

ITHACA HEALTH ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

Naturopathic Medicine and Integrative Health Care

By Deanna Berman

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**Volunteer with the
Ithaca Health
Alliance.**

**Our committees
want and need help
on a variety of
projects.**

**Contact the Ithaca
Health Alliance for
more information.**

607-330-1253

**Be part of creating a
healthier community!**

It is rare that we find a healthcare environment in which practitioners working in different modalities coordinate the care for one client. What might this look like? A medical doctor, for instance, might be running blood work on a patient and offering treatment advice and suggesting other therapies such as massage, chiropractics, acupuncture, diet therapy, and so on. The medical doctor might also suggest a drug therapy and consultation with an acupuncturist, so that any herbal treatments don't conflict with the drug treatment. The ideal is to have everyone who works with a particular client communicate concerning that client's care. This is just what the naturopathic doctor is trained to do.



**Deanna Hope Berman,
ND, CM, LM**

Naturopathic doctors receive two years of medical science training before taking courses in acupuncture, Chinese medicine, spinal manipulation, massage, herbal medicine, and other complementary health modalities. They take pharmacology, learn to read laboratory reports and x-rays, learn to set bones, suture, and perform minor surgery. The idea is to create a doctor with a strong background in conventional medicine and a working understanding of many complementary therapies. Knowing the specifics of how other practitioners work, the Naturopath can help coordinate a client's care.

The naturopathic perspective acknowledges that drugs are sometimes necessary. Yet there is also an understanding that diet, supplements, and herbs may be used to reduce the side effects of drugs, reduce the duration of a treatment, and help restore the body after aggressive drug treatments. You might find this approach in an integrative setting such as Cancer Treatment Centers of America, where traditional cancer treatment methods of surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy are offered alongside nutritional counseling, naturopathic therapies, pain management and physical therapy, mind-body healing techniques, and spiritual support. In this case, the naturopathic doctor works to prepare the client before therapy, at times enhancing the efficacy of the therapy, and then helping to heal the client and keep the client healthy after treatment.

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More Produce for Better Health

By Julia Lapp



Most of us know that fruits and vegetables are good for us, but do you know why this is so? How much produce should a person eat each day and what counts as a serving? As a nutritionist, the single most important thing that I believe a person can do for their health is to consume plenty of fruits and vegetables, at minimum 5 servings, every day. Unfortunately, a big public health concern in the U.S. is that inadequate intakes of produce ranks number one on the list of nutritional risks evidenced by most Americans. On average, Americans consume 2.2 servings of produce a day. So what is it about fruits and vegetables that's so beneficial, and why should you seriously consider putting some effort into increasing your intakes?

1. Eating more produce is an easy way to decrease calorie consumption. Fruits and vegetables are high in fiber, which helps to make you feel full. When you eat more produce you're also getting more nutrients (vitamins and minerals) for the amount of calories you consume, equating to all around better nutrition. Several studies have shown that people who eat more produce have an easier time controlling their calorie intakes, and hence their weights.

2. Fruits and vegetables come in a variety of colors. The naturally occurring compounds that give produce those colors are collectively known as "phytochemicals." In the case of plant foods, like apples and citrus fruits, much of the phytochemical content is concentrated in the skin of the fruit or in the pulpy layer just beneath the skin. Those phytochemicals are antioxidants, meaning they act as a barrier between the flesh of the fruit and the potentially damaging effects of oxygen and UV light. Researchers have found that these phytochemicals perform a very similar function in the body of humans and animals. Antioxidants in the body intervene with oxygen, UV light, and other environmental toxins, preventing these substances (collectively known as "prooxidants") from causing damage to cellular DNA, RNA, and cell membranes. It's that damage to components of cells that can initiate cancerous cell growth and tumor formation. With more antioxidants on board, less cellular damage occurs and risk of cancer cell formation is lowered.

Cancer researchers point out that each and every one of us has a certain level of environmental toxins that we are exposed to everyday. Car exhaust, UV light, oxygen itself, cigarette smoke, chemical residues from foods like mercury, DDT, PCBs, and chlorine are continually causing damage to the cells of our bodies. The accumulation of toxins in the body is referred to as "toxin load." Coupled with genetic propensity, a person's toxin load can determine their risk of cancer. However, because we are routinely exposed to such a variety of potentially harmful substances on a daily basis, assessing toxin load is very difficult. Lowering exposure most likely is beneficial. Nonetheless, many nutritionists now recommend that people focus on increasing the foods that can help protect against damage wrought by toxin load, and that means increasing protective phytochemicals by eating more plant foods. You should eat 5 servings a day at a minimum. Ideally, you should consume closer to 10 servings of produce a day. For example, a small piece of fruit, a cup of berries, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup 100% fruit juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetables, or 1 cup of salad greens all give you one serving.

Julia Lapp is an assistant professor of nutrition at Ithaca College.

ITHACA FREE CLINIC UPDATE

Please say hello to our new Clinic Coordinator, **Jim Goodreau**, who is now getting an orientation from our interim Coordinators, **Nicole Culman** and **Rob Brown**. On several occasions, Jim has coordinated volunteer activities at the Clinic on his own and by all accounts seems to be getting comfortable in his new role.



The **Development Committee** pulled off another splendid fundraising performance at Olivia's in March. The event garnered more than \$3300 for our on-going Clinic work and also provided IHA members and Clinic volunteers a chance to celebrate the Clinic's successful year of operations. A special thanks goes to the staff at Olivia's, who gave their time to the event, thereby increasing the Clinic's proceeds.

VIC Radio's DJs raised more than \$3500 for the Clinic during the team's 50-hour broadcasting marathon on the Commons between March 30 and April 1. The Ithaca College students went without sleep in order to keep their broadcast on the air and the pledges coming in. During an interview following the fundraiser, the DJs noted that by being open the Clinic helps to address access to health care, one of the community's biggest local problems.

A group of volunteers recently attended a reception given by the Human Rights Commission, where the Clinic received the Michael Padula award given in behalf of the Commission in recognition of the Clinic's work with underserved residents of the community. Congratulations and many thanks to the **Clinic Operations Committee** for its leadership in guiding the Clinic!

Since opening the Ithaca Free Clinic in January, 2006, clinic providers and other volunteers have had more than 1200 patient visits. You can call the IFC office at 330-1254 for more details.

The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the Ithaca Health Alliance. More than 95 percent of the work we do in the community is by way of volunteer efforts. If you'd like to become a member of the IHA, call 330-1253 or visit our site, www.ithacahealth.org, for more information. If you're looking for volunteer opportunities, call 330-1254.

ITHACA FREE CLINIC HOURS OF OPERATION

MONDAY 2 to 6pm

THURSDAY 4 to 8pm

Location: 225 S. Fulton St., Suite B, Ithaca

The pediatric clinic is on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 4 to 8 pm.

No appointment is necessary.

Call the IFC at 330-1254 for more information.

How to Join the Ithaca Health Alliance

The Health Fund was established to facilitate access to health care and increase wellness in our communities. IHA general members are eligible for grants or interest-free loans to help with specific healthcare expenses. These include preventive care, certain emergency procedures, and dental care. Health fund offerings also include IHA Community Grants for other organizations performing health-related projects.

General Membership in the Ithaca Health Alliance entitles you to request medical grants or loans for specified health problems. Please note that IHA general membership is available to residents of New York State only. To learn more go to www.ithacahealth.org.

News You Can Use

Compiled by Brooke Hansen and Bethany Schroeder

Breastfeeding: Protecting Mothers of All Ages Against Cancer



Prior research has demonstrated that having children before the age of 25 is associated with lowered rates of some forms of cancer. New studies from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Cancer Institute indicate that breastfeeding is also associated with this protective effect, even for mothers who have children after 25.

These findings, recently reported at a cancer research conference by the study's lead author Dr. Giske Ursin, will be good news to the growing number of women who delay childbirth until their 30s and 40s. The news is yet another indication that breastfeeding needs to be encouraged and supported for women of all ages. Our culture still grapples with the issue of breastfeeding along with how, when, and for how long.

An important contextualization of this issue can be found in anthropologist Meredith Small's book *Our Babies, Ourselves: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Parent* (1999; Anchor). Small reports that in cultures around the globe, women breastfeed often, and for a long time, resulting in extensive periods of closeness between mother and child. In American culture, we train our children from infancy to be independent and responsive to a schedule. It is interesting to note that science is trying to bring us back around to what our sisters in other cultures and our forebears have always done.

Glycemic Load and Weight Loss

According to new findings published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, the number of calories rather than the type of carbohydrates you eat may have the biggest influence on whether you lose weight. Study results indicate that diets low in what is known as the "glycemic load," or the type of carbohydrate consumed, are no better at reducing weight in most study participants than were more traditional weight-loss strategies.

Findings from the carefully managed year-long study showed that 34 participants lost weight when calories were reduced, whether the glycemic load of the food they ate was high or low. According to the investigators, no single way to reduce weight is right for everyone, but weight loss should focus on a healthy diet. A diet that emphasizes a low "glycemic index," or foods that avoid a rapid surge of sugar in the blood stream, may be helpful, on the other hand, to people with type 2 diabetes. One of the study investigators pointed out that focusing on the number of calories we eat could help us lose weight, especially in a culture in which portions are so large.

Brooke Hansen is an associate professor of anthropology at IC and Bethany Schroeder is a local writer and healthcare consultant.

Using Herbs to Bee Well

By Shawn Tubridy

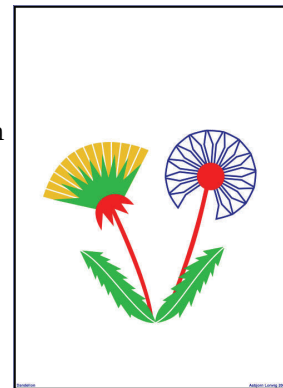
When I first started studying herbal medicine, I was intrigued by the idea of using herbs preventively rather than waiting until someone was ill before starting treatment. I also appreciated being able to harvest herbs locally instead of supporting the already rich pharmaceutical companies. Pharmaceutical medicine is most often prescribed as a response to disease or illness. Although a huge sum of money and resources are put into research and treatment of diseases, we are surrounded by common plants, which can help prevent these diseases from occurring.

In addition to the treatment of illness, herbs can be used in a harm reduction or damage control approach. We live in a toxic society. We are exposed to harmful chemicals in our air, water, food, clothing, shelter, cleaning, and cosmetic products, just to name a few. These toxins tax our bodies and burden our liver and kidneys.

Two very common, but often unpopular herbs that have traditionally been used to cleanse and support these organs are dandelion and burdock. The roots of these plants are safe enough to be eaten as a food and powerful enough to prevent many diseases. As with any foods, some people can have reactions to these plants, but my experience is that these herbs are safe for most people.

Burdock and dandelion work well together as a nourishing tonic, which helps to cleanse and strengthen the liver, kidneys, lungs, and the lymphatic and immune systems. Then the body is able to defend itself against disease. These herbs can bind with chemical residue, metal contaminants, and other toxins to neutralize and safely eliminate them from the digestive tract. They are effective in helping the body to heal and prevent constipation, diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, rheumatoid arthritis, and the growth of cancers.

Regular use of these common weeds in food, tincture, or tea can improve overall bodily functions. This makes you less susceptible to imbalances and disease. Why isn't everybody using these common and abundant plants? Because there is little money to be made on them!



Shawn Tubridy is a local herbalist and activist.

Naturopathic Medicine and Integrative Health Care (continued from pg. 1)

By Deanna Berman

The basis of the naturopathic perspective is integrative in nature. A naturopathic doctor seldom looks at symptoms in isolation. Whereas a client might complain of insomnia, the naturopath recognizes that the insomnia is accompanied by digestive distress, twitching muscles, elevated blood pressure, and nausea. The client's sleeplessness may be due to elevated cortisol, a hormone that helps us wake up and stay awake in the daytime. But the reason the client's body is producing too much cortisol at the wrong time may be related to allergic or histamine responses as the result of diet.

Integration of care is a way to approach illness and treatment, and it can also refer to the coordination between practitioners of a client's care. Whichever way one interprets the notion of integration, for the naturopathic doctor, integration of therapies and of care is the goal of all treatment.

Deanna Berman, ND, CM, is licensed in Washington State as a naturopathic physician and is certified in New York State as a midwife. Her practice is located at 210 West State Street in Ithaca. For more information about naturopathic practice, visit www.naturopathic.org.

**IHA—Your Ally
In Community
Health**

PO Box 362
Ithaca, NY 14851

Phone: 607-330-1253

Fax: 607-330-1194

E-mail:

office@ithacahealth.org

**Ithaca Health Alliance
Online @
www.ithacahealth.org**

Growing Well Together

THE NORTHEAST SCHOOL OF BOTANICAL MEDICINE

Located outside Ithaca, the Northeast School of Botanical Medicine has been a source of instruction for people interested in the intricacies of herbal medicine for 15 years. The school offers a three-day-a-week program and a one-weekend-per-month class. Both run from May to November.

The school provides a practical hands-on approach to herbal medicine. The focus includes botanical identification, medicinal plant use, ethical wildcrafting, physiology, medicine making, first aid, and clinic skills. One of the school's major goals is to help raise community herbalists. The school's primary instructor is 7Song.

Get information at 607-539-7172, or send email to 7Song@lightlink.com, whose website is www.7Song.com.

IHA Board Meetings are generally held every month.

IHA members are welcome to attend.

We hope to see you there.

Call 330-1253 for dates and meeting places.
