



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

7—The Canadian Champion, Wednesday, February 21, 1996

Physician sees red over vaccine stand

Dear Editor:

When I saw the front page of Friday's *Canadian Champion* (Vaccine Rationale... Feb. 16, 1996) I saw red.

Then I saw children suffering and dying. I saw a six-year-old patient of mine dying of tetanus. She couldn't talk, couldn't breathe. The gentlest touch, any sound, even a ray of light would send this child into excruciating convulsions. I saw the look of terror and grief in her parents' eyes when I told them their little girl was dying. This child would have lived had she been vaccinated.

I saw a 14-year-old girl develop encephalitis after catching measles. She had been a high school cheerleader, an honours student, and

president of her class. She now couldn't recognize her parents and her friends, she couldn't talk, she couldn't walk or care for herself.

I saw the suffering in her mother's eyes. She carried a double burden. She saw both her daughters' suffering, and the loss of promise and potential in a child who could no longer understand. This girl could have been a community leader, a loving wife and a mother today, had she been given the second dose of measles vaccine children are receiving now through the province.

I saw my patients who lived among the garbage heaps of Miami, Niger. I saw their children playing playing in the open sewers. I can imagine their look of astonishment and disbelief if I were to tell them that in Canada we were going to stop vaccinating our children. They would tell me that in Africa, they valued their children more than we do in Canada.

I saw the parts of the world where 50,000 people die every day of water borne diseases like polio. I saw my middle-aged patients who suffered polio before Dr. Jonas Salk's vaccine was developed. I'm sure Dr. Turner, and Ms Barbiero, that these people who suffered the ravages of polio are pleased to have a strong immune system, and that their daily weakness, back pain, depression, loss of mobility, and loss of income are small prices to pay.

I told the Milton Ratepayers Association at their meeting last Thursday that we are but soldiers fighting a never-ending battle against the forces of infection. This battle has been going on since the creation of the planet. Our weapon is knowledge. The other side's weapons are complacency, ignorance and half-truths.

In North America, and northern Europe, we enjoy our relative good health because of the

work, suffering, and sacrifice of Anton van Leeuwenhoek, Ignaz Semmerlweiss, Robert Lister, Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, Alexander Fleming, Jonas Salk and many others. These scientists first identified the bacteria and viruses that cause illness, and developed the first rudimentary weapons to fight them.

We have benefited from their work. In the 20th century, the average life expectancy has increased due to public health measures such as water and sewage treatment, and vaccination.

However, if more people allow themselves to be misled, then, diphtheria, tetanus, polio, cholera, typhoid fever, meningitis, rubella and other horrific diseases will become household words in Milton and we will be faced with the same bleak, but informed choices of my patients in Africa and the Caribbean.

Garnet Maley, M.D., Milton

Dateline

Dateline is a free listing of coming events only. The column is available to local community groups to assist in promoting their future events. Only charitable or non-profit community groups may use this service. We can only guarantee one issue of publicity closest to the date of the occurrence although more insertions are possible if demand is low.

Notices for Dateline should be written and handed in at the office of The Champion, 191 Main St. E., mailed to us at P.O. Box 248, Milton, Ont., L9T 4N9, or faxed to (905)878-4943. The final deadline is noon Friday for Wednesday's edition and noon Wednesday for Friday's edition. Dateline items will not be accepted by telephone.

Wednesday Feb. 21

Mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies are invited to find out more information from the **Milton La Leche League**. The group meets at Cherish Family Resource Centre, 540 Childs Dr., at 8 p.m. The topic is "The Birth of Your Baby and Baby's First Weeks. Nursing babies are welcome. For more information, call 878-6387, 876-0772 or 878-4803.

The Women's Information and Support Centre of Milton, 917 Nipissing Rd., holds **Women's Night Out** from 7 to 9 p.m. Women are invited to drop by the centre, which provides information on community resources for women, a lending library on women's issues and friendly support. Call Sally at 853-5807 for information.

Ladies are invited to attend **Coffee Hour** in the Allendale auditorium, 185 Ontario St., from 9:30 to 11 a.m. The special feature is "Herbs and Vitamins for Health" with Rina Dixon. The event also features an interlude of musical selections and guest speaker Betty Brooks. Admission is free and babysitting is provided.

Thursday Feb. 22

The Victorian Order of Nurses holds a **foot care clinic** at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Dr., from 9 a.m. to noon. The cost is \$15. For further information or an appointment, call 875-1631. Foot care clinics are by appointment only.

The **Living with Cancer Group** meets in the Fellowship Room of St. Paul's United Church, 123 Main St. E., from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Led by nurses, group discussion provides emotional support and practical guidance to patients and their family and friends. For more information, contact Eleanor at 878-1876 or the Canadian Can-

• see DATELINE on page 8

The Canadian Red Cross Society BLOOD DONOR CLINIC

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WHEN?: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

TIME?: 1:30 PM - 8:00 PM

**WHERE?: HOLY ROSARY PARISH HALL
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