

Medication and the older adult

by BETH MCADAM

Beth McAdam recently attended the Community Gerontology Program presented by Confederation College. The Program sponsored a workshop on Medication and the Older Adult held on May 5 in Sibley Hall. Mrs. McAdam recently reported on the workshop to the Chimo Club.

"The Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens prepared this program to stimulate discussion regarding medication and the Older Adult. Scientific advances have produced many aids to help people alleviate temporary or chronic discomforts, provide cures in some instances and help individuals to adjust or return to normal life. As with every advance there is the possibility of some misuse or abuse.

The Senior adult of the 1980's has lived through the greatest number of social, economic, technological changes and scientific breakthroughs in the history of the world. Seniors of today are the survivors. Technological changes in such areas as transportation are most incredible. We've progressed from the horse and buggy to the airplane and beyond. One disadvantage is that we walk less and have become a less physically active society. We have moved from the "over the fence" and "town hall" gatherings, to the radio, the television and satellites that bring us news almost as it happens from all parts of the world.

Older adults remember the 'hard days' of the depression and the pride there was in "standing on your own feet." We moved into the "affluent" society and into new areas of attitudes of "rights" and "the world owes me a living." Due to their backgrounds some seniors are probably better equipped and prepared to cope with today's changes - such as recession and times of transition.

Scientifically there have also been many changes, some of these changes have improved our lifestyles, such as the world of medicine, but have also created some new problems.

For those people in our older population who have several chronic illnesses, multiple medications may be prescribed to alleviate the symptoms caused by these diseases and this is where the problem often begins. A

society which has witnessed the virtual eradication of serious infectious diseases by the use of what we call "miracle drugs" would look to medication that will cure chronic illness. However, chronic illnesses caused by life-style related problems, such as obesity, excessive use of alcohol, smoking, exposure to chemicals, pollutants and excessive stress, do not necessarily respond to medication the same way as in the case of an infectious disease. A change of lifestyle should be investigated for positive results.

The use of medications in the case of chronic illness diagnosed in some older adults may have side-effects. Multiple medications may be prescribed which themselves may create symptoms requiring further medication. Adverse drug reactions are increased with the overuse of sedatives, sleeping pills and tranquilizers, such as rashes, nausea, weakness and confusion.

It was quoted that "The young and old both have a drug problem. They just take different drugs and have different pushers."

Panel members were Mrs. Connie Oja for the Intergroup Council, Paul Lucas Pharmacist, Dr. R.L. Hutchinson M.D., V.O.N. L. Nalezty on Nursing Linda Aho Gerontology worker Student Confederation College of Applied Arts and Technology.

Lucas spoke on problems in the taking of drugs. Old medication - once the Dr. takes you off a drug destroy any you have left preferably by flushing it down the toilet. A drug is beyond usefulness once the date has expired. Do not store drugs on window sills or in the bathroom. High humidity causes a breakdown of the medication. Keep the drugs in a cool dry place and out of the reach of children. Keep your drugs in their separate vials.

When you visit your doctor take all your drugs with you, and write down any questions you may want to ask him.

If you are travelling out of the country, carry a list of medications and the kind of use.

Never increase, or decrease the dosage of your medication. See the doctor first.

If one's memory is poor, mark on the calendar or use a pill reminder box with

one day's supply. Many place their daily pills in envelopes for a week's supply.

Don't make changes if you have side effects from your drugs. Contact your doctor or speak to your pharmacist. Many times we have problems because while we are taking prescriptions we are also taking over the counter drugs and this can cause drug interaction.

Do not take aspirins if you are taking blood thinners. Stick to one pharmacist he has the basis of your medication profile, and in this way you will not run into problems as he can refer to your drugs. Should you take over the counter drugs, he can tell you if it will interfere with your prescribed drugs.

Mrs. Nalezty the VON worker spoke on the nursing in the home and the misuse of drugs, especially those recommended by family or friends.

The patient in their home must have a good knowledge of what drugs they take because many suffer from forgetfulness or confusion. The improper use of drugs cause many problems. Their hearing is poor. They don't understand, and confusion is their problem. Dexterity is another problem. Not being able to open their medication bottles or vials. Speak to your pharmacist - he will make it easier for you to be able to open your container. If you are out somewhere and you realize you forgot your pills at home, don't ever take one offered you by a friend who may be one with a similar heart pill. If your friend says what's good for me should be good for you - it is not the case. Our body chemistry varies from person to person. Many patients purge themselves with Tums and antacids, containing alcohol and caffeine which interfere with prescribed drugs. Inform one's family of the drugs you are taking. Keep a vial of information of drugs and any particular ailment so that if an ambulance is called they can take this with them. A suggested place to keep this vial is in the fridge door and the driver can easily obtain it.

A patient must be truthful with his doctor. The doctor makes his diagnosis on what you tell him. Be truthful - tell all. There's a responsibility of the doctor to the patient and of the patient to the doctor.

Loneliness is a big factor among the elderly. Encourage them to get involved with activities such as are offered in senior citizen centres. Many become addicted to drugs or alcohol through lone-

ness. Visit the elderly in their homes or take them out for a drive or even a walk down the street.

A film called Wise Use of Drugs was shown and a good deal of information was derived from it.

The people assembled broke into groups and discussed what they had seen.

Do not hoard your pills. Take them as prescribed and until they are all used, even if you feel better after the first one or

two. If any group would like to obtain the above mentioned film it can be ordered through Joan Gale, Addiction Research Foundation, Lillie St. Thunder Bay Ont.

Danny O'Keefe - next stop nationals

by MARYLYN TURCOTTE

The 1982-83 Gymnastics season has been one packed with hard work and continuing success for Danny O'Keefe and his coach Betty Tate.

Danny completed his 1982 season by placing fifth overall at the Provincial competition, held at York University last May.

He then spent the largest part of his summer holidays attending a gymnastics camp near Temagami Ontario.

At the beginning of the 1982-83 season, Danny moved out of provincial stream compe-

titution and into national stream. He competes now in the "Tyro National" category. This includes all of the boys aged thirteen and fourteen years who compete at the national level.

Last August Danny and Betty attended a two week long training session held at the Canada Games training camp.

In September he competed in a Canada Games selection meet held in Hamilton. The meet was for boys aged nineteen years and younger. Danny placed eleventh overall.

Then in December on

to Toronto for a competition in which Danny placed fifth.

In April 1983, Danny and the other members of the Terrace Bay Tumblers competitive team, Andrew Bonnema, Krysta Ditchfield, Tanya Ditchfield, Sandra McDougall and Lisa Heinrich competed in the gymnastics meet held here in Terrace Bay. All of the members of the team performed well and are a credit to their club and their community.

In April as well Danny attended a two day competition held in Mississauga. This was a provincial meet for nation-

al stream gymnasts which qualified the top six competitors of each category for the Canadian National competition. This will be held in Banff in June.

Danny's results were fabulous. He placed fourth both days of competition.

He is now one of the six "Tyro National" boys who will be representing Ontario at the National competition.

Congratulations Danny and Betty. Your hard work and dedication are certainly bringing you great rewards.

We are all very proud of you. Good luck in Banff.

St. John Ambulance - 100 years

In 1945 when a grain elevator exploded in what was then Fort William, the last paragraph in the Chronicle story said, "Members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, with stretchers and other first aid equipment were early at the elevator and were able to assist authorities in giving treatment to the injured."

In 1951, a bus and train collided at Coniston, near Sudbury. This time it was first aiders trained by St. John in INCO's Copper Cliff plant who were first on

the scene. Seven people were dead, and 20 injured, some of them seriously. The men worked in temperatures of 40 below, applying first aid and protecting the victims against shock until they could be taken several miles to the nearest hospitals. The Sudbury Brigade unit was then asked to help maintain a blood grouping clinic for the victims.

When a major emergency strikes, the Brigade is there, assisting authorities, the pro-

fessionals, the fire fighters, ambulance attendants, police. They're part of the response team, these volunteers who are secretaries, assembly line workers, truck drivers, housewives. St. John Ambulance Brigade phone numbers are on the list in emergency plans all over Ontario.

What they bring to a crisis are first aid skills, compassion, sometimes considerable courage, and a willingness to do what needs to be done, even when that is sad or

boring or grisly.

St. John Ambulance is celebrating its 100th anniversary in Canada in 1983. It was organized in its modern form in England in the 1870's when humanitarians started the ambulance movement to take newly organized first aid skills into England's mines and mills, and into service to the general public. The work of the volunteer Brigade during crises may be the proudest part of the organization's long history.



The Lake Superior high school Soccer Team lost the NSSWAA Soccer Championship in the final game to Marathon with a 3-0 score. The game was part of the NSSWAA Tournament held in Terrace Bay. Marathon

subsequently went on to play Hammar skjold High School and lost 5-0. Coaches Bill McDougall and John Vandergraaf said that they were "exceptionally pleased with the teams performance this year."