

# Seniors Impressive magazine for seniors

By FLORENCE WILKINSON

It seems a little presumptuous for me to sit here trying to write an article for a newspaper when I am really not much for reading newspapers - when, as a matter of act, even handling newsprint can sometimes make me sneeze until my teeth want to fall out! However, for better or worse, here I sit. I got started on this article because I stepped out of character and picked up a copy of Today's Seniors, a monthly for seniors which is sent across Ontario. The copy which I have says on the front, "Toronto and Ontario edition."

I saw the paper first because it had a picture of Stompin' Tom Connors on the front. Now, my mother of all people, liked Stompin' Tom. I expect she liked him because she was a dedicated Canadian, and showed appreciation for anyone who would be so out front in their appreciation of this country of Canada. She also liked the way in which he could capsule the very essence of Canada, and bring it to the people so that it would become a part of

## Seniors for the Future

all those who heard.

The '80 page paper had lots of things in it besides the article on Stompin' Tom, but two or three things took my eye. One was the article dealing with seniors in the workplace. More than 7,000 people turned up for the Seniors Job Fair which was sponsored by the newspaper Today's Seniors. If the pictures are accurate, not all those who attended were seniors, but even so, 7,000 is quite a number to be interested in jobs for seniors.

In the letter section there was a letter from a wife whose 56-year-old husband decided to sell out his own business and look for a job. The only reason given for his rejection in the workplace was his age, so he decided to lie about his age and become forty-six. He got the job, and on location found out that four out of six of his co-workers were seniors, and had

also filled out the wrong age on the application form so that a job was available. This to me seems rather sad. If the official retirement age is sixty-five, or even sixty, it seems to me that jobs should be available to anyone who is able. In this case it turned out that those under-age tired more quickly than those over-age. (Can I hear many seniors mutter "So, what's new?")

Another article which interested me was one called "Seniors on Drugs". This article quotes a report which was released by the province recently, and claims to have found the following: that widespread over-prescription and misuse of drugs among seniors is generating big profits for pharmaceutical companies; nearly 4,000 seniors a year die from over-prescription or misuse of drugs; about 20 per cent of people entering hospital have illnesses due to drugs.

Thank goodness that committee which released the report proposes a major overhaul of the Ontario Drug Benefit Place, as well as many other suggestions. Of course this report comes from a party not now in power. Let's hope that the new Ontario government will not overlook the findings and the recommendations made in this report.

I expect that those of you who belong to a seniors organization have already been to your first fall meeting. Halton Seniors TV Productions, to which I belong, is working around the big move which Halton Cable is making.

As soon as everything has been installed in the new building, which is only a couple of doors from the old building along Acton main street (Hwy. 25), there will be an official opening, and we are looking forward to that day, and hope many of you will be interested in attending. Halton Cable is doing everything possible to keep the programming on the air during the move. If our October show does not materialize it will be because of trouble with our own camera. You are invited to watch our show which comes on the first and third Wednesdays of the month, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

I wish you good reading and good viewing.

# Toronto medical researchers step up Alzheimer fight

By SALLY JOHNSTON

University of Toronto medical researchers appear to have taken a step forward in the fight against Alzheimer's disease, which affects at least 300,000 Canadians.

The team of scientists, at the Centre for Research in Neurodegenerative Diseases, has found that a drug called desferrioxamine can decrease levels of aluminum in the brain. Aluminum is thought to play a role in Alzheimer's, which causes mental deterioration.

Dr. Ted Kruck, one of the researchers, cautions that the drug is not a potential cure. But it does offer a hope of stabilizing or slowing the advance of the disease, he adds.

"We are optimistic that the drug will help patients to maintain quality of life," he says.

Alzheimer's, an insidious disease, causes the steady death of brain cells. At the same time, an excessive amount of a certain protein accumulates in the brain, forming a mass of tangled, twisted filaments.

Gradually, Alzheimer's patients, who are generally elderly, become increasingly forgetful and confused, until they can no longer look after themselves.

Kruck says that post-mortem tests on the brains of about 50 Alzheimer's victims showed that all contained elevated levels of aluminum. Those tested had about four micrograms of aluminum per gram of dried brain tissue, compared to about two micrograms in people who died of other causes, including

other dementia patients.

"We believe aluminum messes up the normal processes of the brain," says Kruck. The element appears to adhere to certain brain cells, causing an effect a bit like running through a library with a stick of glue, he adds. If the pages of books are stuck together, the book no longer makes sense.

In a preliminary test, the researchers used desferrioxamine on Alzheimer's patients whose brains were examined for aluminum after they finally died. The patients who had taken the drug had brain levels of aluminum 60 per cent lower than those who had not taken the drug.

Now Kruck has recently completed a two-year study with 50 Alzheimer's patients, half of whom were treated with desferrioxamine. At regular intervals the patients were given simple tests, such as counting change and putting on a sweater.

The tests were recorded on videotape and later compared to see if the patients showed signs of progressing mental deterioration.

"We are looking for an indication that the drug will prevent further deterioration," says Kruck. "We can't hope for a cure because once the brain cells are dead you can't bring them back."

Results of the study are being

evaluated and will be published soon.

Although the human body needs some trace elements - for example, iron in the blood - aluminum has no biological activity other than being toxic, Kruck says.

Because humans are constantly exposed to aluminum - one-third of the Earth's crust contains the element in one form or another, so it's in many foods - the body has built up an "excellent resistance" he says. "There's a billion to one chance of any aluminum you swallow getting from your stomach to your brain. Normally it's washed out when you pee."

Still, over a lifetime, some aluminum does accumulate in everyone's brain. The body seems to be able to cope with it up to about two micrograms per gram of brain tissue. Why Alzheimer's patients accumulate more aluminum, pushing them beyond the tolerable limit, is not fully understood, says Kruck. Scientists suspect it may be a genetic trait, causing "leaks" in the body's resistance.

At present, there are no government restrictions on the use of aluminum additives in food. But many food manufacturers are dropping their use as scientific evidence builds about the dangers of aluminum to the human body, Kruck says.

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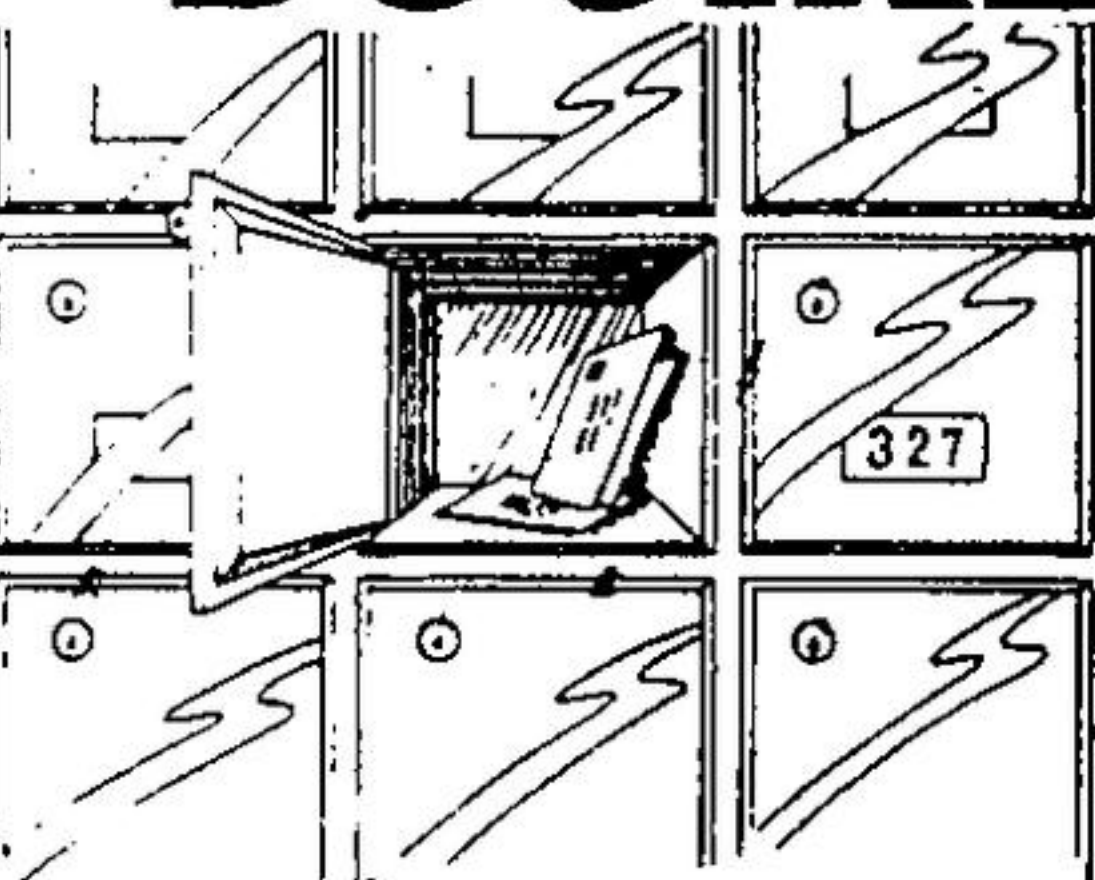
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