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Practicing in Boca Raton and the Surrounding Community Since 1979

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Coffee as a Dementia Deterrent

Peer reviewed scientific studies have revealed that moderate amounts of coffee and tea are healthy. The definitive studies were performed using data from the British National Health Service UK BioBank and were published by researcher Kelsey R Sewell, PhD.

Dr. Sewell recently presented new data at the Alzheimer's International Conference. She noted that in using epidemiologic and observational studies, coffee and tea seem to have a beneficial effect on "... stroke, heart failure, cancers, diabetes, and Parkinson's Disease." She also noted that coffee may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's Disease.

Her current paper looked at whether there is a quantity of coffee and tea that negatively affects cognitive function. Their study looked at almost 8,500 adults age 60 or older with normal cognitive functions. They were divided into groups of coffee drinkers, tea drinkers and non-coffee non tea drinkers. They were further divided into groups based on how much coffee and tea they consumed per day. Risk factors for developing cerebrovascular disease, cardiovascular disease were noted as were Body Mass Index, lipid Levels and presence of genetic markers associated with increased risk of developing dementia. The participants then underwent neuropsychological evaluation at baseline and two more times over a period of almost nine years.

The results clearly showed a decline in cognitive function at a higher rate in those individuals who consumed more than three cups of coffee per day. They examined a particular parameter called "fluid intelligence". Tea drinkers showed a different pattern with moderate to high tea consumers having a slower decline in cognitive intelligence than non-tea drinkers.

The study was an observational study. It did not examine the participants coffee and tea habits when they were younger than 60 years old. The study did not note smoking history and habits.

The results of the study indicate a need for a randomized controlled study looking into coffee and tea consumption and cognitive function. Once again, it did hint at the fact that moderate consumption of coffee and tea is probably healthy.

Strep Throat Evaluation Has New Guidelines

As we enter fall and winter, we expect to see an increase in upper respiratory infections with sore throat (pharyngitis), coryza (runny nose), sinus congestion, cough, fever, malaise, aches and pains. Most adult sore throats are caused by viruses, not bacteria, so they are treated with supportive care for symptom relief rather than with antibiotics. Antibiotics do not work to treat viral sore throats!

Strep throats are usually seen in young children, their siblings, parents, teachers, and care givers of young children. Prior to the development of antibiotics, the sore throat was accompanied by swollen glands in the anterior portion of the neck, a large exudate on the throat and tonsils and fever. The infected individuals' body produced antibodies to combat the infection and often these antibodies and the host immune response were

responsible for the development of complications such as post streptococcal glomerulonephritis and rheumatic fever.

With the introduction of antibiotics, the appearance of the streptococcal sore throat changed. It often mimicked the common viral sore throats seen in older children and adults. To identify which were which we needed to swab the throat, plate it on culture tubes, make a slide and view it on the microscope and then regrow it on culture medium while the organism was exposed to different antibiotic options. Often by the time the results were available the patient had recovered. Quick strep detection assays were developed to allow physicians to quickly (within minutes) identify bacterial strep throats from viral illnesses which did not require antibiotic treatment.

Since the appearances of the two infections were now so similar do you Quick Assay every sore throat? To clarify the issue, researchers have now developed scoring systems to help differentiate who needs a strep test when presenting with a sore throat and who does not. These scoring systems are designed for children aged 3-14 and their caregivers. One point is assigned for swelling of the tonsils or the presence of an exudate. One point is awarded for swelling on the neck anterior cervical lymph nodes. One point is awarded for fever and another for the absence of a cough. If the patient is 45 years old or older, a point is subtracted. Scores of 0-1 do not require strep testing or antibiotic use. A score of two suggests doing a quick strep assay prior to treating. Scores of 3-5 allow you to treat empirically but get a swab and culture prior to beginning treatment.

The goal is simply to save money on testing. Using the scoring system adds time and documentation to the already overwhelmed primary care office. The tool is there if you want it and need it. Frequently when you tell your patient over 45 years old that they do not need an antibiotic they may very well respond with “I know my body better than anyone” and they will doctor shop or urgent care shop until they get what they want.

Trust your physician’s education, experience, expertise and judgment. Their treatment recommendations are based on their findings and are in your best interest.

Walking May Slow Progression of Parkinson’s Disease

Physical activity and exercise have been shown to slow the progression of neurological effects of Parkinson’s Disease. With that in mind, researchers at the Massachusetts General Hospital evaluated the effects of walking on cognitive impairment in individuals enrolled in *Harvard’s Aging Brain Study*. Wai-Ying Wendy Yau, MD and Jasmeer Chhatwal, MD, PhD published an article in *Nature Medicine* correlating daily steps walked with a decline in progression of cognitive difficulties.

Their study looked at 296 seniors with an average age of 72 years. They all had elevated brain amyloid as seen on PET scan and all were cognitively intact in 2010. They were followed through 2025 and reassessed annually.

Walking 3,000 – 5,000 steps per day delayed the expected decline in cognitive function by about three years. Those walking 5,000-7,500 steps per day delayed symptoms by seven years. These are modest amounts of activity.

With the cost of infusions for removal of amyloid and tau protein from the brain being astronomical, and accompanied by significant risks, lacing up your walking shoes and moving seems like a wonderful idea.

Try the Mediterranean Diet for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

I have suffered from irritable bowel syndrome since I attended medical school in my mid-twenties. Physicians have sent me for upper GI x-ray series, small intestinal x-ray series, flexible sigmoidoscopies, and colonoscopies. I have been placed on a low Fodmap diet, a low lactose diet and a low gluten free diet – yet I remain symptomatic.

The bloating shows up unexpectedly followed by queasiness and cramps. These symptoms are accompanied by an overwhelming feeling of fatigue which even rest and sleep do not improve.

Next comes the rectal urgency with a rush to the toilet with explosive gas and bowel movements. The stool starts out formed and solid and over the next four or five hours there are three or more return trips to the bathroom for progressively looser stool. When it gets mustard colored, it is accompanied by rectal burning because those are bile salts propelled quickly by rapid transit from the small intestine to the rectum and they are irritating. Eventually it stops with a final urge to void which signals the end.

I have tried all the recommended medications. Metamucil and fiber did not help. Combidiol, Bentyl, Donnatal all left me with dry mouth and fatigue feeling worse than the disease did. A few years back I changed my diet, eating more salads with nuts and vinegar and oil. I added more fresh grilled fish, grilled chicken, less bread, and less soft cheese. I read about the Mediterranean diet and tried it. The result was not perfect but a vast improvement in symptoms.

A recent study out of the United Kingdom supported my findings. Sixty-two percent of IBS patients placed on a traditional Mediterranean diet achieved significant symptom relief. The study was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and the authors including Imran Aziiz, MD, MBChB from the University of Sheffield in England, believe it can be used as a first line therapy for IBS.

There is no perfect cure for IBS, which is probably several different entities lumped into one category. The Mediterranean Diet eases its symptoms.

Melatonin, Sleep and Heart Failure

Restful and fulfilling sleep at night is a goal we all strive to achieve. As we age it becomes much more difficult to initiate sleep, fall asleep and stay asleep. For many years now, physicians have been trying different medications to help patients get a restful night's sleep. It seems every time a new medication arrives and is introduced, we find that the medication results in patients suffering more falls and accidents from ambulating or driving a vehicle, not realizing they are still under the influence of the medication. In noticeably short order, that medication appears in the book "Best Pills Worst Pills" under the worst pills designation. The problem is that when patients do not sleep restfully and effectively and are groggy from lack of sleep, they are more likely to suffer a fall or an auto accident as well.

As a physician, if I do not prescribe medication for sleep my patients are likely to purchase over the counter sleep aides. Most of these contain diphenhydramine, a Benadryl type medication. As an over-the-counter medication the product is deemed to be a food, not a drug. There is no inspection of the production facility. There is no critical evaluation of the product. There is no guarantee that what is listed on the label is the product in the package. There is no guarantee that there are no additional items in the bottle or package which are not listed on the label.

Melatonin is supposed to be a safe alternative supplement to promote sleep which is sold on the over-the-counter nonprescription market. It comes in multiple dosages and in multiple forms from pills to gummies. Its mechanism of action involves reducing the temperature in a portion of the brain known as the hypothalamus involved in sleep induction. Consumers are advised to take it 30 minutes prior to hoping to fall asleep.

Most advertising suggests it is innocuous with minimal, if any, adverse effects and or drug drug interactions. Initial studies of the effects of melatonin on patients with heart failure indicated that it was helpful.

A new observational study questions that conclusion. E. Nnadi, MD from the Internal Medicine Department at SUNY Downstate in Brooklyn, New York looked at 130,828 adults (61% females with an average age 55.7) with a diagnosis of insomnia. Half received a placebo and half received melatonin for at least 12 months. They were followed for five years.

The melatonin group was more likely to develop heart failure and be hospitalized compared to the control group. Their mortality doubled. The researchers were quite clear and adamant that their results did not show a cause and effect. They made it clear that further studies need to be performed to answer the question of whether melatonin had any effect on these patients' cardiac function and survival. Once again it leads us to remember that there is no such thing as a "free lunch".

Boca Raton Now Boasts Concierge MRI Centers and ER Facilities

The concept of concierge medical care in Boca Raton began over 25 years ago designed by innovators Robert Colton MD and Bernard Kaminetsky MD who with a private investor started MDVIP. Their idea was to care well for a small group of patients giving them more time, greater availability and advocacy. Their concept called for MDVIP to convert other willing practices to a concierge model with MDVIP being compensated for managing the change in practice. Their success has resulted in the Boca Raton/Delray Beach area hosting more concierge internal medicine and family medicine practices than most large metropolitan areas.

As a logical spinoff of concierge internal medicine practices locally, new concierge medical services have arrived. Prenuvo is a concierge Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) facility located in the Mizner Park center which uses magnetic energy to perform total body scans. They are searching for small undetected tumors and growths, abnormal blood vessels with previously unknown weaknesses or atherosclerosis. Their scans are purely investigative to detect problems early. The images are created with magnetic forces avoiding the x-irradiation used in CT scans for the same purpose. A single CT scan exposes patients to about the radiation equivalent of two hundred chest x rays. X-irradiation does have the potential to cause blood dyscrasias which the MRI does not. The imaging costs about \$2,400 with a discount given to members of participating concierge medical practices.

In the past I was not in favor of healthy individuals having a CT total body scan because of the large radiation exposure. MRIs avoid this. In the near future, they plan to offer brain volume scans and body composition scans. If you are interested give us a call or Prenuvo directly. I emphasize, these scans are for screening only. This is not an imaging center with tests for following known treated diseases.

We all detest feeling sick and waiting for hours in an emergency room. Sollis Health acted on this problem by opening a full-service members only emergency room in midtown Manhattan. It is a fully equipped medical and surgical ER staffed by board certified emergency physicians. They too have expanded to Boca Raton with an urgent care center for members at 1905 W. Clintmoore Road. If by chance your illness requires hospitalization, you will need to be transferred to either Baptist Health Boca Raton Hospital or Delray Medical Center.

We Are Killing Our Pets with Our Topical Dermatologic Medications

Nicole Pace, MD, assistant professor of Dermatology at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, presented a paper in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* suggesting that our pet dogs and cats are becoming ill and dying at an alarming rate from sampling our topical dermatological medications. She examined 152 incidences of pet poisonings (87 dogs and 64 cats) who became ill from Vitamin D products in 37% of the cases, 5-Fluorouracil in 26.5% of the cases, Minoxidil in 18.5% of the cases and estrogen in 14.8%.

Animals who ingested these products experienced vomiting (44%), lethargy (36.2%), arrhythmias (28.9%), and seizures in 17.1%. A staggering 24.3% died.

The dogs exposed to Vitamin D products died 56.3% of the time and 5-FU 63% of the time. The journal article and research were initiated after two of Dr Pace's patients complained about losing their beloved pets to ingestion of a dermatologic topical product. The dermatologists had never considered including teaching and counseling about protecting your pets as part of their explanation of the risks and benefits of prescribing these

medications for skin conditions. Pace feels that asking a patient if they have a pet should be part of the history taking session when one prescribes these medications.

Clearly patients need to keep these products closed and away from their pets. After applying them to their skin, they recommend hand washing and covering the area until it completely dries before allowing your pet to be near that part of your skin. Small animals are especially vulnerable to lesser amounts of these topical products.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year

As the holiday season has begun, and the new year is just around the corner, my staff and I wish you and your loved ones a kind, loving, healthy and wonderful holiday period. We also wish all of you a New Year that is filled with joy, peace, prosperity and good health.

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