

Book Reviews

Digestive Wellness by E. Lipski. Keats Publishing Inc., 368 pages, paperback, 1996, US \$14.95.

The environment has received a good deal of attention from sociologists, psychologists, clinical ecologists and environmentalists in general. But how many really know that one of the most important environments is the chemical environment that flows through our digestive tracts? This environment, which is external to the body even though it runs through it, is as important to us as is the sea water in which unicellular organisms grow. It is the medium from which we obtain all our essential nutrients, except oxygen, and is the place where we deposit most of our wastes. If, therefore, the chemicals within that environment are wrong for the individual; if the system is not able to absorb or use them properly; and if waste products are not properly eliminated, it is impossible for that individual to be well. The health of the individual depends upon the integrity and functional capacity of the digestive tract. It can never be given too much attention.

This valuable book describes in five parts what a healthy digestive tract should do, what can happen to it, and how to correct problems that are present. In Part 2 we are taken on a voyage through the digestive tract where we meet some of the billions of inhabitants, the bacteria, yeast, and others. We travel through good as well as bad districts, and are even told what happens when the walls of the gut become leaky, when they are not able to keep out what normally should not penetrate into the blood stream. Part 4 is an account of the remedies needed to achieve wellness, starting with detoxification and proper diet, and the last part consists of a number of natural therapies. The entire gastrointestinal tract is examined: halitosis, gingivitis, canker sores, heartburn and hiatus hernia, gastritis, intestinal gas, constipation and some of its consequences. This is a good book, easy to read, and will be very helpful to everyone except those already

blessed with good health. It is a good companion to the texts used by medical students and gastroenterologists.

Mental Health: The Nutrition Connection by Patrick Holford. ION Press, 34 Wadham Road, London, SW15 2LR. 278 pages. Paperback, 1996. \$7.95

This volume consists of two smaller volumes back to back. The first is Carl Pfeiffer's book, *"How to Beat Depression, Anxiety and Schizophrenia,"* 205 pages, the second is *"How to Enhance Your Mental Performance and Emotional Well Being,"* by Patrick Holford, 73 pages.

After a fifty year hiatus, nutritional medicine is enjoying a reawakening. It was lulled to sleep by the false promises of the wonder drugs of the 1950s - the corticosteroid hormones and the antibiotics. Nutrition disappeared from the curricula of medical schools, and shifted to departments of biochemistry and nutrition or dietetics, departments which had no direct contact with or relevance to people. Nutrition became just a subject, and appeared to have no part to play in the well-being of people.

Of course, veterinary schools had the entirely opposite view. They considered nutrition of vast importance, I suppose because the health of animals has great economic value.

The vitamin paradigm was firmly entrenched (tiny vitamin doses to prevent and to treat a few classical diseases such as scurvy and pellagra). This paradigm was powerfully supported by a vast medical-nutritional-government establishment. It provided the cover needed to maintain the system which allowed one of the most monstrous human experiments in history to establish itself and grow at an accelerating pace. This was the gradual conversion of the major food supplies from foods to which we have been adapted by evolution, to our present food supply which is about 85% processed. The policy has been change it, promote it, distribute it, and

think afterwards, so now 20 to 40 years later, society is becoming aware that what was done has been very harmful and will have to be undone, but against the opposition of the industry which allowed the corruption of our food supply to take place.

Pioneers like Carl Pfeiffer, and books like this one, are the agents by which society is becoming aware of what has been done, how it been harmful, and the methods one can use to repair the damage and to restore a measure of health, both mental and physical. For this reason I was very pleased when Patrick Holford asked me to prepare the Foreword, and I am even more pleased to bring this book to the attention of the readers of this Journal.

Pfeiffer established a scientific nomenclature, a diagnosis which is causal, not merely descriptive. In psychiatry, the modern trend has been to make diagnosis more and more descriptive, and less and less etiological. The best example is the DSM of the American Psychiatric Association, which with each revision becomes less useful and scientific. For the fifty diagnoses used to describe children, the only treatment still remains stimulant drugs such as ritalin, and there is less and less reference to real causes such as allergies, vitamin deficiencies and vitamin dependencies. Dr. Pfeiffer's method for dividing the schizophrenias into three important sub groups is described in his book. Patrick Holford enlarges the value of nutritional treatment by discussing conditions such as sugar blues (depression caused by too much sugar in the diet), the role played by stress and by allergies.

I am delighted that Patrick Holford has brought Dr. Pfeiffer's work to the fore. Too often, in these days of computers who do all our thinking and abstracting, there is a tendency to believe that what was done many years ago no longer exists, especially if the work did not enter mainstream medicine and remained excluded from the world's government-run abstracting services.

Foundations of Nutritional Medicine by M.R. Werbach MD. Third Line Press, Inc. 330 pages, Hard cover, 1996. US \$ 49.95

This is Dr. Werbach's fifth book in a series of valuable informative volumes. It is an important addition to the scientific development of the whole field of orthomolecular medicine. Every branch of medicine must have its scientific back-up in the form of accurate evaluation of the literature, in a convenient source where practitioners of the new art may have ready access. It covers in detail such topics as disorders due to abnormal nutrition, common deficiencies, bioavailability of supplements, interaction between supplements and between drugs and supplements. It also considers the pathology of heavy metal intoxication and interactions of metals to supplements. These are all very valuable and well done and I will not discuss them further.

I am, however, intrigued by his discussion in Chapter One of the disorders due to abnormal nutriture. I have never seen this materiel prepared in this way, and it has given me some new insights into the pathology of chronic malnutrition. By looking at the various connections between a symptom and the nutrients, it may be possible to trace back to the basic abnormal reactions which are hidden in the body and expressed as symptoms.

For example, let us look at alopecia, hair loss. Surely this is very important to most men getting on in years and to a smaller number of women, but with ever more people receiving chemotherapy for cancer, this becomes a very real and difficult problem. Under alopecia Dr. Werbach lists the following nutrients which appear to be deficient: biotin, copper, essential fatty acid, inositol, pantothenic acid acid, riboflavin, vitamin B₆ and zinc. Only two nutrients, selenium and vitamin A, are present in increased amounts. It is simple enough to provide all the nutrients which appear to be missing, or at least present in too small amounts. He could have added

niacin but the relationship between alopecia and niacin has not been discussed in the literature. I have seen niacin restore hair growth in some. But the important question is, can one, by looking at all the relationships between these nutrients and essential reactions in the body, home in on the essential fault? It may turn out that one or two of these nutrients are the most important and that the others have less significance. Can we use these nutrients clues to find out exactly where the biochemical error is? Can we find the essential ones and

eliminate those which are merely associated and therefore of less importance? Symptoms which have fewer nutrients implicated will be simpler to trace back. Thus with hypogeusia (loss of taste) only one nutrient, zinc, is deficient. This makes it easier to zero in on the basic pathology. I hope Dr Werbach will put his mind to this problem, and help us all out by suggesting which nutrients should be targeted for these diseases or symptoms of disease.

—Reviews by A. Hoffer, M.D., Ph.D.