

Submission to the College of Physicians and Surgeons
of Ontario, April 12, 1991, from the Canadian Society
for Environmental Medicine

In the 1960's Dr. Theron Randolph, one of the fathers of Clinical Ecology, began to describe patients whom he felt were reacting to levels of chemicals in the environment normally considered safe and innocuous. His observations were met with disdain and derision by the rest of the medical community.

However, the latest research regarding Environmental Sensitivity Syndrome, is proving that Dr. Theron Randolph's observations were correct.¹ In fact, because of independent literature reviews, this diagnosis is now being accepted as a valid clinical entity by the National Academy of Science (U.S.A.),² the Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.A.),³ the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (U.S.A.),⁴ several American states such as California, New Jersey and Maryland, and in Canada by Health & Welfare, Canada, Revenue Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the Ontario Ministry of Health, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Education.

The Waterloo Board of Education has built classrooms in three schools with a fourth on the way for the environmentally sensitive, with good results. The Burlington, Peel County and Halton Boards of Education have done the same and are meeting the needs of these students with good success.

However, because of literature reviews in position papers published by traditional allergists, no medical body of doctors has accepted the validity of this diagnosis. Only the California Medical Association had an official opinion which was quite negative.⁶ In the fall of 1989 this position was retracted at the same time as the California State Attorney General's office accepted Environmental Sensitivity Syndrome as a legitimate diagnosis for claiming disability. The literature reviews published in medical journals by traditional allergists and immunologists have been biased by their paucity of reviews of the positive literature, and by their reliance on negative studies published to date which had faulty design and were poorly executed.

At this time, doctors are graduating with no education regarding the diagnosis and treatment of Environmental Sensitivity Syndrome or Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. As a result, the patients seen by medical practitioners of environmental medicine, have been ill an average of more than five years. There are many more patients not yet diagnosed. The National Academy of Science (U.S.A.)¹ estimates that up to 15% of the population may be afflicted with this syndrome. This closely reflects the percentage observed by the Environmental Protection Agency.³ Good epidemiological studies have not yet been performed, but if these numbers are close to correct, it is obvious that there is a large number of patients not being adequately diagnosed or treated by medical doctors.^{5,7}

As stated -
The medical profession must, therefore, become more responsible in educating its physician members regarding information available to date.

Extensive literature reviews have already been done. For example, Dr. Nicholas Ashford of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Dr. Claudia Miller, a fellow in Allergy and Immunology with a Master's degree in Environmental Medicine, published a literature review for the State of New Jersey in December, 1989.⁸ They reviewed more than 250 papers on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity. Not only do they accept the validity of this illness, but they make many recommendations regarding the overall care of patients, ~~suffering from this illness,~~ these recommendations closely correspond to the recommendations made in the Position Paper of the Canadian Society for Environmental Medicine.⁹

At present, patients with Environmental Sensitivity are not being adequately diagnosed or treated by the medical profession.^{5,7} Patients are being denied their rights regarding disability pensions, third party insurance payments, etc. The solution to this problem is increasing the knowledge and awareness of the primary care physician regarding the diagnosis and treatment of this illness. The physician members of the Canadian Society for Environmental Medicine are more than willing to share their knowledge and experience and become actively involved in educating their fellow physicians, but the guidance and support of the College is required.

We would like to meet with the College once again regarding further education for our fellow physicians. We look forward to your help and support.

Dr. John Molot
Chairman, Education Committee
Canadian Society for
Environmental Medicine

References

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