

The Tuesday Minute

Nutritional information.... one byte at a time

This Week's Topic

Natural Support For Swine Flu

The swine flu drama, can you feel the tension building? On one hand the pharmaceutical forces with their advertising dollars are alerting the media about the dangers. Some are already calling it a pandemic. School children are being taught "preventative" measures while public health officials are promoting immunizations like they were the "elixir of life." However, on the other hand, groups of responsible scientists from around the world are saying "it's only the flu, don't panic." Even the World Health Organization's pandemic preparedness guide says that 30 -50% will experience mild or no symptoms whatsoever. Should you get an immunization for this "supposed pandemic?" Even the medical professionals aren't clear about what to do.

According to the 2009 August 25th issue of the British Medical Journal, more than half of the doctors and nurses surveyed say they will refuse the H1N1 vaccine due to potential side effects and concerns about if it will even work. Scientists from around the world are sharing their concern whether the side effects outweigh the risks. See the website below for more on the immunization debate.

It's definitely not an option I am considering, but everyone should make their own decisions. As health care professionals, when there is confusion, our patients look to us for answers.

Here's a common sense approach that you might find helpful. First, I don't think we can expect children to avoid contact with other children, wash their hands more, or do any of the other "preventative strategies" we hear on TV. I know if

I don't do those things I can't expect a child to. Next, let's learn from history and see what we can do to sensibly prevent people from both panic and disease.

Several years ago four bodies were found frozen in Tundra that had died from the 1918 flu. After much debate, their bodies were examined and found that the lungs of the deceased were filled with fluid. Apparently, when the macrophages start attacking the virus to destroy it, they give off powerful oxidative substances. The lungs as well as other healthy tissue are protected if there are sufficient antioxidants. When the danger of the bacterial or viral threat is over, the macrophages stop releasing the oxidative substances and the body then disposes of the dead bugs.

Chemical messengers called cytokines tell the body what to attack and what not to attack. Cytokines are proteins produced by the white blood cells. Cytokine activation is a "good thing" telling the immune system to turn on and just as importantly to turn off. When the battlefield is in the mucus membranes of the lungs, messages go out that a bacteria or virus is present. A battle is waged by the white blood cells. Brief oxidative bursts are released; the bugs are killed; swallowed up for transport; inflammation occurs; a congestion or "traffic jam" results; we cough, sneeze, and ooze out some gluck for a few days; and we recover normally.

But what if the macrophages don't turn off and continue with their oxidative burst. Cytokines are over stimulated and inflammation escalates. Mucus continues to be released to the point where patients

actually suffocate. That's what happened during the 1918 flu. Healthy people like children and young adults were affected and died. This is referred to as a "cytokine storm," a slang term conveying the concept of an onslaught of "kill messages."

One researcher said it is like a trigger on a gun. The trigger gets stuck and the oxidative damage and inflammation continue until the person can't breathe. Healthy people have such a strong immune system that their macrophages continue to release the free radicals even though the bugs are long dead. The trigger is stuck. The infection is certainly a factor but the overreaction is the culprit.

Here's the key point. The most readily available and cost efficient way to modulate cytokines naturally is with vitamin D. Sunlight being the best solution, which is why we don't have the extremes of the flu during summer months when people are out in the sun and getting natural vitamin D. But from autumn to spring, supplemental vitamin D is the best defense.

My suggestion is to put every one of your patients young and old on a good vitamin D product. The optimal blood levels are 50 - 100 ng/ml so if blood testing is available increase your dose to reach those levels. If not, take 6,000 IU per day as a maintenance dosage. My favorite is Bio-D-Mulsion Forte from Biotics Research. It's emulsified for better absorption and the most bio-available vitamin D on the market. Each one ounce container is \$19.00 for over 700 drops of vitamin D. Each drop is 2,000 IU that means only 3 drops will give you 6,000 IU.

I just got two blood tests back yesterday, one from a woman in her 70's and one from someone in their 20's who is a runner and very active.

After a summer with sunlight exposure, both of them had levels in the 20 ng/ml range. That's scary to me, remember, for optimal protection we want levels over 50.

Back to common sense. Vitamin D, as any catalyst, will need cofactors to work properly. Also, there are other nutrients that have value as immune modulators; therefore, a multi-nutrient formula like Bio-Immunozyne Forte works synergistically with vitamin D. Bio-Immunozyne Forte has all the foundational levels of nutrients, botanicals, and enzymes designed to support but not to over-stimulate the immune system.

As I have mentioned, one of the problems with overactive macrophage is excessive free radicals. Most of the vitamin C on the market is already oxidized, which the body must regenerate into the reduced form before it can be used. So we want a form that is already in the reduced form, like the mineral ascorbates. 1500 - 3000 mg is a good prevention dose.

I do have an updated handout that you can refer to for things to consider for a more chronic aggressive virus. But the common sense here is to make sure everyone of your patients, both young and old, maintain sufficient levels of vitamin D; and they need to get started RIGHT NOW. Start building those levels. Make sure patients are taking a multiple designed to support but not over stimulate the immune system and use some extra vitamin C to support the patient's antioxidant system. This simple program prevents against the WORST, supports the body for all kind of other stresses and strains of everyday life, and doesn't cost a fortune.

Thanks for reading this week's edition. I'll see you next week for another Tuesday Minute.