. A study using single doses of 200mg, 400mg, and 600mg daily of Panax ginseng enhanced memory in 20 healthy young adults. Another recent trial showed that Panax ginseng powder taken daily for 12 weeks gradually improved patients with probable Alzheimer’s disease symptoms. Animal models also show behavioural and neuro-pathological improvements with ginsenosides, and compound K. The proposed mechanism for ginseng’s effectiveness is that by promoting neuronal cell growth (neurogenesis) and preventing inflammation, development of dementia and depression is prevented.

**Ginseng and the heart:**
Increasing evidence suggest positive effects of ginseng on cardiovascular diseases. Studies involving rats showed that ginseng helps prevent heart enlargement, which is a common feature in heart failure and other heart diseases. This was again due to the active ginsenosides. Other scientific studies also showed its potential effects in adjusting blood pressure, and improving heart and blood vessel function.

**Other uses:** Ginseng has been long used for the treatment of impotence. In a study published in the American Journal of Urology, 45 men with erectile dysfunction who received Red Ginseng 900mg, three times a day for eight weeks, experienced improvement in their symptoms. Studies also suggest that ginseng improves mood and physical endurance and may be useful as an adjunct treatment in cancer and hepatitis C, and for improving liver function and menopausal symptoms.

Keep warm, avoid the cold and damp and take turmeric daily.

Yours in good health

Dr Richard J Coleman

**Selected References:**