Springing Forward (& Cursing Botanical Sexism)

Plus, My Entirely Accidental (Curative?) Discovery

March 9, 2024 By Mike Barr

I'm not saying I like it. No, I still think it's a stupid, semi-sadistic, even dangerous war-time relic. (And I see we could up and move to PR, USVI, Hawaii, Arizona, India, most of Mexico, and a few other not too terrible places to put it all in the past. Just that somehow the spring change always seems a little less disruptive than the autumn one. It was becoming too light too early in the a.m. over the past month, and will be kind of fun to have an extra hour of daylight after work. But check in with me Tuesday or Wednesday; I may be singing a different tune.

And if you are fortunate to have control of your schedule and time, I always recommend easing into the change— over a period of 7-10 days. Or just say no! (Why don't more people say no?)

Maybe it's because at thirteen or so, I was a paperboy? Yeh, fifty-two houses on the route, although the Prestons and Sullivans were often away and put their accounts on hold. Delivered after school weekdays, but first thing in the morning Saturdays and Sundays. My sister sometimes helped me. (Those Sunday papers, even then, could be whoppers.) And during the famed Blizzard of '78 Dad even pitched in. Everybody got their paper. And on time. I was paid $11.70 each Saturday and was thrilled. Can you imagine? That's $1.67 a day. What a dope I was.

I also came from a family of farmers. Seems like Dad mostly helped with hay baling, hog slopping and milking cows. I never saw any chickens or other fowl. And by the time I was ten, Grandpa's farming mostly consisted of his quarter acre vegetable (and strawberries, raspberries, melons) patch out back, abutting a freeway (!!)— and a part-time gig hauling cattle and hogs off to (thinking the unassuming abattoir was Ebersole's, down Route 13 in Fredericktown or Mount Vernon) their, well you know, in his faded red wooden truck. (I see now that it must have been in Chesterville.)

Like many of us, Ed White, Elaine Stritch, David Corkery, Christopher Barillas, Stephen Gendin (I'm remembering Ypsilanti?) jump immediately to mind, our presumably formative years took place in Ohio or Michigan. I forgot Phyllis Diller! (BC/EFA pal Tom Viola hails from Pittsburgh.) And then somehow we ended up in Greenwich Village or even— incredibly, completely independently— at the Lesbian & Gay Community Center itself, as it was then called, each Monday evening, for something like five continuous years, without fail. Until it all fell apart.

I guess I never knew that Michael Cunningham was from Cincinnati. And I overlooked ACT UP/New York alums Jim Provenzano (Ashland), Brian Yealy (Dublin), and Liz Tracey (Lakewood)! Danny Fass (Columbus). Joe Fontechhio & Todd Marsh (Mentor).

All this is a wistful middle-aged man's way of looking for an explanation for why it has always seemed easier to get up and to go to bed one hour earlier than one hour later. Does everyone have that experience?

But as I glance across the way at the bulging buds of our Greek neighbors' (positively radiant when in bloom) magnolia tree out back. Or the red-hued tips of the skyscraper tall trees behind the 19th century monastery across the way (like Greenwood Cemetery, if smaller scale, a little-known urban oasis) that if you let it, will transport you to Spain or Italy (or Crete or Cyprus?) in just one slow, deep breath, I also have to think of what is to come.

It seems it's actually the plane trees that are most to blame for the April (increasingly extending into May) epidemic of antigenic excess. Back when I first lamented about how May not April was the Cruelest Month, eleven years ago, I learned that many cities plant only male trees because the females' fruits were so, well, messy. I never really found out for certain how true that is, but the idea seems not only to have caught on but to have even been named: botanical sexism!

Who would have ever thought I would come to lament the presence of only men around me? Live and learn.

But I did discover one thing. Completely by accident. And that's that these allergic flare-ups come from an imbalanced, even slightly inflamed, gastrointestinal milieu. That's where the cure— even a preventive cure, comes in. (Mauricio, Dr. D, are you there?) And it's not something one can remedy in a couple of days, or by just popping a few capsules. But if you're up for a really cool experiment, sign up for my private newsletter, All of Us Still Learning, here, as I don't know if it's advisable to publicly post what might be construed as medical advice. In the meantime, some geek-out, teaser "further reading" finds:

- Relationship between Gut Microbiota and Allergies in Children: A Literature Review (2023)
- The Association Between Intestinal Bacteria and Allergic Diseases—Cause or Consequence? (2021)
- Allergy associations with adult fecal microbiota: Analysis of the American Gut Project (2016)
- The Gut Microbiome of Adults with Allergic Rhinitis Is Characterized by Reduced Diversity and an Altered Abundance of Key Microbial Taxa Compared to Controls (2021)
- Hay fever could be linked to our gut and nose bacteria (The Conversation, April 21, 2023)
- Microbiome and Allergic Diseases: Mini Review Article (2018)

While the Conversation piece, for one, proposes probiotics (and the Mini Review, a combination of pre- and probiotics (aka synbiotics)) as allergy ameliorating interventions, in my (and others') experience a more top to bottom rebalancing is called for (weeding as well as seeding, even if we now know (or think we know) that no probiotic product actually takes up residence in your GI tract)—and requires a minimum of 30 days and perhaps up to 2 or 3 months, or several 30- to 60-day cycles throughout the year. Details in subsequent post.

For now though, some of my supplement company sales reps are nudging me with their quercetin- and stinging nettle-based and other such products. In the interest of expediency, I will share them first. It has always been my experience that most folks are most always looking for quick fixes as opposed to longer, more "root cause" and lasting cures. So here goes...

Connecticut HQ'd Designs For Health, founded in 1989, offers these proposed remedies (comments are hers):

- HistaEze - "No longer need to use steroids during allergy season"

- Quercetin + Nettles - "Additional support; Add in as we get closer to the end of April"

- ImmunoMod-A - "Helps to maintain a healthy and balanced immune response."

- IgGI Shield - "I love this product because it focuses on the [sequestering] of antigens [and the actual source of the aberrant immune system response, namely the gut].

I have DFH discount codes somewhere; let me look them up... Here we go: VIP (30%) for first-time/one time use; TAKE20 (20%) after that.

Then there is their overall Allergy Support Protocol, which to the HistaEze adds in a probiotic (6 Lactobacilli strains + 4 Bifidobacteria strains), omega-3 EFAs and vitamin D (with K1, K2 and GG). If you know your vitamin D is already within the optimal range (55-75 ng/ml), supplementation would not be indicated.

Similar products from Metagenics could include from among: Quercetin 500 or Sinuplex, one of their four vitamin C products, and one of their three probiotic products: UltraFlora Immune Booster, UltraFlora Balance or UltraFlora Spectrum (the one I currently take, along with Microbiome Labs' MegaSporeBiotic). If you know or suspect you have a Th1-Th2 imbalance; that is, lopsided, over-exuberant Th2 activity (I seem to have written about it, however sloppily, here), you might try their perilla seed extract product, Perimine. In traditional Chinese medicine, we tend to use the leaf more than the seed— but the tradition teaches distinct properties for each, and the

seed does appear to contain more of the desired anti-inflammatory compounds here.

And, of course, they are sort of famous for their omega-3's.

Other professional grade supplement companies I like (and use or have used) besides Metagenics include Douglas Labs (the naturopaths' brand), Pure Encapsulations, Researched Nutritionals, Integrative Therapeutics, Klaire Labs, Seeking Health and Seroyal/Pharmax Genestra.

One of my more colorful mentors, Robert Roundtree, frequently regales us about the unique efficacy of Thorne 's "phytosome-based" products, but because there is also a financial relationship there (and because I am now seeing their products at Target, Walmart and even in NYC subway ads!), it's difficult to gauge his true feelings (or clinical experience with the products).

I have soured a bit lately on Quicksilver Scientific, but they arguably have (some of) the most "thinking outside the box," if increasingly sales and not science driven, imo, approaches. Shade seems to think that everything is better in a liposome or nano-emulsion (but only because he has the patent on it?), and I'm just not convinced that's true. Plus, they are wildly over-dosing (again, imo only) B vitamins and more lately hormones (!!??), which makes me uncomfortable if not downright nervous/irritated. And Tony Robbins appears to be their unofficial celebrity spokesman. Need I say more? Didn't Suzanne Somers teach us anything??

I have clients & customers who are very loyal to the Standard Process (and Australia-based MediHerb sister company; herbalist Kerry Bone is a real treasure) brand, although I must confess I really do not understand their products much. (Not true, though, of MediHerb!) The whole "let your arm drop" in order to select which supplements your body "is asking for" (known in their biz as applied kinesiology), which SP trains their practitioners, almost exclusively chiropractors, to use, just sort of sets my B.S. detector off to a deafening air-raid siren scream.

And of course, I love my TCM herbal formula companies: Golden Flower, Seven Forests, Kan/KPC, the ever-underestimated and often overlooked Anaheim, CA-based Guan Ci Tang (!!) aka Active Herb, even Mayway and the recently bastardized Health Concerns (casualty of Covid, oddly enough). (Sorry again, but I just don't get Heiner Fruehauf's Classical Pearls. I find it all mostly terrific storytelling.) Sort of legacy brands, from I believe the 1970's (!!), are DaVinci and Allergy Research, for which I am developing newfound appreciation.

I hope I haven't left anyone out. Oops, Xymogen —and Biocidin (I absolutely love Biocidin)— and the relatively new kids on the block, taking the world by storm, upstarts Microbiome Labs and Pendulum.

(I am not at all a fan of OrthoMolecular Products. Theirs is certainly 99% hot air— and usurious

markups: when I was an intern, we would buy (wholesale) a bottle of their melatonin, as just one example, for $9 and resell it, at the MSRP, for $100. And people happily bought it!)

It’s the wild, wild west world we live in. I have my biases and blind spots to be sure, but I try to guide folks as honestly & competently as I can.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/springing-forward-preparing-allergy-season