



OF BEES & HONEY

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2009

HONEY AS/AND MEDICINE

Recently I came across four powerful human stories and each one with a common factor: honey.

One is about tragedy mixed with uplifting fortitude. Another is of near disasters, last minute happy endings and deep and long lasting personal trauma.

The third one is most poignant and is evolving right now as I am writing.

The last one should be seen as (deadly) serious, and hopefully not as outwardly farcical as one stage it may seem.

Story Number One

A healthy and fairly active older man had a small operation at a private clinic. It was not only quite successfully done but he was also quickly discharged, as may be expected in this time and age.

After a couple of weeks he had to accept that this initial assessment was no longer valid.

The problem was that the incision done during the operation would not heal at all and the puss exuding from it was getting progressively worse.

It seems that the patient had bargained for far more than he expected by taking home "free of charge" the hospital's lurking and flesh eating bacteria "methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*" (MRSA), or "super bug" for short.

Equally as expected, his doctor prescribed the only laboratory issued medicine for this condition.

It must be said that this "bug" is almost impossible to treat by conventional medicine, indiscriminately killing many thousands of people every year,

especially in the developed world.

The side effects of that standard prescribed treatment are such, which may force one to use the following (sarcastic?) expression to describe it.

"If the patients do not die from the disease, they will definitely die from the cure..."

The end result was that even if the patient's problems with the incision had eventually come to an end, as long as he lives he will deeply regret the treatment that was prescribed to fix it.

This previously healthy and active older man can now, unfortunately "boast" a pair of non functioning kidneys. The reality of which forces him to regularly have dialysis if he wants to be among the living.

According to his daughter who initially told this story, he still tries his best to

be active. Even though he now knows that honey, especially Manuka honey could have cleared the infection fairly quickly without any side-effects, he none the less is not bitter at all and even has an overall positive outlook in life.

Story Number Two

Presuming can be quite a wrong thing to do, and that's exactly what instinctively I did when a lady asked me if I knew of any other use for honey, besides food.

In actual fact my reaction was not so much triggered by the question, but by being combined by her affirmation that she was a medical doctor.

"Oh no! Not again!" My brain exclaimed.

The expression that I once heard from the well known radio doctor/professor when asked about medicinal uses of honey had suddenly come to mind.

"Honey?" he repeated fairly loud as if taken by quite surprise. "As far as I know the only thing that it does is cause constipation!"

What do SA doctors know with their entrenched dogma to use standard laboratory medications only? I asked myself. Even worse, not allowing themselves the liberty of having inquiring minds in order to know more about other healing products, namely honey and its medicinal uses?

Anyhow, if honey works for German doctors, for instance, how come it is so different locally?

Perhaps the scepticism or even some condescension showing on my face was a bit too blatant, which somehow forced her to lift her chin in obvious resolution, and maybe a bit of defiance. While looking straight at me

she followed up with:

"Please let me tell you a very relevant story on this subject". (Was there a hint of patronising in her voice? I wondered.)

"There was a diabetic patient that had been suffering from a leg ulcer for about four years while being treated for it by his own physician at the same Hospital where I worked. The administrated medicine was seemingly not doing much of the job it was supposed to do, as the ulcer not only kept expanding, but even go deeper".

By this time perhaps, as may be expected, I was starting to feel some uneasiness with my presumptions. Even more so because it seems that she also could clearly read it on my face.

She went on, but now with added vigour:

"When the physician finally accepted the obvious failure of his medications, he advised the patient that in the existing circumstances the only recourse would have to be quite drastic. What he was trying to say was for him to have the limb amputated. For good 'medicine', he went on, explaining that the unfortunate man's life would be placed in serious danger otherwise".

After a little while and as if holding back some deep emotions, she went on saying.

"When I heard of such an extreme solution, I told this patient that I didn't believe in the assessment that there wasn't anything more that could be done to remedy his condition". She said with a faint smile and while holding my intrigued gaze.

"You see, I have read some interesting research about honey healing



...HONEY AS/AND MEDICINE CONTINUED

properties". She almost whispered it as if a confession.

Somehow her resolution to hold back her emotions wasn't working as well as she wished, as they were by now clearly written on her face.

My sheepish "sorry for myself" look was now mixed with some unbridled curiosity and perhaps even easier to read at this stage.

"On his acceptance of my suggestion I started treatment immediately, as there wasn't much time to lose..." She paused "...Yes! The only medicinal product used was honey, specifically Manuka Honey".

She affirmed with obvious resolution and while some shininess was appearing at the bottom of her eyes. She carried on after a sort pause, needing to calm herself first.

"Do you know that after just two weeks of treatment the supposedly incurable ulcer was practically healed?"

The expression on her face while she asked this question was without doubt joyful and perhaps even showing a fair amount of pride. The repressed tears that could be seen as confirming the existence of these emotions were also threatening to roll out.

Suddenly it was as if a massive storm cloud darkened her brief moment of glory. In no time her pose was very sombre, her gaze downcast and a frown clearly etched on her forehead.

Like any other attentive parent when faced with a sudden crisis involving any loved progeny, my eyes were also imploring the obvious hurt child facing me to please let me know what had happened, so that I could help, as it was clearly paining her so much.

"My troubles started then". She said in a slow and obviously deeply



distraught voice.

And then lifting her gaze and looking straight in my eyes she said:

"Do you know that his physician not only almost succeeded in getting me fired, but actually wanted me struck from the doctors roll?"

And then in almost a shrill cry she let go in most hurt disbelief:

"For malpractice!"

By this stage not only the lady in question was quite emotional, as each expression and intense mood had taken a serious toll on me as well.

"Do you know that it took many years to resolve and almost ruined me?" She asked in a way that clearly showed her profound sadness and even deeper scars.

That's how she finished her story.

While I was quite numbed by the yo-yo of emotions running amok inside myself and perhaps was equally felt by the likewise silent other persons that happened to be at my market stall, she turned around and walked away. Perhaps having had enough emotions for a single day.

Would I be labelled a cynic if I asked the following questions?

What could have been the real reasons for the physician's subsequent behaviour?

- A) Hurt professional pride? (Probable)
- B) Loss of income? (Most possible, by trying to have recourse against [perceived] colleague's meddling actions)

Your bet about any of these is as good as mine. Why not a deadly cocktail of both? But if there aren't enough options for you, let's add two more...

- C) Rotten system? (By that I mean self-regulatory medical ethical practices that allowed such travesty)

- D) Existing SA laws that may regard honey treatments as punishable offenses? (None whatsoever, as far as I know).

Story Number Three

The following story was written by the patient himself and is in the form of two emails addressed to myself. It does have such a degree of emotional authenticity, which sincerely makes me doubt that I, or anybody else for that matter, could equal it.

"When I spoke to your lady earlier today she said that she was sure that you had some Manuka Honey from New Zealand in stock but she could or would not give me a price.

Could you PLEASE - PLEASE let me know the cost of a tube of this honey. I am desperate for these varicose ulcers to completely heal so I can get to the next stage of treatment.

I suffer the most 'ginormous' pain every time the ulcers are dressed with 'acticoat' & the dressings must be done every 4th day. The 'Acticoat' is very expensive & my Medical Aid has been exhausted for about 5 / 6 months now.

If the Manuka honey treatment would heal the ulcers quickly as the article in the magazine 'Renaissance' indicates it would make me & my wife so very, very happy. Please would you be so kind as to phone or e-mail me the cost & how you would be prepared to get the product to me as soon as is possible. Might I suggest that I pay the cost direct into your Bank Account which you would let me have all particulars



...HONEY AS/AND MEDICINE CONTINUED

of - then I FAX you the Bank Slip & you could then send the Manuka Honey to me by the quickest postal method available.

I trust that you will be so kind as to organise all of this very quickly so I can get relief from these accursed things & get onto the compression stocking stage of the treatment.

I thank you in anticipation,

G—T—

Two days later:

"Dear Kim,

I have received the little parcel that you sent to me & Gisi (my wife) will do the first dressing this afternoon. Thank you very much!!!

The lady that wrote the article said that the dressings should be changed weekly so this is what we are going to do first by keeping them on for four to six days. If they get horribly sore we will change them more frequently. As the honey gets used up I will ask for more & pay you in the same way that I did for this order. It seems to me that this honey in the little bottle is very good & probably better than honey in tubes.

Gisi & I both are very excited about this 'wonder treatment' & I promise you that I will from time to time keep you informed..."

Story Number Four

It all started one day at the Market when a new client happened to mention that she was a professional tour guide. Nothing earth shattering about this, one must agree. She went on to affirm that she always made sure that she had bottles of honey with her each time she went on tour. Not much in that either, except perhaps to wonder as I did:

"Which one will it be? Connoisseur's sweet tooth or health conscious? Why not both?"

Seeing the obviously inquiring look, she offered the most unusual answer as a form of question:

"Can you imagine a bus full of people that after having had some meal somewhere were suddenly forced to realize that it actually had been laced with some sort of nasty bug?"

What perhaps was even worse was that she asked it with an expression that perhaps can be described as half poker straight face and half

tongue in cheek. Suddenly I didn't know if I could hold the threatening laugh coming from all the way down in my belly, as I was almost sure that perhaps I should be showing a somewhat sad and commiserate face.

Then some most inappropriate thoughts did come into my mind and suddenly I couldn't hold it any longer.

Basically, the thoughts were about visualising a most dignified group of people suddenly and intermittently asking to be let out of the bus, and doing so regardless of where they were or how often they wanted to get out.

Nature was seemingly showing that it had a far stronger call than any logical reason whatsoever and definitely equally more powerful than any individual's projected dignity.

The appearance of a personal friend's "witty" word of "squitters" didn't help much either...

Suddenly some old story flashed across my mind and in no time I felt a bit ashamed of my behaviour, especially regarding the apparent propensity for what must have been some crudeness of humour.

A news story in actual fact about one of the most nightmarish scenarios imaginable. It happened when on a long flight and after an on board meal, a full planeload of passengers suddenly started suffering from the acute and uncontrollable consequences of food poisoning (E coli bacteria, if I am not wrong).

To try to understand the scale of what happened, that besides the pain and horrific trauma suffered by the victims themselves, just try to imagine the state in which the plane was left, for it to have to go straight away for a total and complete refurbishment.

When I eventually managed to deal with my contradictory emotions, the tour guide did explain that was the specific reason for carrying the honey with her at all times.

She said that honey not only would almost immediately alleviate the "bad tummy" symptoms, but also replace the lost electrolytes.

Her recipe was quite simple and basically consisted of stirring a spoonful of honey with a pinch of salt in a large glass of water.

In reality, this same formula is recommended by the World Health Organization for children suffering from serious or chronic diarrhoea. It must be said that this is precisely the main cause of deaths of infants in developing countries.

From what we read and without wishing to be seen as facetious, perhaps our learned professor had a definite, although oblique point in equating honey with constipation.

Actually, there is a well-known honey formula specifically to fix this condition.

The regular morning use of the juice of a lemon, or a squirt of cider vinegar*, plus a spoonful of honey dissolved in a

cup of warm water should do the trick of cajoling perfectly well the most uncooperative of bowels.

It should also be mentioned that if a person would consume 125g or more of honey in one go, the end result could be quite embarrassing and not too dissimilar to the purging that castor oil was used for.

There you have it Doc.

*The more knowledgeable in this matter do recommend some imported brands from the UK, where a 'veil' swimming in it is clearly visible, which they say attests of it being 'alive'.

Kim the (hopeful story teller) honey man.

NEW HONEY(S)

It's more than time to mention it.

Yes! Avocado honey is finally available.

Almost black and unusually for such a dark honey, as smooth as they come.

Malty with a hint of molasses and a perfect fit for yogurt or toast. Excellent even in coffee, or just a spoonful of it for an easy and most delectable desert.

The mineral content of the nectar of avocado flowers happens to be so high (and excellent for humans) that the poor bees harvesting it eventually get so damaged that have to give up and find a more suitable flowering plant.

Do hope that this year's production

of highly desirable Buffalo Thorn (Ziziphus Macronata) from around the Kalahari fringes is better than last years. Two years ago May's killer black frost, which for good measure was followed up by a major and nasty draught, did put an end to it.

The feedback is that the flowering has been exceptionally massive, but the first harvested honey has been unusually light in colour, perhaps the result of being mixed with some other source(s).

Let's hope that the main crop will be showing its true and glorious deep ebony shadings, and above all, to be able to brag of its full, off-sweet and superlative smooth malty flavour.

FEEDBACK THANKS

All feedback on these newsletters are welcome.

For all the questions, comments and feedback on the newsletters.



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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily that of other authorities on the behaviour of bees. They come mostly from my personal experiences and memories, as well as common sense deductions. The only reason for the distribution of these newsletters, as stated on various occasions is: "To Spread the Gospel (and Love) of the Bees" to a wider audience.