

Hi to everyone in the Millhouse Medical Centre community

In recent newsletters I have discussed how the food we eat influences our disease risk, and that quality nutrition extends longevity. This month I want to suggest our '**mindset**' may be more important than physical factors in contributing to a state of wellness.



Psychologist Becca Levy¹ and her colleagues in 1975 asked 650 people in Oxford, Ohio to respond to positive and negative statements about ageing, notions such as, 'Things keep getting worse as I get older', 'As you get older, you are less useful' and 'I am as happy now as I was when I was younger'. The respondents were scored as to whether they held a positive or negative attitude to their health. Twenty years later the researchers reviewed the data and found that those who viewed aging **positively lived on average seven and a half years longer. A 'positive attitude' appeared to have a greater affect on longevity** than lowering cholesterol and blood pressure (extends life four years), stopping smoking, maintaining weight and exercising (these extend life between 1-3 years).

Professor Martin Seligman proposed a theory of learned helplessness after studying experimental animals that were conditioned with electric shocks without control of their circumstances. The same conditioned animals continued to exhibit **learned helplessness**, even when they were placed in a new situation where they could escape from negative stimuli. Seligman suggests that learned helplessness has similarities to clinical depression and that mental illness may be related to loss of control over our circumstances.

In 1946 Seligman and his colleagues² questioned twenty-five year old Harvard students to determine whether they held positive or pessimistic views of life.

Over the next thirty-five years the researchers reviewed their medical records and found that all individuals had the same degree of health until forty-five but between forty-five and sixty the **pessimistic participants had more illness.**



Psychologist Sheldon Cohen³ assessed the emotional wellbeing of subjects who gave permission to be quarantined and exposed to the cold virus. He found that those who were **happier had less colds and flu.** Researchers have also shown that having an **optimistic attitude accelerates recovery** after coronary artery bypass surgery⁴.

This year I read social psychologist Ellen Langer's new book 'Counterclockwise'⁵ in which she proposes that our attitudes and the way we live may reverse the aging process.

In the 1970's Langer with Judith Rudin encouraged a group of frail elderly nursing home residents to have greater control over their living situation. She encouraged them to make more decisions for themselves, including when to receive visitors and going to movies. As well as this she gave each a pot-plant to care for which they could place anywhere in their room. A second control group of residents were given no instructions on living but received a house plant and were told that the nursing staff would care for it. Eighteen months later on psychometric testing the first group were found to be more cheerful, active and alert, and suffered less than half the number of deaths compared to the control group.



Later Langer and her students conducted an experiment where two groups of elderly volunteer males in their seventies and eighties were asked to live for one week in a 'recreated world' of twenty years earlier at an old monastery. The 'nifty fifties' environment was replicated using period music, television, food, language and dress and the men were asked to dress in old clothes and bring books and magazine from that time. Langer wondered if living and experiencing an earlier mindset would be reflected in a younger biological age for each individual.

The first group were told they would be living in the past, to write a short autobiography as though they were living in 1959 and to bring photographs when they were younger. The second group, who visited a week later, was told they would be reminiscing about the past, to

write their autobiography from a current perspective and bring recent photographs of themselves. All received physical and psychological tests before and after the study period.

What happened? **All participants exhibited a change in behaviour.** By the second day the men were actively involved in serving meals and cleaning up, even though many were extremely dependent on relatives prior to coming. Both groups engaged in lively discussion and showed improvement in memory and hearing. They all gained on average three pounds in weight, their grip strength increased significantly and the parameters for aging showed **they had become younger.**

The first group showed **greater flexibility and manual dexterity** and their **intelligence testing scores had improved** by 63% compared to 44% in the second group. They also had **improvement in height, weight, gait and posture.**

The take-home message. Take care of your plants. Be young at heart, optimistic and have a positive attitude seeing the 'best in all situations'. Don't let others define or manipulate your life, especially as you become older. Take control over your circumstances. Live as though you were youthful and make connections with younger people.

MILLHOUSE MEDICAL CENTRE NEWS

130 Millhouse Drive renovations are underway and the parking area is nearly completed. The renovations have been a déjà vu experience, reminding me of our beginnings in 1994 when I moved from rural practice to join Dr Mark Denekamp at the Millhouse Medical Centre. After a number of years Mark pursued his interests in appearance medicine and opened the Springdale Clinic in Chapel Road. Mark sold to Dr Else, who has now returned to good health and will resume working fulltime when the new building opens.

MILLHOUSE INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL CENTRE, yes a name change and a deliberate focus on using a comprehensive approach to wellness and the treatment of disease. Technological medicine is lifesaving in the acute illness but less effective with chronic disease. The integration of western medicine, eating excellent food, consuming spices, using appropriate nutrients & herbal remedies, performing regular exercise, applying physical therapies, enjoying rest & recreation and making time for mindfulness & prayer bring the best in health.

130 Millhouse will allow patients to **receive skilled acupuncture** from **Aaran Church**, **counseling & stress management** from **Barbara Wright**, and **skin care and cosmetic therapy** from **Solani Mehendale**.

Dr Scott will make use of his **surgical expertise** in the new operating area and **Dr Else** will once again be resident **fulltime contributing her vast medical experience and caring concern.**

The additional meeting space will allow **group education** on such things as diabetes, asthma, stress reduction, natural hormone replacement.

Dr Chris – a couple of weekends ago I caught up with Christine who was back to her normal self. Relaxed and more energetic, she informed me she has had no **further recurrence** of her melanoma. This is great news. I reminded her with the new facility there will always be space for her to resume medical practice. Thank you to all who have prayed for her during this last year.

Webpage Resources. There are now a number of information sheets on site including the Stone Age diet, Low Salicylate diet, Low Amine diet, Dairy Free diet, Specific Carbohydrate diet, Cancer diet, Relaxation and Breathing. More will be added as time permits.

Yours in good health

Dr Ric Coleman

¹ B Levy et al. Longevity increased by positive self perception of aging. J Personality and Social Psychology 83, 2 (2002) p261-70

² C Peterson et al. Pessimistic explanatory lifestyle as a risk factor for illness. J Personality & Social Psychology. 55 (1988) p23-27

³ S Cohen et al. Emotional style and susceptibility to the common cold. Psychosomatic Medicine 65,4 (2003) p652-57

⁴ M Scheier et al. Dispositional optimism and recovery form coronary artery surgery. J Personality & Social Psychology 57,6 (1989) P 1024-40

⁵ E Langer. Counter Clockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility. Ballantine Books, 2009.