

# The greening of medicine (part 3)

By RONALD D. WHITMONT, M.D.

For over 200 years, homeopaths have routinely utilized extremely small amounts of medicines in their treatments.

This clinical experience should offer sobering advice since it suggests that the significantly larger and continually persistent amounts of allopathic pharmaceutical waste in the environment is much more likely to have significant health effects over time.

Failure to recognize the importance of this form of pollution could prove to be very serious for many species, including man.

As individuals ultimately responsible for our own health, the choices that we make as a group and the system of health care that we choose to embrace will have profound effects on future generations through potential environmental accumulation.

The health choices that we make today will definitely impact future generations if these agents continue to be produced, consumed, and excreted at their current rates.

So far, the allopathic medical profession has chosen to ignore the implications and long-term effects of these treatments. The attitude that the body and the environment are isolated, non-interacting systems is fatally flawed. Allopathic medicines are building up in our water supplies and reaching toxic levels that will affect all of us whether or not we



WATER TREATMENT PLANT: Allopathic medicines are building up in our water supplies. MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES

choose to consume them. Several medical organizations have begun to take up the call to "green" the practice of medicine and to reduce these toxic exposures, but change will only be possible if

people collectively expresses their concern and outrage and choose alternatives to the medical-pharmaceutical industry.

We know that pharmaceutical compounds are biologically active

and that they are accumulating in our water supplies. We can be sure that they can and do affect us. Therefore, we need to take steps to deal with this problem now. These steps should include: A strong message to

the medical-pharmaceutical industry that irresponsible production of environmentally toxic medications will not be tolerated.

Insistence that pharmaceutical firms strive to reduce the persistence,

bioaccumulation, and toxicity (PBT) of all medications that are developed, manufactured, and marketed.

- Reduced reliance on all forms of prescription and nonprescription medications.
- Responsible recycling of all unused medications (instead of flushing them down the toilet and into the water table).
- Improvement in wastewater treatment methods to help destroy these agents before they are released into the environment.
- Design and development of more environmentally friendly "green drugs," which rapidly biodegrade into harmless compounds.
- Utilization of more natural therapies, including homeopathy and herbal medicine, as first-line treatments whenever possible.

Toxic pollution of the environment with pharmaceutical compounds is a preventable ecological disaster. The health of the environment and of future generations is at stake.

Consider the final destination of these drugs before swallowing your next prescription or nonprescription medication.

Dr. Whitmont is a classical homeopathic physician practicing in Rhinebeck, N.Y., and New York City. His website is Homeopathicmd.com.

## Food companies and trans fats

By DR. JOHN BRIFFA

Common sense dictates that fats found naturally in the diet that we've been eating for hundreds of thousands of years are unlikely to be detrimental to health.

For instance, saturated fat (a primal foodstuff if there ever was one) turns out not to have the heart-stopping properties we've been warned about for decades. Some naturally occurring fats such as omega-3 and monounsaturated fats appear to have health-giving properties.

One class of fats I recommend that people avoid is industrially produced trans fatty acids, a byproduct of partially hydrogenated fats.

These fats are unknown in nature and have only made their way into our mouths since the processing of vegetable oils. The hydrogenation of fats allows vegetable oils, such as sunflower and safflower oil, to be solidified, which is obviously critical in the manufacturing of solid fats such as margarine. The other benefit of

hydrogenation is that it makes fats less liable to turn rancid, which extends their shelf life.

The polyunsaturated fats that are the raw material for industrially produced, partially hydrogenated and trans fats are kinked and even coiled in shape. This physical form of fats is referred to as "cis" (pronounced "sis") configuration. However, the processing of these fats not only adds hydrogen but also can cause cis fats to straighten out, forming the trans configuration.

As expected, research suggests that industrially produced trans fats have the potential for a wide range of unwanted health effects.

Trans fats have been linked to adverse effects on heart health. For instance, in one study published in the August 2000 European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, individuals who had suffered a heart attack were found to have significantly higher levels of trans fats in their bodies compared to healthy individuals.

Those with the highest concentrations of trans fat were found to be, on

average, more than 2 1/2 times more likely to suffer from a heart attack than those with the lowest levels.

A number of other studies also support the concept that trans fats are bad for the heart. Of four studies that have examined this potential association over time, three found that consuming just 2 percent of our calories from trans fat is associated with an increased risk of heart disease of from 28 to 93 percent.

These findings were published in July 1996 by Harvard Medical School in the British Medical Journal, November 1997, in the New England Journal of Medicine, and a Netherlands study in the Lancet in March 2001.

Trans fats seem to have the ability to impair the function of insulin, which would be expected to increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. This concern was verified in studies published in Diabetes Care in May 1997 and in January 1999 in the journal Metabolism.

Other research published in the American Journal of Clinical

Nutrition in June 2001 has found that in women, a higher intake of trans fat is associated with an increased risk of diabetes.

The evidence suggests, as we would expect from primal theory, that industrially produced trans fats are thoroughly unhealthy.

In the U.K., we consume an average of about 2.5-3.0 grams of trans fats per person each day, according to research published in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition in February 1999. This may not sound like much, but studies show that even very small amounts of these fats are associated with an increased risk of disease.

In 2002, the U.S. Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine published a report on the role of trans fats on health and made recommendations regarding safe levels of intake. In the summary of this report, its authors suggest the "tolerable upper-intake level of zero."

The adverse effects of trans fats and the benefits of removing them from the diet was recently highlighted in



TRANS FATS: Doughnuts are a common source of trans fats. PHOTOS.COM

an editorial published in April in the British Medical Journal. In response to this article, a letter was published on June 16 in the BMJ:

"In many jurisdictions it is unlawful to render food injurious to health. For example, the U.K. Food Safety Act, Section 7, states: "Rendering food injurious to health: (1) Any person who renders any food injurious to health by means of any of the following operations, namely—(a) adding any article or substance to the food; (b) using any article or substance as an ingredient in the preparation of the food; ...

"(2) In determining ... whether any food is injurious to health, regard shall be had—(a) not only to the probable effect of that food on the health of

a person consuming it; but (b) also to the probable cumulative effect of food of substantially the same composition on the health of a person consuming it in ordinary quantities."

The production of foods containing damaging trans fats appears to be unlawful in the U.K. This opens up the possibility that legal action could be taken against food companies who manufacture these foods.

A class action suit by some rightly disgruntled consumers is a distinct possibility.

Dr. John Briffa is a London-based physician and author with an interest in nutrition and natural medicine. His website is Drbriffa.com.



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