

Book Reviews

The Road to Immunity. How to Thrive and Survive in a Toxic World. by Kenneth Bock, M.D. and Nellie Sabin. 1997 Pocket books (Simon & Shuster Inc.) New York. Paperback. 426 pages. \$19.00

By now we are all aware of the frightening increase in new forms of viral and bacterial epidemics which have been gathering on the horizon. Fortunately, knowledge of the immune system and the natural factors which can influence it has likewise kept pace and offered us a means of defence. Dr. Bock, a practitioner with a lifetime of clinical experience, has written *The Road to Immunity*, an excellent reference work and the book for those who want the most up-to-date information on natural immunity. With treatments that range from nutritional supplements to hormone balancing, from homeopathic remedies to the latest bio-oxidative therapies, Bock refers to his leading-edge approach as "progressive medicine" which combines the best of both traditional and alternative medicine to create a powerful tool to help even the most immune-compromised bodies.

An early chapter, Immunity 101, gives the layperson a very good grasp of the basics of immune system, a difficult subject to simplify but one that is essential to understanding the rest of the book. Another chapter enlightens us on how stress, environmental toxins and psychosocial factors all form a uniquely modern challenge to our immune system. We must use knowledge of how to maintain our immune system to compensate for what our bodies are ill-prepared for by the slowness of evolution. Specific interventions beginning with a prototypical immune friendly diet are outlined along with an in-depth treatment of all the known substances including vitamins, minerals, amino acids and herbs which can be used to bolster immunity. An excellent chapter on gut and liver function shows us their important role in detoxifying the body of accumu-

lated and ambient environmental toxins. Bock emphasizes the importance of limiting exposure to immune depressing toxic substances for a strong immune response. Bock is a strong advocate of redox medicine such as hydrogen peroxide, medical ozone, proper breathing and aerobic fitness all of which affect the body's use of oxygen. Each chapter ends with a case study from Bock's clinical files which demonstrate each principle being discussed. Overall, a fine reference book which will give practitioners solid information for integrating sound complementary therapies into their practice

Greg Schilhab

Smart Fats by Michael Schmidt, Ph.D. Frey, Ltd, North Atlantic Books P.O. Box 12327, Berkeley, CA. 254 pages, Softcover, 1997, U.S. \$16.95

Before discussing *Smart Fats* a little personal history on fats might be in order. Born in 1910 on a Western Canadian mixed farm, I experienced life before drastic changes, especially in fat consumption. We enjoyed milk products, a variety of fat pork, beef and poultry. At that time, the prevalence of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, was very low. Noticeable too was the low incidence of divorce, violent crimes, suicides and mentally related problems. After World War II we were told to cut back on animal fats, but increase our consumption of vegetable oil-based products. Medical doctors and dietitians told us it was very healthful. I reluctantly accepted this advice which we now know was incorrect. At that time, I had little interest in matters related to fat and human health.

My knowledge in such matters dramatically changed after reading, *Fats and Oils* by Udo Erasmus in 1987. He made an exhaustive study of this very important topic. In 1993, Erasmus updated his book now entitled, *Fats that Heal, Fats that Kill*. This publication, is one of the most au-

thoritative book on this very important topic. Canadian companies pioneered cold pressed oil production in North America. Another recognized pioneer in this field is David Horrobin. His area of research has been the clinical use of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA) an Omega-3 derivative of that essential oil. It is present in the seeds of the evening primrose, borage and black currant seeds. He was among the first to discover the benefits of GLA in treating disease conditions related to the nervous system.

More recently, Edward N. Siguel, M.D., Ph.D. wrote a fine book, *Essential Fatty Acids in Health and Disease*. He explains his pioneering work in a new blood test to measure Essential Fatty Acid (EFA) deficiencies.

The excellent book, *Smart Fats* by Michael Schmidt, greatly enlarges on Horrobin's theme. This timely book should interest both professionals as well as the general public. Since following the faulty medical advice, heart disease and strokes have become the leading cause of death in North America; cancer is a close second, with diabetes number three. Diseases and conditions related to the mind and nervous system have increased dramatically; *Smart Fats* provides possible answers. The author emphasizes the fact that 60 percent of our brain is composed of fat. His main thesis is that we must choose the right fats if we want optimum mental, physical and emotional health.

Fats are categorized as follows: saturated fats, primarily from animal products, are not harmful when consumed in moderation but non-essential; monounsaturated fats, found in olive and canola oils which are not essential but have beneficial properties; trans fatty acids are not essential and are harmful.

There are only two essential fatty acids. They are linoleic acid (LA), or Omega-6, rich in vegetable oils such as sunflower and safflower and Linolenic acid (LNA) or Omega-3, high in flax seed and fish. Schmidt concentrates on Omega-3 (LNA) since it is nec-

essary for the production of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) the main brain fat.

In earlier times, we thought the brain was an entirely separate part of our body, as evidenced by the term, "brain barrier." The current largely accepted idea is that the brain extends into every cell and organ of our body. The trio of mind, body and spirit summarizes Schmidt's central theme. He categorizes the main functions of the brain in an easily understood way. "It masterfully orchestrates trillions of daily activities—all beneath our conscious awareness. It enables us to organize, catalog, and recall vast amounts of information, and to contemplate their meaning. It allows us to move our bodies with grace, speed and power. It allows us to laugh, cry and to love." He emphasizes that the vast number of "fibres woven to form the tapestry of the brain are composed primarily of DHA fat. The implications of this theme is startling. It is incredible that such a poorly understood part of our diet could have such powerful effects.

He points out that the reason breast milk is a superior food for infants is that it contains DHA. Formula milk has lacked this very important fatty acid derivative. Research shows that breast fed children have less temper tantrums, impulsivity, anxiety and hyperactivity. When these children were given lecithin and fish oil (rich in DHA) their condition improved. Cow's milk contains almost no fat products such as DHA. Calves grow rapidly in their first year while their brains shows little development. Contrast that with a human infant which develops slowly in physical terms while its brain triples in size during the same period. The diet of earlier humans contained a ratio of omega-6 to omega 3 of approximately 1:1; today it is close to 30:1. Omega-3 intake has fallen by 80% over several generations. Schmidt concentrates on the influence of essential fats (especially DHA) on mental and behavioral problems including agoraphobia, attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder (ADHD), uncontrollable anger, schizophrenia, depression, migraine headaches, seizures, vision, diabetes, sciatica, cerebral palsy, dementia and Alzheimer's. These diverse problems have many contributing factors such as heredity and nutrition and the author provides ample up-to-date re-

search results to document his interesting ideas. This book opens up a hopeful possibility that by adding more essential fatty acids to our diet, remarkable preventive and therapeutic effects can be achieved.

Joseph Campbell