

Book Reviews

The UV Advantage : The Medical Breakthrough That Shows How to Harness the Power of the Sun for Your Health

by Michael F. Holick, Ph.D., M.D.
with Mark Jenkins. ibooks, Inc. NY.
2004. Paperback, 224 pages

“Turn off that TV and get outside!” Those dread words of my mother’s were the bane of my idea of an ideal childhood: plant oneself in front of the television, and stay there. Not in my parents’ house. Weekday afternoon or Saturday morning, cartoons were out and playing outside was in. When we pleaded that none of our friends were outside, Mom said, “They’ll see you and they’ll come out.” That’s true; eventually they did, after they were done watching TV. When I got home from summer camp, one of my Dad’s highest compliments was, “It’s about time you got some color on you.” Every photo I’ve ever seen of myself as a kid shows that I was a platinum-haired, sun-bleached blondie. With a nice tan.

Things are different today; we hear every mother (and practically all doctors) say, “Put on your sunscreen!” But now Michael Holick, Ph.D., M.D. tells us what our “old school” mothers, or grandmothers, told us first: sunshine is good. And I tend to believe him. Maybe it’s his nearly thirty years experience teaching physiology and biochemistry at Harvard, MIT, Tufts, and Boston University. Perhaps it was his 52-page curriculum vitae, with his 10 books, over 200 reviews, and no fewer than 260 original research reports. Maybe it’s just common sense. But mostly, it’s the strength of the facts in his book, *The UV Advantage*.

Right from the first chapter, wryly entitled “The Facts of Light,” Holick provides an illuminating look at how sunlight is not merely good for our bones, but is also very good for the rest of us. Sunlight and the vitamin D it gives us relieves depression; reduces risk of type I diabetes, rheumatoid

arthritis, and multiple sclerosis; lowers blood pressure as well as medication; and prevents cancer of the prostate, breast, ovaries, and digestive tract. And while we’re at it, Holick affirms that sun exposure cannot cause vitamin D toxicity.

The kids of my generation baked all day in the sun: back yard, ballpark or beach. We covered, if we covered at all, only enough to keep the sun out of our eyes while catching a fly ball, or perhaps to prevent burning. Sun block? Never heard of it. As a result, and in fairness to critics, we probably got more sun than is safe. It must be clearly said that Holick absolutely, positively does not advocate such exposure. He is talking ten minutes, not ten hours. *The UV Advantage* contains twelve pages of detailed “Holick Safe Sun Tables” that sort you by skin type, indicate the latitude of your city, and then tell you, month by month, and by time of day, how many minutes—that’s minutes—of sun are safe for you. This straightforward tool will delight readers as much as it has annoyed dermatologists.

Holick is ultra-moderate about ultra-violet. Moderates catch it from both ends. Sun-worshippers and tanning-booth shareholders think his general recommendation for ten minutes of unprotected exposure to full sun three times a week is too timid. The American Academy of Dermatology (of which he is a member) thinks he’s nuts to recommend any sun-time at all. But Dr. Holick is what I would call a militant middle-of-the-roader. He goes out in the noonday sun, yet he is neither mad dog nor Englishman. He may be out, but not for too long. He has emphatically stated that “he does not advocate tanning.” In an interview, Holick told me he wears protective clothes and uses sunblock, but only after he has had what he calls “sensible sun exposure.” For such as this, he was fired from Boston University Medical Center’s dermatology department in 2004.

The UV Advantage makes effective use

of pedagogical techniques ranging from an engaging first-person narrative to quoting a Peanuts cartoon. Students attending a Holick lecture would be fortunate indeed: you cannot help but learn when the presentation is this clear. His book is well organized, with summary boxes, appropriate graphics including maps and charts, a glossary, and a good index. Seventeen pages of scientific references complete the volume.

Davy Crockett said, "Be sure you're right, then go ahead." There is more than conviction in Holick's writing; there is certainty. When interviewed, I detected that same sense of assuredness. There is justification for it: Holick is arguably the world's leading authority on vitamin D. In *The UV Advantage*, he and coauthor Mark Jenkins have demonstrated what may be the apex of real scholarship: managing to summarize an intense array of sunlight research into one relatively small and totally uncomplicated paperback.

Now we know why our parents were right to give us a push out the door and into the sunshine. Dr Holick's push is more gentle, but unmistakably in the same direction.

—Reviewed by Andrew W. Saul
JOM Assistant Editor

Your Personal Life: Measuring What Your Specific Body Needs to Live Lean, Long, Strong & Better

by Greg Tefft with Bill Quateman
Angel Mind, Westlake Village, CA
2006. Paperback, 329 pages

My older brother has been lifting weights for forty years. When you watch him, you can actually see the iron bar bend. 91-year-old Jack LaLanne exercises two hours every day of his life... and takes no prescription medications. With such exemplary inspiration, at 51 I'm in better shape now than I was in college. "Health

and strength of a high degree is the natural heritage of man and woman," wrote Bernarr Macfadden, who himself could tear a deck of playing cards in half, twice over. Dr. Greg Tefft would agree. He, along with Bill Quateman, has written *Your Personal Life: Measuring What Your Specific Body Needs to Live Lean, Long, Strong & Better*. Tefft, a naturopathic physician, is also a three-time Natural Mr. America bodybuilding title holder. And yes, photos are included in the book. He was launched into nutritional medicine after sudden multiple asthma attacks put him flat on his back in the hospital. This experience, he says, "confirmed the uselessness of conventional medicine in detecting the cause of this problem and correcting it naturally. My doctors deluged me in drugs that they promised I would need to take forever. It was only through blind luck that I came upon special non-conventional nutrition and profiling which allowed me to sort out the true causes of my asthma and correct this problem." What he learned developed into a twenty-year advocacy of personalized nutrition testing that is the subject of his book.

Your Personal Life's ten chapters are well organized and written with the energy of the dedicated coach. This is pleasant, and highly motivational, for the reader. The book focuses on the detection and correction of nutritional needs via metabolic profiling and targeted nutrition therapy. This is accompanied by a short history of metabolic typing and a discussion of toxin elimination therapy, and supported with clinical cases. Being a self-reliant type myself, I enjoyed the spirit expressed in "Determining Your Own Nutritional Prognosis" (Chapter 9) and the unmistakable "come on, go for it!" attitude that permeates the book. Many summary charts and other graphics are provided, plus four appendices, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index that would benefit from expansion.

“The body’s metabolic types are derived from primal genetic designs modified through many generations,” says the author. “Feed the genes as they desire and a maximum lifespan is insured.” Dr. Roger J. Williams, who introduced the idea of biochemic individuality half a century ago, would be pleased at Tefft’s modern application of the genetotrophic concept.

Your Personal Life has the voice of experience: Dr. Tefft has personally administered more than 100,000 nutrition tests. No surprise that he is a naturopath. Medical doctors go to medical schools where they learn medicine, practice medicine, and prescribe medicines. Most medical personnel remain largely unfamiliar with nutrition, and tend to dismiss it without knowing about what they’re dismissing. This is a great loss to the profession as well as to the public. *Your Personal Life* provides a welcome second opinion, presenting orthomolecular nutrition as a sensible alternative for our overweight, overmedicated, and ever-ailing population.

—Reviewed by Andrew W. Saul,
JOM Assistant Editor

What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Depression

Michael Schachter, MD, Deborah Mitchell
Warner Wellness, Lebanon, Indiana
2006. Paperback, 397 pages

From the series – *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About* – Dr. Schachter’s book explains effective treatments for depression. Many sick, suffering and vulnerable patients take their tired brains to overloaded doctors who efficiently label them ‘depressed’ and quickly write prescriptions. In today’s world of fast facts and fast foods, patients who trust fast care may stay depressed. And yet, what could be more effective than giving antidepressant,

anti-anxiety, and mood stabilizing medications to the drained, depleted, helpless and hopeless-looking depressives who trudge into the offices of their brain-doctoring psychiatrists? While practicing as a psychiatrist and medical director of the Schachter Center for Complementary Medicine, Dr. Michael Schachter saw many depressed patients, listened to their stories and helped them recover and live well. Now he teaches us an integrated approach and shares their recovery stories. Following the road less traveled but well known to orthomolecular physicians, he recommends diagnosing the root cause(s) of each patient’s discomfort before offering safe, effective and restorative treatments.

If the painful state of depression can result from various causes, distresses and medical problems, surely a competent psychiatrist would know how to assess patients and use medical tests and procedures to diagnose properly before trying to heal. Schachter explains that depression usually involves a neurotransmitter deficiency. Without getting too technical, he explains that when the brain sends chemical signals, some excite while others calm. Imbalances, strains and problems can overload, drain and deplete these biochemicals, producing the characteristic symptoms that get labelled as depression or dysthymia or bipolar disorder. The DSM diagnostic manual has many labels but Dr. Schachter does not get sidetracked label-picking. Instead he considers whether each patient’s imbalance involves nutritional, hormonal, environmental, gastrointestinal, medical, pharmacological or genetic factors.

He encourages patients to review their diets and study their biochemical profiles for clues which might explain why they suffer from depression. He advises neurotransmitter and medical testing and thorough diagnostic work-ups. Assuming that patients can find doctors who know about restorative orthomolecular treatments, Dr. Schachter recommends customizing regi-

mens of amino acids, essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and even herbs to refuel depleted brains and alleviate the symptoms of depression. He introduces an encouraging selection of supplements with just the right amount of detail to reassure us that they have been researched and found safe and effective. Then he explains how our foods, enzymes, toxins and even hormones may also need adjusting. After restorative treatments, many depressed people recover but even so, Schachter counsels building resilience with exercise, light, relaxation and energy work.

Finally, what about brain pills? Do antidepressants always work as advertised? First, these pills do not restore depleted brain fuels; furthermore Schachter teaches us that some drugs can actually cause problems. Scientific studies have found that man-made antidepressants can interfere with neurotransmitters; these pills may not work properly unless our brains are well fed and even so, synthetic medications may not restore normal signaling patterns. Dr. Schachter is not against medications; he knows that many patients take brain pills however he recommends learning the facts, monitoring risks and using restorative regimens along with medications. Schachter's book carefully explains an integrative approach for the safe and effective treatment of depression, with facts that your regular doctor may not tell you.

—Review by Robert Sealey, B.Sc.

Naturopathic Nutrition: A Guide to Nutrient-Rich Food and Nutritional Supplements for Optimum Health
Abram Hoffer and Jonathan Prousky
CCNM Press, Toronto, 2006
Paperback, 350 pages.

Nutritional science may, in the end, be reduced to a single short sentence: "Eat right." But the whys and wherefores of nutritional biochemistry have filled

countless thousands of texts. Occupying the middle ground is the reliable how-to health book, of which *Naturopathic Nutrition* is a prime example. Here is entry-level nutritional medicine clearly explained by two experienced physicians who also happen to be very good writers. One is Dr. Jonathan Prousky, Assistant Professor of Clinical Nutrition at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. I have heard Dr. Prousky present on a number of occasions, and he writes every bit as well as he speaks. The other author is Dr. Abram Hoffer, the near-legendary founding father of orthomolecular medicine. Readers of Hoffer's two dozen other books will quickly recognize his inimitable voice and penchant for penning some of the greatest one-liners in medicine. "In our early studies," writes Hoffer, recalling his early research back in the 1950s, "we found we could inject chronic schizophrenics with 90,000 mg of vitamin C and still find none in the urine." So much for the hackneyed "you won't absorb all those vitamins" argument. Then there is the authors' No Sugar Law, and its corollary declaration: "We are convinced that high sugar intake is a greater risk factor for heart disease than is the fat level of a food." For the two-thirds of our population that is overweight, here is another bestseller-cover-worthy statement on the benefits of eating unprocessed foods: "You can actually eat more and lose weight at the same time." Perhaps my favorite quote of all has to do with how our health costs will not go down until we "return to the whole living diets of our ancestors, or until we adopt the feeding principle and practices of any good zoo."

Hoffer and Prousky, while separated by decades of age, achieve complete editorial synchronicity. Together, they offer a forthright, uncomplicated health plan: don't eat junk food, and do take supplements. While many books offer similar advice, *Naturopathic Nutrition* does a par-

ticularly good job explaining why. There is a conservative, common-sense tone to the book that would likely be very persuasive to any initially doubtful reader.

Naturopathic Nutrition is well organized into major sections, each containing two or three chapters. The first three sections, "Our Health Dilemmas," "Health Costs of the High-Tech Diet," and "Health Benefits of a Naturopathic Diet" are justification and motivation for personal lifestyle change. The next section contains chapters discussing nutrient deficiencies and dependencies. In addition, a nutrient supplements section, which appropriately constitutes the largest portion of the book, discusses therapeutic uses, safety, and optimum dose recommendations. The nutrient content of foods, and a number of interesting case histories, are also included.

Chapter 7, "Optimum Absorption," is especially well done. It focuses on the problems with and treatment of low stomach

acid, and includes a self-evaluation questionnaire. Practical indeed, since even the best of diets is of little use if not absorbed. I found myself quoting this helpful chapter to a family member even before I finished writing this review.

As with other CCNM Press volumes that I have seen, the present book is a handsome presentation incorporating good use of headings, uncluttered tables, and ample references. As readers so often wish to be able to quickly look up mentions of a specific illness or find comment on a specific study, I hope the publisher will duly consider adding footnote numbers and an index.

Good introductions for the public make good reviews for the professional. All readers will therefore appreciate and benefit from a good dose of *Naturopathic Nutrition*.

—Review by Andrew Saul, Ph.D.
JOM Assistant Editor