

AGROMEDICINE PROGRAM UPDATE

MUSC DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE – DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SERVICE
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Volume 16
No. 5
May 15, 2004

Previous issues are available at www.musc.edu/oem/apunews.html

Program Notes

➤ Larry Spell Retires

Another long-term staff member in the Agromedicine Program has retired. Larry Spell, Staff Training and Development Coordinator, worked in the program for more than twenty years. He was responsible for coordinating the technical requirements of the division including computer equipment for information retrieval, educational material authoring and production of audio-visual and multimedia material. He also maintained the internet web pages for the division and served for several years as Managing Editor of the *Journal of Agromedicine*.

Needless to say, his expertise will be sorely missed, as well as his thoroughness and creativity.

Larry will be honored along with last month's retiree, Sam Caldwell, at a Department of Family Medicine Staff Dinner later this year.

>Consultations Invited

Despite recent retirements, the Agromedicine Program is still alive and well and looking for opportunities to be of service to physicians and patients in South Carolina.

If you have a clinical question, or a patient/client has a concern over an agromedicine issue, please call us. We will be happy to do research for you and provide you with references to help answer your question.

In addition, please let us know if you have ideas for a patient information brochure or would like a presentation for your hospital staff or a lay group in your community.

>Simpson Named Agromedicine Journal Associate Editor

Dr. Steve Kirkhorn, Medical Director of the National Farm Medicine Center in Marshfield, Wisconsin and new editor of the *Journal of Agromedicine* has appointed Dr. Simpson as one of the associate editors of

the *Journal of Agromedicine*. The *Journal*, now indexed in *Index Medicus*, will continue to be published quarterly.

Food Bioterrorism

Stan Schuman continues to be actively involved with the Agromedicine Program. His letter to the editor, published April 21, 2004, responds to Dr. John Kelly of Clemson's column also published in the *Charleston News and Courier*

"Vice President Kelly's column is most timely. He cited some of the highlights of the ongoing, dedicated scientific teamwork which monitors the quality and safety of the food supply that we tend to take for granted. One part of that food safety network is the medical sentinel role of the primary care practitioner, who must diagnose and report any unusual cluster of food-borne illness in his practice.

"Here at MUSC, the S.C. Agromedicine Program has served, in cooperation with

Clemson and others for over 20 years, to share its food safety data base with over 250 volunteer community clinicians through a monthly SCAP newsletter, by mail and by web site. "We citizens are fortunate, indeed, that our state legislators have sustained food safety and agromedicine outreach programs in the Public Service budget. In this inter-university program, South Carolina has been a leader, not a follower, among the states of the Southeast and the nation."

Foodborne Illness Primer

The American Medical Association along with the CDC-P is making the newly published 2nd edition of the publication: Diagnosis and Management of Foodborne Illnesses available free of charge to clinicians. Email srt@ama-assn.org or fax to LJ Tan at (312)464-5841 with name, shipping address and contact telephone number.

Food Irradiation

Scientists at the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy and the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota have published a review of the role of irradiation in food safety.

A few of their points are summarized below.

*Technology for irradiating food is underutilized. In the US, "only 10 percent of herbs and spices and less than 0.002 percent of fruits, vegetables, meats, and poultry are irradiated."

**Slow acceptance of irradiation may be due to several factors: the term "irradiation" may be confused with "radioactivity", causes and prevention of foodborne disease are poorly understood by the public, health professionals and the media are largely unaware of the benefits of irradiating food, and an anti-irradiation campaign has been conducted by certain groups because of their beliefs about food, nuclear power and agricultural economics."

**In the 30's and 40's health professionals had an important role in consumer acceptance of the pasteurization of milk. As health advocates, they need to fill that role again in the adoption of food irradiation."¹

¹ Osterholm MT, Norgan AP. The role of irradiation in food safety. NEJM 2004;350:1898-1901 (for readers who do not have access to the full publication and an accompanying editorial, contact us with your fax number and we will send the full text)

"Pesticides should be viewed as weapons of mass distraction—they're a wonderful tool to scare the heck out of people."

--Tom Hall

To Juice or Not to Juice

A recent call to our Agromedicine consultation line (843)792-2281 or (800)522-9290 was in reference to the health effects of home-squeezed juices. The caller was interested in the preservation of nutritional values and vitamins in the juicing process. A search of the literature turned up very little data, but there are a great many claims in the advertisements for juicing machines, etc.

Of the few "bottom lines" that have some science behind them:

--commercially prepared and pasteurized juices have about 67% of the "fresh" juice vitamin content and lose about 2% per day after opening the container. Freshly prepared juices probably have approximately the same rate of decay of vitamin content.

--macronutrients are essentially identical in fresh versus commercially prepared juices (unless "things" like sugar have been added)

--the final "bottom line" remains—a wide variety of fruits and vegetables is the foundation of a healthy diet—at least five and preferably nine servings a day.