

Health Promotion NEWSLETTER

Health Ministries Department of the Euro-Africa Division

<http://health.euroafrica.org/>

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EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues and friends:

Allow me to make a brief review of the development of the SDA understanding of the health message. Jesus healed the sick, preached the about His kingdom, and educated the people all in one. "Christ, the great Medical Missionary, is our example.... He healed the sick and preached the gospel. In His service, healing and teaching were linked closely together. Today they are not to be separated."¹

Jesus told His disciples to continue the same work, "and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."²

When the SDA church was organized there was great emphasis on the preaching of Jesus' second coming. God sent Ellen G. White several messages emphasizing the importance of "temperance"³ and of a healthy lifestyle. "The comprehensive instruction of 1863 emphasized the relation between the physical welfare and the spiritual. It showed that the care of health was a sacred duty - an integral part of the third angel's message in preparation for the life to come. It placed upon the people of God not only the responsibility for living in harmony with His health laws, but to share with their fellow men the knowledge of healthful living."⁴

As a response the church started to establish hospitals and clinics all over the world and developed a program for medical education. This was important because of the little understanding in the medical world about the laws of life. EG White revolutionized the understanding of health and healing by which later became the NEWSTART acronym. (The same principles are included in the acronym CELEBRATIONS⁵ created by the GC Health Ministries Department).

The church's medical program matured into a strong separate line of work at the side of the proclamation of the word. At the same time there was a strong combat against two major addictions, alcohol and tobacco, that led to the creation of the Temperance Department. In later years, this was included in the "Health and Temperance Department", today renamed as Health Ministries Department.

The focus on health was mainly curative, which is easily understood because of the great need of medical care in the mission field. During the years to follow secular governments have developed their own systems for health care making it difficult for private organizations to compete without state subsidy. At the same time the understanding of the importance of prevention and the growing scientific evidence supporting a healthy lifestyle led to a more educational approach. Although the curative aspect was still strong, the NEWSTART® program and other lifestyle seminars (stress management, family life, cooking seminars, etc.) developed quickly culminating today on health EXPOs and health clubs. However, there are still these two separate lines of approach to evangelism, the *ministerial* and the *medical* task forces. It is true, health professionals and ministers are working together more closely but each one in his own domain. There is no complete amalgamation yet.

As the understanding of natural healing methods and the influence of spiritual factors in life expands, also grows the introduction of Eastern pantheistic philosophies into Western medicine, thus creating a mixture of true *natural* and esoteric methods.

Since the last two decades there is a rapid growth in the understanding of the intimate relationships between the mental and physical dimensions of man. This reinforces even more the acceptance of all sorts of spiritual healing methods but at the same time gives the church the opportunity to use a more spiritual approach in the curative settings and, of course, in the seminars on health issues. At the same time it is better understood that addictions (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gambling, and others) have also roots in broken relationships (family, school, society, church, etc.). Better understanding of the brain chemistry, the influence of thoughts and feelings upon the immune system (today called "psycho-neuro-immune system"), and the interactions between body, mind and soul help us to understand the importance of a wholistic approach to therapy and prevention that includes spiritual aspects along with regular exercise, a healthy diet, abstention from harmful drugs, etc.

Health professionals, pastors and counselors are increasingly confronted with problems that have physical, emotional, and spiritual components in various degrees, like eating disorders, burn-out, depression, AIDS, crisis due to natural catastrophes and war, terminal cancer, family violence, alcoholism, teen pregnancy, suicide attempt, and so forth, just to mention a few.

All this shows that human suffering is a complex mixture of physical/emotional/spiritual/social disorders that require an integral approach. "The physician needs more than human wisdom and power that he may know how to minister to the many perplexing cases of disease of the mind and heart with which he is called to deal. If he is ignorant of the power of divine grace, he cannot help the afflicted one, but will aggravate the difficulty; but if he has a firm hold upon God, he will be able to help the diseased, distracted mind. He will be able to point his patients to Christ and teach them to carry all their cares and perplexities to the great Burden Bearer. There is a divinely appointed connection between sin and disease. No physician can practice for a month without seeing this illustrated. He may ignore the fact; his mind may be so occupied with other matters that his attention will not be called to it; but if he will be observing and honest, he cannot help acknowledging that sin and disease bear to each other the relationship of cause and effect."⁶

The ultimate goal of all healing efforts is the restoration of the broken relationship between man and God. This means in essence, redemption, salvation. Scientific discoveries in fact force us to follow EG White's counsel to blend health education with the proclamation of the gospel.

In this and the next issues of the Health Promotion Newsletter we will continue to address some of these timely topics.

Yours, for better health

J. Hawlitschek

EUD - Health Ministries Department

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1. EG White, Counsels on Health, 395
 2. Luke 9:2
 3. D. A. Delafield, Ellen G. White in Europe, 40
 4. E. Hon, A Call to Personal Ministry, 122, ed. 2000
 5. Choice, Exercise, Liquids, Environment, Belief, Rest, Air, Temperance, Integrity, Optimism, Nutrition, Service
 6. EG White, Counsels on Health, 325

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND MEDICINE (continuation)

In our newsletter no. 42 we reported about the Healthy People congress in Loma Linda last year under the title "Spirituality, Culture & Health". One of the speakers was Professor Harold G. Koenig, MD, co-director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health of the Duke University, USA. See www.dukespiritualityandhealth.org/

Two weeks ago Dr. Koenig was in Switzerland giving a lecture at the Medical School in Berne about the influence of religion on health. This gave me the opportunity to get acquainted personally with him - a fine, Christian physician.

The essence of his lecture is found in the document "Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine: Research Findings and Implications for Clinical Practice" published by the Southern Medical Association, 2004. This excellent document is attached separately for your information.

In conclusion, most studies show that religion, if practiced, affects the person's health in a positive way. There are several mechanisms that explain these results. Religion influences health in three basic areas (see table on the last page of this newsletter):

1. **Mental Health** - Usually religious systems impart a good value system and a positive attitude towards life, helping to cope with difficult situations. A good mental health in turn influences the immune system, the autonomic nervous system, leads to earlier disease detection and better treatment compliance.
2. **Social Support** - Active members of a religious community enjoy stronger social support as isolated individuals. They feel accepted and receive encouragement and support in stressful circumstances. This also influences the immune system and fosters a responsible attitude towards his own health.
3. **Health Behaviors** - Many religious systems promote a healthy lifestyle including exercise, regularity in life activities, a healthy diet, and abstinence from destructive dependencies and behavior. All these mechanisms together result in a better health and longer life.
4. The above mentioned three mechanisms work independently if the individual believes in God or not. I would like to add a fourth mechanism that is directly linked to God - not any god but our savior Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal of the gospel is not only to improve physical or emotional health, but overall to achieve complete healing, freedom from sin, that means salvation of the whole (entire) individual. In this regard it is important to know that "salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" than the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Jesus himself said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

Having said all that you may ask the questions: Does religion always improve health? May religion not affect health in a negative way under some circumstances? You are absolutely right. Dr. Koenig calls this “**Spiritual struggles**” and I quote from his document:

“When patients are hospitalized with sudden medical illness or must endure chronic illness and disability, they often ask the question, “why me?” Then, as prayers for healing and relief go seemingly unanswered, they ask other questions. Is God punishing me for past sins? Does God even care about me? Does God even have the power to make a difference? Has my faith community deserted me? While such existential concerns are normal and to be expected in the short term, some patients get “stuck” in these spiritual struggles and without help are unable to resolve them on their own. The result is that they cannot rely on spiritual beliefs that might otherwise give them comfort and hope.”

It is our attitude towards God that makes the difference. We need to differentiate between *religion* (a formal system of beliefs, credos, rituals, and forms) and *God* - a personal being, our creator. *Religion* affects our health towards good or bad, according to natural laws, but *God* is always ready to help us as a loving father. The outcome may not always be as one expected but let's trust in Him under all circumstances as did the three Hebrew men in Babylon. “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’” (Daniel 3:16-18)

FACTS

A randomized trial assessing the Five-Day Plan for smoking cessation - ABSTRACT

Aim To evaluate the effectiveness of the Five-Day Plan (FDP) in helping smokers to stop smoking. **Design** Randomized controlled trial comparing intervention and control groups. The primary outcome measure was 12 months continuous abstinence verified by expired air carbon monoxide concentration. Secondary outcome measures were self-reported abstinence at end of treatment, at 3 and 6 months. **Setting** Six towns in France. **Participants** 228 smokers, recruited by newspaper and radio advertisement, aged 18 years or over and willing to make an attempt to quit smoking. **Intervention** The Intervention group (119 participants) received the FDP, which is a behavioural group-based treatment programme that has been in operation in France since 1965. It involves five consecutive evening behavioural therapy sessions. The Control group (109 participants) received a single session discussing the health effects of smoking. **Findings** In the Intervention group, 67 participants (56%) quit smoking at the end of the FDP. After three months this number had been reduced to 30 (25%) and to 19 (16%) by the end of one year. In the Control group these numbers were 14 (13%) and 12 (11%), respectively, after three and 12 months. When considering the rate of cessation without lapse after one year a significant difference was observed with a 13% rate in the Intervention group and 3% in the Control group ($P = 0.004$). **Conclusions** The FDP may be considered as an aid for smokers who want to quit.

Source: Romand R, Gourgou S, Sancho-Garnier H. Universite Louis Pasteur, Illkirch, France. In *Addiction*, 2005;100, 1546-1554. Phone +33 88 65 56 67

Alcohol and tobacco delay wound healing

Tobacco, beer, wine and other liquors impair the healing of wounds. The medical journal *Lancet* published a study that shows that patients who abstained from smoking six to eight weeks before a surgery had three times less problems of wound healing than those who smoked regularly. A study in Germany found that patients who smoked more than 10 cigarettes per day and drunk major amounts of alcohol had four times more complications in the healing of the surgical wound.

In the healing process of the skin the wound is repaired through coagulation of the blood, formation of a crust and growth of new connective tissue that forms a scar. Concerning nicotine, research findings show clearly that the coagulation process of the blood is reduced and the activity of macrophages to combat bacteria in the wound is impaired. At the same time nicotine hinders the formation of new tissue. The result is a disturbance of the wound healing process that can be greatly reduced by stopping to smoke before the surgery. Something similar happens with alcohol. Several clinics in Germany recommend to their patients to avoid smoking and drinking before a surgery.

Source: Moller, A.M. et al.: Effects of preoperative smoking intervention on postoperative complications: a randomized clinical trial. In *Lancet* 2002;359, 114-117.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Finland: Health-EXPOs all over the country

“Thank you for sending the story about Herghelia. It was great to read how God is working through them.

The Health EXPO is working wonderfully in Finland. Almost every week it is held in some part of Finland. Last week I participated in one. 50 people came in 2 hours. It is good in Finland. I talked about health and God to them, since I had the health counseling part. I thank the Lord for letting us to have this project."

Sent by Dr. Outi Haggren, former Health Dept. Director of Finland, actually on mother's leave.

[Note: In September 2004 Dr. Hawlitschek was invited to speak to the health professionals in Finland and presented the concept of the Health EXPO. They soon translated the panels into the Finnish language and started to work.]

CONVENTIONS AND SEMINARS

North & Inter-American Health Ministries Summit - Orlando, Florida

Date: 29 January - 4 February 2006

Place: Orlando, Florida, USA

Topics: Many powerful lectures and seminars with renown health professionals.

Registration fee: U\$ 249.00

Hotel (special conference rate): U\$ 75.00

Info: www.plusline.org

Email: events@plusline.org

Phone: +1.800.732.7587

LLU School of Public Health

Date: 7-9 March 2006, "Healthy People Update"

Topic: Adolescent Health

Info: www.llu.edu/llu/sph/cpe/events.html

Note: At the time of redaction of this newsletter the event was not posted at the website yet. The above dates were obtained directly from LLU.

LITERATURE & MATERIALS

The interaction between **health and spirituality** is becoming a frequent subject of discussion, lectures, seminars, etc. You may find valuable documents and PowerPoint presentations in French, German and English for free and paid download on the website www.seminare-ps.net/ Dr. Samuel Pfeifer is a Christian psychiatrist, since 1988 Medical Director of the Christian Psychiatric Clinic "Sonnenhalde" (= "sunny hill") in Basel, Switzerland.

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

"There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. All who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to His service will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power."

Ministry of Healing, pg. 159

"All things are possible with God." Mark 10:27

The *Health Promotion* NEWSLETTER is a quarterly report about new health promotion materials, conventions, important addresses, working strategies, etc. For best effectiveness we kindly ask you to share such information with your co-workers and also to supply to our department pertinent information to be published. Let us unite in the proclamation of God's health message!

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Model of Religion's Effects on Health

Handbook of Religion and Health (Oxford University Press, 2001)

