

November 2009 Newsletter



Dr. Hahn is moving on, with her usual style. (This photo was taken in Les Anglais, Haiti, during her stint there with Engineers Without Borders earlier this year.)

Dr. Hahn's *next* adventure

To our patients;

Miles and I have been job sharing for the last 5 years, but in December I will be changing gears and leaving the practice. I consider it a great privilege to have worked with each of you and appreciate the trust and respect you have given me.

Dr. Hassell will continue to take care of you, and (as most of you know) you are in excellent hands with him. Miles is an extraordinary physician and it has been my good fortune to be part of such a unique and exceptional medical practice.

During the next few months I will be taking temporary medical assignments and plan to do some traveling. My long term plans are not yet defined, but eventually I intend to continue to practice here in Portland. I will also be available to cover for Miles when he is out of the office.

Your medical records will remain with the practice unless we are authorized by you to transfer them to another physician. Please don't hesitate to call the office if you have questions. I will miss you, and wish you all the best!

Flu-fighting techniques to try at home

First, boost your immune system. Improving our immunity is something we can all do, all the time. Following are some immune-boosting strategies to reduce our risk of getting severe forms of infections, particularly viral infections. Notice the use of the word *severe*: it seems to be perfectly normal to get *mild* versions of viruses, especially when we are children. Apparently a runny nose now and then is akin to our immune system having a healthy workout at the gym.

- **Eat real food.** Follow a Mediterranean-style whole food diet emphasizing whole grains, beans, whole fruit (*not juice*) and vegetables, and good fats (like extra-virgin olive oil and raw nuts), as there appears to be a vital interplay between fiber, various families of micronutrients, and healthy fats. We suggest using extra-virgin olive oil instead of other vegetable oils. Read *all* ingredient labels and avoid hydrogenated oils. For much more on the subject of which foods to enjoy and which to avoid, start with reading Chapter 2 of *Good Food, Great Medicine* (2nd edition), the cookbook and lifestyle guide written by Mea and Miles Hassell, M.D.

- **Avoid refined carbohydrates.** Minimize all forms of refined carbohydrates like white flour, white rice, sugar, and most fast foods. All of these foods tend to acutely raise blood sugars, which has the effect of suppressing immune response, perhaps through a negative impact on white blood cell activity. In addition, these foods are low in overall nutrition, so our total trace nutrient intake goes down when we eat refined carbohydrates. (Trace nutrients are important. Increased zinc, for example, which is prominent in foods like oysters and red meat, is associated with fewer infections in the elderly.)¹ Again, read ingredient labels on *everything* you eat.

- **Eat probiotic foods** daily. *Probiotics* refer to the beneficial bugs (live cultures) that grow in

¹ Am J Clin Nutr 2007;85:837-44

traditional foods such as yogurt, kefir, homemade sourdough bread, salt-cured sauerkraut (like the *Bubbies* brand), and kimchee, and help restore the normal 'friendly' bacteria in your body. Yogurt and kefir are the most common source. (Kefir is a yogurt-like drink but with a different spectrum of good bacteria; ideally, we should eat both.) For the best quality product with the most dependably active cultures, make sure the ingredient list has only milk and live cultures. Read those labels! Many yogurts (especially fat-free versions) have added sweeteners, fillers, and artificial flavors. A six-ounce container of pre-sweetened yogurt can include 9 teaspoons of added sugar! Sweeten the yogurt yourself with honey and/or fruit. Here in Oregon, our favorite brand is the locally produced *Nancy's*.

▪ **Get enough sleep.** Give your immune system 7 - 9 hours of sleep daily. Sleep deprivation is associated with more viral infections.

▪ **Exercise daily.** Exercise is a broad immune system booster. Any amount will help: we recommend 30 - 60 minutes of brisk walking on every day ending in Y. No excuses and no exceptions. If walking doesn't work for you, there are countless other options.

▪ **Vitamin D** may have a role in both prevention and treatment of viral illness. If you do not already take robust quantities (1,000 units daily or more) of vitamin D, or know that your vitamin D levels are low, then a supplement of 5,000 units daily for a week at the beginning of the infection is a reasonable step.² Having a blood level of 25-OH Vitamin D in the region of 50 ng/ml is a reasonable target. That usually takes either quite a bit of sun exposure without sunscreen, 1,000-2,000 units of vitamin D daily as a supplement, or about 1 tablespoon each day of cod liver oil.

Note: For more prevention and treatment tips, check out our *Cold, Flu, and Sinusitis* handout on www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

Cookbooks for Christmas

The third printing of the second edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine* has arrived, so we are well stocked with books and ready for Christmas. If you gather some friends together to form a buying group, you will be able to take advantage

of our 40% case discount. (There are 14 books in a case.) The discounted book price is \$18.

Spring class series

Many of you attended our recent Summer/Fall class series: *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Health Care Crisis, Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease*, and *Preventing and Reversing Type 2 Diabetes and Insulin Resistance*. We are planning a new series of free classes this coming spring. In response to the evaluation sheets you filled out, we plan to include classes on weight loss and cancer survivorship (with an emphasis on breast cancer). The classes will be at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the dates will be posted in an upcoming newsletter. If you would like to be notified when we have more details, please call our office at 503-291-1777.

Telephone consults

Have a problem but don't think you need to come into the office? For some situations a telephone consultation may be a reasonable alternative to an office visit, and save you a lot of time. Telephone consultations may be scheduled just like office visits, and if they are under five minutes there is no charge. Insurance generally does not cover this type of a service.

Upcoming Speaking Events

11/4-6/2009 – Riding the Wave of Primary Care: Miles Hassell, MD: Maui, Hawaii.

11/11/2009 – University Club: Miles Hassell, MD: *Which diet and lifestyle choices really matter?* Portland, Oregon.

12/1/2009 – NEXT Steps against Breast Cancer: Miles Hassell MD and Ken Weizer ND *Nutrition and Exercise Today to Reduce Risk and Improve Survival*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Cancer Center. *This event is free. For reservations or more information, please call the Providence Resource Line (503) 574-6595.*

12/3/2009 – Pacific University: Miles Hassell, MD: Hillsboro, Oregon.

12/4/2009 – Providence Outpatient Diabetes Services Staff Retreat: Miles Hassell, MD: *Diabetes Talk & Saturated Fat Discussion*. Oregon City, Oregon.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”

1 Thess. 5:21

² Cannell. *Epid Infect* 2006;134:1129-40