

FOCUS

Food and pain: one woman's crusade

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You wouldn't stuff your car full of firewood and expect the vehicle to be fuelled. You wouldn't shove chunks of coal in your lawn mower and expect it to run. Not all fuels work in all machines.

So why is it so difficult to accept - even consider - some foods as potentially ineffectual or harmful to the human machine?

It's a premise that still drives author Elaine Gottschall to the edges of frustration some days.

"I see and hear of so many people suffering and it doesn't have to be," she says emphatically from her Haldimand Township living room overlooking rolling hills. "It breaks my heart. Why aren't people getting the message that there is help? I hear daily from people all over the world who have been helped by my books, and yet, there are people here in these communities who don't know about the specific carbohydrate diet. There are people dying who shouldn't be."

Now in her 70s, Elaine Gottschall has more than earned the right to enjoy her beautiful home, her family, the recognition her scientific research has won. But laurels don't interest Elaine Gottschall. She's determined to spare others the anguish and years and years of searching for answers she endured after her own two-year-old child became desperately ill.

"You go crazy. No one could help us," she recalls of

the message came up: food had nothing to do with it.

An uncle, a Philadelphia physician, urged the family to try an "old medicine", sulpha drug. While it did prove to have some efficacy, by the time their daughter was eight years old, she was unable to attend school regularly. The stress on an older daughter and the parents was at a breaking point.

"One day, I went into the bedroom and started to cry. A friend came to visit me and told me of another friend who knew a Dr. Sidney Valentine Haas who had saved her coeliac child's life."

Dr. Haas was 92 years of age when the Gottschall's visited him. For years, Dr. Haas had been quietly investigating and publishing his findings on treating coeliac patients by altering their diets. His breakthrough had come when a desperately ill child had eaten and retained a banana when most other foods resulted in digestive chaos, lethargy, and seeming starvation from lack of retention.

Working with the the Haas findings to date, the Gottschall's altered their child's diet and saw her thrive.

But it wasn't enough for Elaine. She wanted to know why certain certain foods were acceptable for some people and not others.

"I began going to a medical library. Within one hour, I had found half a dozen articles stating lactose was not to be taken by people with intestinal problems. I began making three litres of yogurt at a time at home, to remove the lactose. (Commercially-

tem from working.

"I was fed up that I had not been given the information on lactose. Herb said it was always possible for me



Elaine Gottschall's quest for medical answers to the effects of food on the functioning of the digestive tract, as well as behaviour, has resulted in years of study, authorship and now, increasing recognition of her findings. "Retirement" in Haldimand Township seems illusory.

Photo by Mandy Martin