



Health Bits & Pieces

By Dan Kenner, Ph.D., LAc



◆ **Keep Your Sunny Side Up: Depression and Cardiovascular Risk.** The relationship between depression and cardiovascular problems is well established, but does one cause the other? If so, which is the cause? A recent study has demonstrated that depression may trigger inflammatory processes that can lead to cardiovascular health problems. Individuals with depressive disorders have been found to have higher levels of blood inflammatory markers such as c-reactive protein and interleukin 6 (IL-6), which are known risk factors for coronary heart disease and other cardiovascular disorders. [Stewart JC, Rand KL, et al., "A prospective evaluation of the directionality of the depression-inflammation relationship," *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* 2009; 23(7): 936-944]

◆ **Keep Your Sunny Side Up Part II: Vitamin D for the Prostate.** Vitamin D is produced from cholesterol by exposure of the skin to the Sun. Many of us who are deficient, especially during Fall and Winter months, need to supplement. Vitamin D is actually an anti-inflammatory steroid that has been studied for its preventive and healing properties for a vast range of afflictions. A recent study in the U.K. showed that Vitamin-D therapy significantly reduced PSA levels during 3 months of administration in 20% of advanced or metastatic prostate cancer patients studied. [Newsom-Davis TE, Kenny LM, et al., "The promiscuous receptor," *British Journal of Urology* 2009; 104(9): 1204-1207]

◆ **Omega-3s Can Prevent Stroke.** Fish oil, rich in anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, may have stroke-preventive properties. A study of carotid arterial plaque in neurologically symptomatic patients showed a deficiency of omega-3 fatty acids leading researchers to suggest that EPA and DHA, omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil, may prevent stroke and reduce risk associated with medical interventions in the carotid artery. [Bazan HA, Lu Y, et al., "Diminished omega-3 fatty acids are associated with carotid plaques from neurologically sensitive patients: Implications for carotid interventions," *Vascular Pharmacology* 2009; 51(5-6): 331-336]

◆ **More Good News on Green Tea.** New evidence shows that green tea polyphenols, also known as EGCG, not only

prevent cancer but can be used to treat it as well. Clinical research at the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas showed that 36% patients with high-risk premalignant oral lesions had a beneficial clinical response to a dose of green tea extract compared to 18% using a placebo. [Tsao AS, Liu D, et al., "Phase II Randomized Placebo-controlled Trial of Green Tea Extract in Patients with High-Risk Oral Pre-malignant Lesions," *Cancer Prevention Research* 2009; 2: 931] A standardized extract from green tea has also been found to have a beneficial therapeutic effect on chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL), a type of leukemia in which white blood cells called lymphocytes increase in number causing lymph nodes to swell. In a clinical trial at the Mayo Clinic, over one-third of the patients using the green tea extract had reduced lymph node swelling and one-third experienced at least a 20% decrease in the lymphocyte count. [Shanafelt TD, Call TG, et al., "Phase I trial of daily oral Polyphenon E in patients with asymptomatic Rai stage 0 to II chronic lymphocytic leukemia," *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 2009; 27: 3808-3814]

◆ **Influenza Treatment News.** During the Avian flu scare, Chinese health officials encouraged people to use traditional Chinese herbal formulas to treat the disease. A meta-analysis of eleven studies with over 2000 patients showed that traditional Chinese herbal formulas were more effective for flu symptoms than conventional antiviral and antipyretic drugs. [Chen XY, Wu TX, et al., "Chinese medicinal herbs for influenza," *Cochrane Database Systematic Review*, 2005, CD004559] Guidance of a health-care provider familiar with Chinese herbs is recommended. In two randomized trials with 198 nursing home residents, a daily 200 mg dose of ginseng reduced the risk of respiratory infections by 89% compared to a placebo. Only 1 out of 97 of the people taking ginseng suffered an infection. [McElhaney JE, Gravenstein S, et al., "A placebo-controlled trial of a proprietary extract of North American ginseng (CVT-E002) to prevent acute respiratory illness in institutionalized older adults," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 2004; 52(1): 13-19] A study in Hong Kong concluded that moderate exercise substantially reduces severity of symptoms and mortality from influenza. [Wong CM, Lai HK, et al., "Is exercise protective against influenza-associated mortality?" *PLoS One*, 2008; 3(5): e2108] 