Patients visiting the Health Information Centre often ask questions about recent research in Alzheimer’s Disease. In order to address those queries, we decided to include an update in this issue of Prime Care.

Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) is a progressive, degenerative disease that affects the brain. People with a diagnosis of AD suffer from serious loss of memory, difficulty with day-to-day tasks, and may also experience changes in mood and behaviour. These symptoms are much worse than those that are experienced as part of normal aging and should not be confused with it. It is important to see a doctor when you notice any of these symptoms as they may be due to other conditions that can be treated such as drug interactions, an infection or depression.

In June 2005, we published an important research finding about the early identification of Alzheimer’s Disease in the journal Neurology. Using neuropsychological tests, we were able to accurately predict which study participants would be most likely to develop AD ten years before they were diagnosed with this disease.

Identification of individuals at risk for Alzheimer’s Disease will be a critical first step in the selection of candidates for therapy if new treatments emerge that will delay the onset of symptoms. Early prediction is also important in order that those requiring more careful monitoring are recognized early and receive the care they require.

Over 10,000 study participants were part of the Canadian Study of Health and Aging (CSHA), a national study initiated in 1990 to investigate the incidence, prevalence and progression of dementia. The second wave of the study was undertaken in 1995 and a third in 2000. The CSHA provided an opportunity to examine the usefulness of neuropsychological tests in the prediction of AD for a long period of time from a large sample of people 65 years of age and older. Initially over one thousand study participants, who did not have dementia or any condition likely to affect the brain, completed several neuropsychological tests. Five and ten years later, participants underwent a diagnostic assessment for dementia. The study found that three of the neuropsychological tests, which measured verbal memory, general information, and the ability to name items from a category, accurately identified those likely to develop AD five years later and a test of verbal memory alone accurately identified those likely to develop AD ten years later. The study found that the poorer the performance on the tests, the higher the probability of developing AD.

These findings are very important because they provide a way of identifying people at risk for AD up to 10 years before they are diagnosed with it, when they are functioning members of society.

It will be most advantageous to provide treatment or arrest the progression of the disease at this stage rather than when the symptoms are present and the individual requires 24-hour care. Because the study provided a way of quantifying an individual’s risk of AD for as long as ten years before diagnosis, the methods could also be used to identify participants for clinical trials that examine conversion to Alzheimer’s Disease and the effectiveness of treatments for those at risk.
Profile: Dr. Ross Upshur

In this issue of Prime Care I would like to profile one of our physicians in the Family Practice Unit, Dr. Ross Upshur.

Dr. Upshur was just in the news as the first Family Physician to be awarded a Canada Research Council (CRC) Chair in Research. This means he will have funding support to conduct research in his area of interest, which is Primary Care Research. To succeed, he had to compete against the very best minds across Canada from every field and discipline. This is a great honour to both Dr. Upshur and the Primary Care Research Unit that he directs, and of which you have heard in other issues of Prime Care.

There is so much more to Dr. Upshur, so let me tell you a little bit about him. He came to the Family Practice Unit in 1998. Prior to this he did training in Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Toronto. His Master’s Degree thesis during this time was on Measuring the Impact of Influenza on Hospitalization of the Elderly in Ontario. He is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, holds Research Scholar designation from the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University and is also Adjunct Scientist at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES). He also maintains Academic Faculty links with McMaster University where he did his undergraduate medical training.

This is not the first time that Ross has trail blazed for Family Medicine. In 2000 he became the first member of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University to be awarded the prestigious Five-Year New Investigator Award by the Canadian Institute for Health Research.

Dr. Upshur continues with his active and busy family practice. He has a strong focus on teaching and has designed courses for the University at both the Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. He has won University awards for his teaching.

Ross actively combines his expertise with humanitarian activities. He has a special interest in Environmental Health. He shows this through his work on the Science Advisory Board, International Joint Commission for the Great Lakes and also as Chair, Scientific Advisory Committee Aral Sea Research Project for Medecins Sans Frontieres (Physicians without Borders).

No matter how busy things are at work, Ross always makes time for his family; and yes, he does take his turn doing the dishes.

A typical Family Doctor? Maybe not. However, Dr. Upshur is typical for the spirit of clinical excellence and academic rigor and enquiry that we all strive for in our Family Practice Unit.

I wish everyone well in this New Year.

Best wishes.

Jim Ruderman, MD CCFP, FCFP
Family Physician-in-Chief

Volunteers Needed

Have you ever considered volunteering at the hospital? Do you have 3 hours a week that you could give? There are a wide variety of volunteer opportunities available at the Sunnybrook campus including working with patients, veteran residents, or in the cancer centre. For further information or to come to a Volunteer Information Session, please call Volunteer Resources at 416-480-4129 or visit www.sw.ca/volunteer.

Recruitment of Participants:

Are you interested in participating in a study that explores the aids and barriers to accessing nutritional foods in the community? Participants must be 80 years of age or older; live independently in the community; be patients at the S&W Family Practice Unit and have a good understanding of written and spoken English.

This study involves a brief interview consisting of 5 questions. If interested in participating, information and consent forms can be picked up at the Family Practice Clinic (Room A1 02) as well as the Health Information Centre (Room A1 19) or by calling The Primary Care Research Office at 416-480-4753.

Special Presentation

Co-sponsored by Program for Midlife & Older Women and Marion Powell Women’s Health Information Centre

*Stress: The Mind-Body Connection - David Posen, MD

On Tuesday, May 16, 2005 6:00—7:30 p.m.
Cummings Auditorium
1st floor, 76 Grenville Street
Toronto, ON M5S 1B2

Cost $25.00
To register and for more information, please call
Mary Addison at 416-323-6400 ext. 3101 or email:
mary.addison@sw.ca

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Many of you have been hearing and reading about the anticipated next influenza pandemic. To date there has not been proven human-to-human transmission of a new virus that could become pandemic. When this happens, it may be a modified form of the current Avian Influenza Virus that is currently circulating in bird populations, but not necessarily.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will declare a pandemic when human-human transmission of a new influenza virus is confirmed and sustained, and outbreaks occur in several different countries. The first wave, lasting 6-8 weeks, will be followed by a second, possibly more severe wave 3-9 months later. A third wave may occur.

Sunnybrook and Women’s College Health Sciences Centre has developed a hospital plan that is currently being finalized. This plan includes strategies to optimize beds, staff, health and safety, infection prevention and control, education and communication. All three levels of government are working on plans to address the impact that a pandemic will have not only on health care, but on government services, businesses and community resources.

When the pandemic strikes, many aspects of society will be affected. Approximately 1/3 of the population will be ill. This may lead to disruptions in regular services. If there is a power failure for example, it may take longer than usual to correct the problem as staffing may be significantly reduced. So as well as preparing yourself and your family to stay healthy, you might consider having some emergency supplies ready at home.

Next issue: What to do if you should get sick.

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**To stay healthy ...**

Get the annual flu vaccine.

Wash hands frequently with soap and running water for 15 seconds or use an alcohol-based sanitizer. If you can’t remember when you last washed your hands, it’s time to do it again!

Try and train yourself to keep your hands away from your face. If a virus is on your hands, you can infect yourself just by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Some virus can remain alive for several hours on surfaces such as computer keyboards.

Avoid people with respiratory infections. Stay at least a meter away from those who are coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose.

Stay home from work or school if you are ill. When you cough, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.

If a family member is ill, clean all shared hard surfaces in the home with a disinfectant wipe.

Source: Dr. Mary Vearncombe
Medical Microbiologist and Hospital Epidemiologist
Chair, Pandemic Flu Planning Task Force
Sunnybrook & Women’s


**Before the pandemic strikes ...** General Emergency Preparations at home …

Flashlights and radios with batteries

First aid kit/daily prescription medications

Non-perishable food and water on hand. Manual can opener.

Don’t forget your pet in your planning.

Menopause Workshop

The staff of the Family Practice Unit (Sunnybrook Campus) will be presenting their Menopause Education Workshop on

Saturday, May 27, 2006 from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm.

It is held at the Coach House, The Estates of Sunnybrook, 2075 Bayview Avenue, Toronto.

This workshop includes information about the signs and symptoms of menopause, symptom management, anatomy and physiology, osteoporosis, heart disease, breast cancer, diet, emotional adjustments, hormone therapy, herbal therapy, healthy lifestyle choices, alternate treatments, complementary therapies and coping strategies.

There is a cost of $40.00 to cover lunch and the handout materials. There are spaces for only 32 women and registration is on a first come, first served basis.

For more information and to register call Judith Manson at 416-480-6183.

Staff Updates:

Dr. Debbie Elman had a baby girl, Carly in December. She is currently on maternity leave. Dr. Laurie Dussault is covering her practice until the end of August 2006.

Jennifer Robinson, one of our former summer students is back with us as an office coordinator.

Room A – 119
Health Information Centre

Please note:

The Family Practice Unit will be closed on Good Friday, April 14 and on Victoria Day, Monday, May 22, 2006.

Should you require urgent care on either day, please call your physician’s regular phone number and ask that the resident on call be paged. He/she will return your call within ½ hour.

FAMILY PRACTICE HOURS

Office Hours:
Monday to Friday
9:00 a.m. – 12 noon
1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Evenings:
Tues. Wed. Thurs.
5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

PRIME CARE

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