



# MILLHOUSE INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL CENTRE

PARTNERING IN HEALTH AND HEALING

**NOVEMBER 2017**

A warm welcome to the Millhouse Community and to other readers.

The year is flying by and Xmas will soon be here.

The warming weather interspersed with rain showers has been ideal for vegetable gardeners like myself. I find this a relaxing pastime digging over the soil and breaking up the large earth clods by hand as I till the ground before planting. It's probably cheaper to buy vegetables in the supermarket but there is something special about harvesting freshly organic grown 'Little Gem' lettuces, spring onions and radishes at present.



Each week I encounter someone who is struggling with the pressures of work and financial stress. Developing relaxing pastimes like gardening, listening to music or playing an instrument, reading,

exercising regularly and sleeping soundly replenishes our energy, enabling us to cope better with the frenetic lives we lead.

## MILLHOUSE NEWS

### Practice Nurses

**Congratulations to Leonie** who passed her nurse prescribing exams and is now able to consult and write prescriptions for patients with common general practice illnesses.

**Congratulations to Michael**, whom many of you will have met on reception, who has finished his nursing qualifications and will soon commence practice at Millhouse.

### Practice Changes

I mentioned in the last newsletter we recently appointed Noreen Cooper as Financial Manager and Lisa Leat to the position of Human Resources Manager.

### Overdue Accounts

A more proactive approach in dealing with overdue accounts has been recommended by the new team. We will continue to waive the monthly fee for recently overdue accounts, if this is paid promptly, but we will be more thorough in following-up outstanding accounts where frequent reminders have been sent.

*In this newsletter Dr Ric writes about the importance of*

## BUGS IN OUR GUT AND STRESS

### Our Microorganism Fingerprint

Last Saturday I visited the same Border Collie Kennels we had been to 12 years ago to select a puppy (photo next page) to replace our elderly faithful friend Spud who died recently from cancer. I watched mother feed her pups and instinctively lick them over and remove any puppy poop from the kennel floor. I knew that mother's instinctual action to keep the pup and kennel environment clean also enhanced her breast milk immune proteins which give added protection to the puppy against disease.

In the [2014 newsletters](#) (July, October & November online) I began a discussion on the importance of bugs that live in our gastrointestinal tract. I mentioned in the last weeks of pregnancy how the human vagina becomes enriched in glycogen stimulating protective lactobacilli that prevent noxious bacteria ascending the vagina, and also smother the baby with a protective coat during delivery. At the same time other protective communities of lactic acid-producing microbes (bifidobacteria), which are transported by white cells from mother's gut, develop deep in the mother's nipples and pass out in the breast milk as a starter culture for the infant gut. Breast milk contains up to two hundred specific sugars, called oligosaccharides, that the baby cannot digest, which provide food for the multiplying bifidobacteria. Over the next three years as the baby is exposed to its external environment, it develops a stable community of gut microorganisms.

### HOLIDAY CLINIC OPENING HOURS

During the Christmas-New Year period the clinic will BE CLOSED on the PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

**EASTCARE A&E** is available at all times for urgent care.

**Between the holiday breaks** we will be open from 9.00am to 5.00pm, only at 128 MILLHOUSE. Bookings can still be made on line.

**Osteopath Ghassan** will continue to see his patients at 130 MILLHOUSE.

## MOVEMBER is MEN'S HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Men die on the average six years earlier than women. It doesn't have to be like that. Men here are some things you can do to improve your health - *courtesy of the Movember Foundation website.*

- **Make MAN-TIME** to stay connected regularly with your mates.

**'70% of men say their friends can rely on them for support, but only 48% say that they rely on their friends. In other words: we're here for our mates, but worried about asking for help for ourselves. Reaching out is crucial.'**

- **MEN - have open CONVERSATIONS** - you don't need to be an expert or have to be the sole solution, but being there for someone, listening & giving you time can be lifesaving.
- **MEN - know the NUMBERS** - at age 50 talk to your doctor about having a PSA-prostate-cancer check. If you are of African or Caribbean descent or have a father or brother who has had prostate cancer have this conversation at 45. Know your numbers, know your risk and talk to your doctor.

*Remember also to have your blood pressure taken and request a cholesterol & diabetes blood check.*

- **MEN - know your NUTS** - get to know your testicles, examine them regularly and see your doctor if it doesn't feel right.
- **MEN - MOVE MORE** - add more activity to your day that you enjoy doing - *walking to a meeting - park further away from the train station - get off the bus one to two stops sooner - use the stairs instead of the lift - cycle to work instead of driving.*



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This *bacterial fingerprint* will remain relatively constant during life unless assaulted by antibiotics, gastrointestinal infections, poor diet and stress. When the bacterial fingerprint is adversely changed it may predispose to the development of obesity, autoimmune disease and other illnesses.

### The Brain-Gut Connection

The gut is the largest and most complex organ in the body even rivalling the brain. It has its own *enteric* nervous system which contains the majority of the body's defense system, with more resident cells than the immune cells circulating in the blood and bone marrow. The gut also has its own endocrine system manufacturing more than 20 hormones, more than all other glandular systems in the body, and produces many other substances. The gut is intimately connected to the brain by a

bidirectional nerve communication (*vagus nerve*), and the blood which allows the gut hormones and many other cell signaling molecules to travel and influence brain function.

The last decade has seen an exponential growth in the knowledge of the bacteria, [archaea](#) (archaea is not a bacteria but are single cell microorganisms with no nucleus or organelles), fungi and viruses that live in the gastrointestinal tract. We now refer to them as the *gut microbiota*. The gut microbiota assist in digestion, the control of body energy, the detoxifying and processing of noxious chemicals, the control of the immune system and slowing the growth of dangerous pathogenic organisms. Disturbances in the gut microbiota are associated with a variety of diseases including inflammatory bowel disease, antibiotic-associated diarrhoea and asthma, and may also play a role in autism spectrum disorders and neurodegenerative brain disorders like Parkinson's and even Alzheimer disease.

### Mind-Gut Effects

Adverse experiences in earlier childhood can predispose to major illness later in life. These include stress-sensitive disorders like depression & anxiety, and possibly the gastrointestinal pain syndromes like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Dr Emeran Mayer, in a [recently released book](#),<sup>i</sup> tells of his animal studies where stressed mother rats were separated from their babies for 3 hours each day. The pups later showed many IBS features. Rats that had experienced a deprived childhood also had the same symptoms, exhibiting more anxiety and sensitive intestines, and when stressed excreted smaller stool pellets, the rat equivalent of diarrhea.

Mayer's research group went on to demonstrate, using brain imaging techniques, that one hundred healthy adults (*no depression, anxiety or gut symptoms*) who had experienced major stress before the age of 18 (*neglect, verbal-emotional-physical abuse, death, divorce or other serious event*) had altered brain structures and changed neural activity in their brain danger-signal network. Early life experience appeared to rewire the brain, in ways which can persist for a life time even in apparent healthy people, and appear to predispose to a higher risk of stress-sensitive disorders and IBS.

### Adverse childhood events alter gut microbiota and brain

This year Mayer's team released [findings](#)<sup>ii</sup> on a study of 29 adults with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), compared with 23 normal adults, who were screened for adverse early life events, gut stool microbiota DNA analysis and brain changes. They found that within the IBS adults, a subgroup who had experienced early life trauma (as mentioned above) were found to have changes in their gut microorganisms and in their brain's sensory processing area where messages are received from the body. This suggests that childhood trauma may lead to lifelong alteration of the gut microbiota which in turn feed back to the brain, altering the sensitivity to gut stimulation, a hallmark of IBS.

Mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy (proactive counselling) can improve neural networking but in future we will need to pay more attention to having a healthy gut microbiota.

**Eat Food that looks like Food**, mindfully, and enjoy the pleasures of food and social aspects of eating this Christmas and in 2018.

Yours in good health

Dr Richard J Coleman

### GUIDELINES FOR EATING

#### • EAT FOOD that looks like FOOD

Whole, Fresh, Unprocessed, No additives or preservatives. Prefer organically-grown food and consider growing your own.

(Prefer fibre-rich, highly coloured fresh vegetables & fruits and whole grains)

#### • MAXIMISE microbial diversity by the regular intake of prebiotic foods that feed & stimulate healthy bugs to grow.

(Especially garlic, leeks, onions, asparagus, chicory root, Jerusalem artichoke, dandelion greens, wheat bran & other resistant starches)

AND eat fermented foods & probiotics.

(Especially pickled vegetables, fermented bean paste - such as tempeh and miso - kefir, buttermilk, kimchi, sauerkraut, soy sauce & natural yogurts)

#### • REDUCE the inflammatory potential of the gut microbiota BY AVOIDING processed foods, sugar drinks & foods, fruit juices, refined white foods & EAT LESS animal fat.

#### • EAT smaller servings at meal times.

#### • AVOID eating when stressed, angry or sad.

#### • EAT slowly and mindfully

#### • BREASTFEED paying attention to the moment

#### • ENJOY the secret pleasures and social aspects of food

#### • LISTEN to your GUT FEELINGS

<sup>i</sup> Mayer, Emeran. The Mind-Gut Connection: How the Hidden Conversation Within Our Bodies Impacts Our Mood and Overall Health (Harper, 2016)

<sup>ii</sup> Mayer E et al. Differences in gut microbial composition correlate with regional brain volume in irritable bowel disease. *Microbiome* (2017) 5:49