

“FRESH AIR AND SUNSHINE” GOING BACK TO THE OLD WAYS IN THE FACE OF INFLUENZA PANDEMIC.

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Abstract

In as much as efforts are being made on development of potent vaccines for the eradication of the influenza currently ravaging the world (COVID-19), it is also pertinent that we look inward and borrow ideas from the past in proffering solutions to the pandemic, and going back the old ways by imploring the natures antibiotics as a measure to remedy the situation is one of the key ideas. Records from the 1918 pandemic showed that a combination of fresh air and sunlight seems to have prevented deaths among patients and infections among health workers. Research has proven that outdoor air is a natural disinfectant, equally sunlight is germicidal, thus both can kill the flu virus and other harmful germs.

Introduction

Fresh air and sunshine are among the oldest, health supporting concepts in medicine. Before the emergence of antibiotics, open air therapy was the standard treatment for infectious diseases. The importance of fresh and sunlight was emphasized by Dr. Arthur Ransome (1834 – 1922). “Abundant fresh air together with sunshine, acts antiseptically upon both the bodies and clothing of patients, destroying all organic impurities which may emanate from either, and so purifying the air that enters the respiratory organs” (R.A. Hobday: 2019)

With the discovery of the chemical antibiotics in the mid – 20th century, there was wide spread hope that this new medicine would eradicate certain diseases. At first, the new medicines seemed to live up to their promise. Yet, their widespread use since then has resulted in bacteria being resistant to them. To find new weapons against infection, scientists are taking a second look at disease control methods of the past. One of which involves harnessing the health benefits of sunshine and fresh air (Dancer 2013, Greenhalgh and Butler 2017).

Open air treatment is the therapeutic use of fresh air and sunshine. In a hospital or sanatorium, this may be done by ensuring good ventilation in an airy, sunny room or by housing patients outdoors in tents or other open forms of accommodation. During the 20th century, such treatment was used for people with infectious respiratory diseases such as influenza or tuberculosis (Hobday and Carson 2009).

Records from 1918 pandemic suggest one technique for dealing with influenza. Medics found that severely ill flu patients nursed outdoors recovered better than those

treated indoors. A combination of fresh air and sunlight played a vital role. Research shows that fresh air can kill the flu virus and other harmful germs.

In 1960s, researchers into biological warfare found that microbes when exposed to outdoor air were killed, but that when they were enclosed, they would remain viable for long. They called this the Open Air Factor (OAF) (Swain Frank 2013). Equally, sunlight is germicidal and there is now evidence it can kill the flu virus (Schuit M et al 2020)

Sunlight

Sunlight refers to the electromagnetic radiation of the sun that reaches the earth, particularly infrared, visible light and ultraviolet light. Sunlight is essential for human health and well being. Researchers have noted a link between exposure to the sun and lower blood pressure levels, with reduced death rates from cardiovascular issues. They suggest that exposure to sunlight triggers the skin to release stores of nitrogen oxides, which cause arteries to dilate, lowering blood pressure, and may reduce the impact of metabolic syndrome. Sun exposure is the most important natural source of vitamin D. The body uses the vitamin to absorb the calcium it needs to build and maintain bones. Additionally, vitamin D plays a key role in optimizing our immunity.

A 2016 study found that apart from its vitamin D making capabilities, sunlight actually energizes T-cells, the immune cells that fight infection. The low levels of blue light present in the sun's rays speed up T-cells movement, optimizing their response to pathogens. When sunlight shines on skin, the nerve endings absorb energy and send it throughout the entire body. A sensible amount of sun exposure nourishes and energizes the human body.

Fresh Air

Fresh air could be defined as the air outside as opposed to that within a room or other enclosed space. The health benefits of fresh air are enormous. Every cell in the body and therefore every function in the body rely upon a constant, fresh stream of oxygen. If one stays indoors or in an air conditioned environment for long period of time, the same air is breathed in again and again, causing the air to become stuffy and stale. Simply stepping outdoors and breathing in some fresh air can have a huge amount of health profits.

By inhaling fresh air, it helps to clear the lungs. This increases the amount of oxygen in the body giving greater energy and also giving the mind greater clarity. Healing from illness and injuries is pretty taxing on the body. Since every cell requires oxygen, it makes sense that replacing damaged cells increases the body's demand for air. While oxygen therapy has been shown to help improve recovery time, fresh air can help one feel better and heal faster too.

Fresh air is crucial for body's metabolism. It strengthens the immune system because white cells need extra oxygen to help beat off bacteria and viruses. Many plants put substances, including organic compound called phytoncides into the air that seem to boost immune function. Breathing in fresh air can help reduce airborne illness and

infection. This is because bacteria and viruses have a reduced chance of survival in fresh air. This is in comparison to warm, humid indoor environment in which they thrive.

Conclusion

One advantage of placing patients outside in the sun is that they can synthesize vitamin D in their skin, which they cannot do indoors. It has been hypothesized that low level of vitamin D may increase susceptibility to influenza (Canell et al 2006). However, more might be gained by introducing high level of natural ventilation in our homes, hospitals and work places, and by spending as much time outdoors as possible. The efficacy of open air treatment has been proven, and one has only try it to discover its value. While we await a potent vaccine to remedy the influenza ravaging the world right now it is also wise that we adopt some measures that include the ones specified by government agencies as well as utilizing that which the nature has given to us.

Refference

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