



THE HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN
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January 31, 1985

Mr. Elie W. Martel, MPP
Legislative Assembly Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A2

Dear Mr. Martel:

I received a copy of your communication with Mr. Drea concerning the Total Allergy Syndrome from Dr. Nikiforuk. I am on Dr. Nikiforuk's committee at the University of Toronto and have taken part in the attempt to put together a questionnaire for evaluating these patients.

This is indeed a very controversial area and unfortunately its very bound up with entrepreneurial American medicine and charlatanism. This is a most unfortunate circumstance for the patients who find themselves without adequate management.

As you may be aware the Ad Hoc Committee set up at the University of Toronto by Dr. Nikiforuk is an uneasy alliance between members of the orthodoxy and several clinical ecologists.

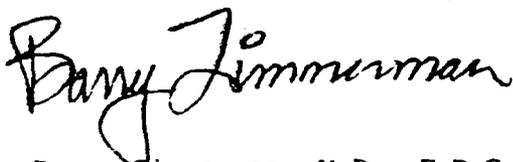
Unfortunately many of the tests and therapies being utilized in the treatment of the Total Allergy Syndrome by the ecologists are entirely unproven and in some cases worthless. I have recently examined the literature supporting several of these treatments and find that they are poorly validated and poorly researched. In particular there is a theory that chronic low-level candidiasis is behind many of the symptoms of Total Allergy Syndrome and that toxins released from the Candida infection in the bowel are responsible for depressing the immune system. As a bench immunologist of many years standing who returned to clinical paediatrics and allergy a few years ago, I am in a position to evaluate both the clinical aspects of this problem as well as the data pertaining to immune dysfunction. I would suggest that the data is extremely poor and that there have been no proper studies done to prove the hypothesis. Nevertheless, treatment is currently being employed with various anti-Candida agents and lymphoid extracts. All of which carry risk.

I feel strongly that prior to a treatment being used in a practitioner's office, it must be validated by controlled studies. There are many instances within orthodox medicine where a treatment has seemed to work extremely well until such time as it was put to a controlled-blind test when it is found to be either worthless or not nearly as effective as originally thought.

Furthermore, I become extremely concerned when the media dwell on specific rare cases and treatments in such a way that they arouse anxiety in parents. The recommendations publicized often concern manipulations of diet and the elimination of foods. This type of therapy can have significant consequences for growing infants and children. It is our hope that by simply doing an epidemiologic survey of patients being seen by the clinical ecologists and diagnosed as having Total Allergy Syndrome that we may be able to more clearly define the syndrome. Nevertheless, it seems incredible to me that such studies have not been done by the major clinics already dealing with large numbers of these patients, including the clinic in Texas and the clinic in Chicago. Publications from these institutions continue to be anecdotal, poorly controlled and unscientific.

The cost of this type of treatment is quite considerable and I believe the diagnosis and treatment of Total Allergy Syndrome should be provided but remain experimental until it has been more critically evaluated. Once it has been critically evaluated it will be possible to provide guidance to the practitioner in his office who does not have the experience to be able to interpret the literature on this condition. That is the reason why several orthodox members of the medical community are on the Ad Hoc Committee at the University of Toronto despite our misgivings about being associated with pseudoscience.

Sincerely,



Barry Zimmerman, M.D., F.R.C.P. (c)
Associate Professor of Paediatrics
University of Toronto
Chief, Division of Allergy
The Hospital for Sick Children

BZ/dac

cc Mr. Frank Drea
Ministry of Community and Social Services

Honourable Keith C. Norton, Q.C.
Minister of Health

Judge G. M. Thomson
Provincial Court (Family Division)

Dr. G. Wikiforuk
University of Toronto Ad Hoc Committee