

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS NEWSLETTER

May, 1986 From the Office of Roy L. Swank, M.D. No. 26
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In previous newsletters we have emphasized the necessity for patients to remain on diet. In the newsletter of July 1985 (No. 24), we stated that "cheating on diet is very dangerous. We now know that an additional 8 grams (1½ teaspoons) of saturated fat can lead to slow deterioration over the years. There may not be warning signs until it is too late and the disease has slipped into a progressive phase." This should be modified as follows: ("The addition of 8 grams of fat often may appear to allow stabilization of the disease but this lasts for no longer than 7 years. Then the disease becomes rapidly progressive, from which there is no recovery.")

This should be a warning to patients receiving plasma, as well as all others. The chance that you can tolerate more than 15 grams of fat daily is no more, and probably less, than 4 percent. Ninety-six percent of patients who have exceeded their diet by 10 grams or more have ended up deteriorating rapidly and suffered a high death rate. To emphasize this point, we are including in this letter a graph showing the relationship of deterioration and deaths to the daily intakes of fat. You will note the sharp increase in disability and deaths upon addition of 8 grams or more fat to your diet.

It is important that the patient understands that a saturated fat intake of 20-25 grams will not usually produce apparent increased disability in a short period of time. A slow, silent deterioration occurs, and in a few years increased activity of the disease surfaces. To exceed this level repeatedly will result in the inability of leading the active life all of you are striving toward.

Some patients receiving plasma or its fraction have assumed that this is a substitute for following diet closely, and have increased their fat intake. For a time this seemed to work, but in succeeding years it became evident that infusions of plasma were required more often, and finally failed to benefit patients altogether. At that point the patient is faced with a prolonged recovery period of a year or more on a strict low-fat regime augmented with rest. The patient is fortunate if he is able to return to his former well controlled state. We have been, and will continue to check your cholesterol and triglyceride levels prior to your appointment. This helps us determine how closely you are following diet. Those patients receiving plasma on a regular maintenance program will be checked even more closely. Those not adhering to diet will not be given plasma. Plasma therapy must be accompanied by strict adherence to the low fat diet in order to be completely effective.

permissible in limited amount. You are allowed one serving equalling one-half cup per day. Weight Watchers Ice Cream Bars (not the sandwich) are permissible in limited amount. You are allowed one bar per day.

Cola Drinkers - Did you know that there are 10 teaspoons of sugar in a 12-ounce can of Pepsi. Many patients are drinking too much cola. Cola contains more sugar than candy. Diet cola is not as good as it sounds. It contains high amounts of sodium. Fruit juices and ice water with lemon are good summer substitutes.

Chocolate/Carob - Carob candy bars and chips contain as much saturated fat as a chocolate bar. In a chocolate bar the fat comes from cocoa butter. In the carob bar the fat is usually palm or coconut oil. Carob powder only is permissible.

Ice Bean - There are two types of Ice Bean Frozen Desert. The tofu flavors are not permissible as they contain coconut oil. Because of the high oil content you are allowed no more than one-half cup per day.

Natural - Don't be fooled by the word Natural on a label. The Food & Drug Administration has great difficulty defining the word Natural. A food can be called natural and still contain artificial ingredients. Products indicating "No Artificial Flavors" often contain artificial colors and preservatives. Products indicating "Sugar Free" may be free only of sucrose and contain other high calorie sweeteners such as honey or corn syrup.

MISCELLANEOUS OFFICE NEWS

We have 2 new secretaries in the office. Barbara Kalkhoven replaced Rusty and will work from 8:30-3:30. Marlene Brandt will join the staff working part time from 1:00-4:00.

As many of you know, getting through to the office on the telephone can be difficult, at best. On an average day, our office receives approximately 80-90 telephone calls. This may be a low estimate. And, then when you count the outgoing calls we need to make, you can understand why the most familiar sound you hear when you call is a busy signal. Something else you may hear is; "Hello, you have reached Dr. Swank's office . . ." The main reason for these encouraging words is there is usually only one person to answer the telephone, and, that's me. Whenever I leave the office, I put on the answering machine. I return all the messages that are left on the answering machine as soon as I can. At times, however, the name and/or telephone number in the message cannot be understood. It is very important that you speak clearly when leaving a message. This will guarantee you a return call from me. To help keep the telephone clear for emergencies, write your request down and mail it to the office. With the busy telephone situation in mind, you could possibly get a faster response by using the mail. The exception to this, of course, is if you are having increased activity of your disease, call the office.