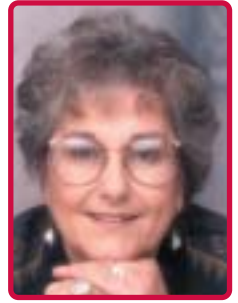


NO SUN EVER? PLEASE! ENOUGH IS ENOUGH ALREADY!

by Leah Curtin RN PhD(h)



Sometimes I think I just wake up in a crabby mood. At any rate, this morning, while sweating my way through my NordicTrack, I was watching the news to distract me. It was pretty much 'same old', '4 same old' violence, destruction and death until the newscaster came on with a solemn pronouncement about your health. "Researchers now report that NO amount of sunlight is good for you." The reporter then went on to say that (and I do not doubt it) we have a veritable epidemic of skin cancer caused by exposure to the sun's ultra-violet rays, and doctors have now concluded that any amount of exposure to the sun is harmful.

PLEASE! Enough already. We are creatures of the sun and the earth. We would not exist without them. Shall we all skulk around heavily masked, polarized sunglasses covering our faces? Shall we only go out after dark, or are there dangers to moon rays too (after all, they are only reflected sunrays)?

This is precisely the kind of report that undermines the credibility of medical research. Everywhere I go, I hear people saying they don't know what to believe anymore. This latest is only one although in my opinion the most egregious one in a long line of dogmatic pronouncements derived from limited scientific studies. For example, first women were told that they must go on HRT or risk broken bones, heart attacks and even premature senility. Now we are told that HRT may be appropriate in some women, but only for a very short period of time. Americans were also told to avoid but-

ter and eat margarine instead because the animal fat in butter makes them prone to heart disease. Now it turns out that the trans-fatty acids in margarine actually are more harmful than the animal fats in butter. And I am not even going to touch the Atkins diet controversy -but it seems that Dr. Atkins was onto something: seems that too many carbs do affect insulin levels, and now some researchers are tying high carb diets directly into the new epidemic of Type 11 diabetes. Is it any wonder people are both confused and frustrated?

And now we have reporters trumpeting about that NO amount of sun is good for us. Avoid the sun or get skin cancer. Period. Full Stop. What about getting terminal depression because you've been deprived of exposure to sunlight? Is that good for you? I think not! Tons of research out there tells you that we've got a terrible epidemic of depression -- and there is one form of it that definitely is related to sun deprivation. In fact, as one reads the research, there are so many epidemics that it is absolutely amazing that there is any one at all left alive!

Needless to say, in health care circles, it is practically heresy to say anything against research. In fact we are told that it is absolutely appalling that most medical practices are not research based. Instead, various practices and treatments are based on traditions passed down from one generation to the next. Reminds me a bit of the 'old wives tales' like the one that said you shouldn't frighten a pregnant woman or it could harm the child (and so on). We all laughed and poohpoohed such superstition when I was a nursing student. And yet now, we have neuro-biologists telling us that the fetus in utero can be affected by his mother's surroundings. In fact, it is now au courant to read to the child still in utero -- and to play soothing music: Bach, Beethoven, Mozart -- to the unborn. Seems like babies get all jangled up from hard rock, rap and the like! So maybe the old wives weren't all wrong.

Seems like every generation is absolutely sure that the truth it uncovers is the one, the only, the Absolute Truth. Well maybe, but then maybe not. Seems to me that we need to look at the old and the new, and adopt what seems to make the most sense - and keep those things, too, which seem to be the most sensible. And not to generalize the findings of any one study, no matter how well conducted, to the entire universe!

Dr. Leah Curtin publishes The Journal of Clinical Systems Management, a fact-filled scan of health care in the U.S. She is a member of the adjunct faculty at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing and is the author of more than 200 articles, 240 editorials and 6 books written for professionals.

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