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RATIONAL EVIDENCE-BASED COMMENT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. WE SAY EXACTLY WHAT WE THINK

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News Flash: Low- and no-calorie sweeteners linked to cognitive decline. **Q&A:** Stevia safety update. **News Shorts:** Diets & Constipation Risk; Hot bath good for heart, sleep, and mood; Erythritol stroke risk.

Health Policy

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement is shaking up the medico-industrial complex.

How to use vaccines safely

The new head of Health & Human Services, Robert F Kennedy Jr. has spent many years campaigning for the safer use of vaccines. For his pains he has been branded an "antivaxxer".

As though to give the lie to his detractors, he has appointed a strong pro-vaxxer to chair the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)'s all-important Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). ACIP approves vaccines and how they are used.



<https://bit.ly/49IqIGv>

The new chairman is the Swedish renowned epidemiologist and biostatistician Dr. Martin Kulldorff, co-author (with Jay Bhattacharya) of the Great Barrington Declaration [1]. He is interviewed here for the UnHerd news platform:

<https://youtu.be/cfJ7SIRpcY4>

Kulldorff discusses his and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s views on vaccines and, amongst other things, >p3

Human Mentality

Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western reductive thought (14)



Continuing insights from psychiatrist & neuroscientist, Dr McGilchrist's (cr [2]) majestic work [3]

Last month, we saw how, in McGilchrist's view, "embracing Wonder and Awe is essential for re-enchanting our view of the world, fostering a more integrated, meaningful and humane way of living rooted in connection, empathy, and an appreciation for beauty, truth, and goodness." Continuing: Iain McGilchrist, following the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, views "beauty" and "truth" as fundamental "values". They are essential, and universal building-blocks of the complex tapestry of the cosmos; they are intrinsically linked with "goodness" and the "sacred".

He argues that modern Western culture, heavily influenced by the left hemisphere's fragmented, utilitarian perspective, has tragically downgraded, dismissed or denied beauty, morality and truth.

"If you want to see the consequences, you need do no more than look around you."

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News Flash

Low- and no-calorie sweeteners linked to cognitive decline

A study finds that consumption of aspartame, saccharin, acesulfame K, erythritol, sorbitol, and xylitol was associated with a faster decline in global cognition, particularly in memory and verbal fluency domains [4].

Participants were followed for 8 years, and those with the highest intake of these sweeteners showed an accelerated ageing of some 1.6 years. However those who were 60+ were unaffected.

My View? One glaring omission from that list of sweeteners is **stevia**. Seemingly, studies find that stevia is 'brain friendly'. See: **Stevia safety update**, p.2. So that's all right then.

However, more disturbing is the presence of the 'sugar alcohols' xylitol, erythritol, and sorbitol. These are naturally occurring low-glycemic, low-calorie compounds and, as dietary fibers, were thought to be a positive addition to the diet.

Now, their seeming effect on cognition must be added to their apparent effect on cardiovascular health. See: **Erythritol Stroke risk**, p3; **Erythritol & Blood Clots again**, [Aug 2024](#) [5]; **Xylitol linked to CVD**, [June 2024](#) [6].

We never used these sugar alcohols very much, but now we have stopped entirely.

Q&A

Stevia safety update

Q. In Stevia: "Natural" Sweetener, June 2006 [7], you said that in "megadoses (80 times normal consumption), hamsters had decreased sperm counts and increased cancers, depression, anxiety, and hyperactivity [8]. On the other hand, studies using more reasonable doses on hamsters could find no signs of ill-effects [9]."

Has anything changed since then?

A. As far as we can tell, "no". And as we relate in **Stevia vs Xylitol, Jan 2021** [10], "... as far as we know, compared to other 'intense' sweeteners, it is pretty safe. Indeed, according to many sources it is therapeutic. It is: antioxidant, antimicrobial, antihypertensive, anti-diabetic, anticancer, anti-hyper-glycemic, anti-hypertensive, and anti-hyperlipidemic [11]".

More recent studies confirm these characteristics with the addition of an improvement in kidney function [12]

Gut health: a fatal bugbear with intense "artificial" sweeteners like Aspartame and Sucralose is their disastrous effect on gut health. See: **Surprise Sweetener Spook, Sept 2014** [13]. However, stevia, as a "natural" sweetener seems to be exempt from this side-effect [14]. Indeed, it might even help the microbiome.

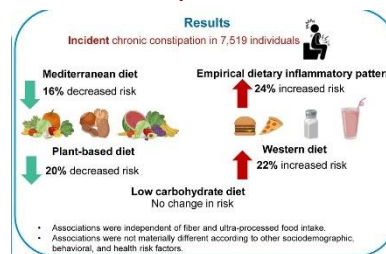
Brain Health: a more recent preoccupation concerns the possibility of cognitive decline. See: **Low- and no-calorie sweeteners linked to cognitive decline, p 1.**

However, here too, studies find that stevia is 'brain friendly' [15,16].

Speaking very cautiously then, so far, stevia looks like a safe low-calorie, low-glycemic alternative to sugar or honey (see: **Is honey all right after all? Nov 2014** [17].)

I am being tentative since, over the years, one sugar substitute after another has been found wanting, and one day it might be stevia's turn. So we are keeping a watchful eye open for any adverse developments.

News Shorts

Diets & Constipation risk

Enlarge: <https://bit.ly/4sn4BOF>

In a study of 96,000 middle- and old-age adults, researchers found that some diets are better than others at preventing chronic constipation [18].

Reduced risks were with The Mediterranean diet (-16%) and the plant-based diet (-20%).

Increased risks were with the Western diet (+22%), and Inflammatory diet (+24%). (See: **Anti-inflammatory diet, Sept. 2024** [19]).

The low-fiber, low carb diet was neutral.

Notably, and contrary to conventional advice, the researchers found that the risk of constipation had nothing to do with fiber intake.

In conclusion, a high intake of tomatoes, cruciferous vegetables, leafy green vegetables, dark yellow vegetables, nuts, healthy fats,

and wine, reduced risks for constipation.

My View? No surprises here. However, I've always thought that there is more to gut motility than diet. A new-born baby on a liquid diet of breast milk, and an Inuit on a carnivore diet, both produce copious bowel movements.

Nevertheless, as I have said on many occasions, the typical forager had a high intake of 'roughage' the tough, stringy material, which neither the digestive system, **NOR** the gut bugs can digest. It passes through the intestines like a chimney-sweep's brush and emerges at the other end intact. There is nothing like that in **ANY** modern diet. See: **Bowel Movement Frequency and overall Health, Aug 2024** [20]

Sometimes, too, there are factors we can do little about, for example a virus infection. It can depress gut motility, see: **Viruses kill Gut Motility Neurons, Nov 2018** [21] and **Herpes/Chronic Constipation Link, July 2016** [22].

Hot bath good for heart, sleep, and mood

I am regarded as a bit of an eccentric for having a long soak in a hot bath every day. [Like that more illustrious eccentric, Winston Churchill.]

For me it is a period of deep relaxation, an emptying of the mind, and freeing up of Right Brain creative juices. See: **Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western reductive thought (2), Nov 2024** [23]

CVD: But studies are finding more tangible results [24]. It increases the volume and speed of blood flowing to the skin. To do this, the heart rate increases and the blood vessels dilate (widen) to increase blood flow. Blood

pressure drops as our blood flows more easily through dilated vessels and the increase in blood rubbing against the vessel walls, over time, reduces arterial stiffness.

It also encourages the body to build more capillaries which can help to decrease blood pressure in the long run.

"These benefits are particularly important as high blood pressure and poor artery function are among the leading causes of strokes and heart attacks," says Dr Tom Cullen, of Coventry University, UK.

Sleep: Another study finds that a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime improves sleep [25].

"The theory is that the cooling down after a hot bath stimulates the brain's production of the sleep hormone, melatonin," says Dr Cullen. See: [Sleep & Melatonin, Sept 2015](#) [26].

Mood. With a hot bath, there are improvements in mood and lifting of depression [27].

The body releases feel-good chemicals like endorphins and dopamine. Muscles are relaxed, relieving stress. Levels of the immune system's inflammation trigger, interleukin-6, come down. There are reductions in the stress hormone cortisol.

Hot tub vs. Sauna: Finally, yet another recent study [28] not only confirms all the foregoing hot bath benefits but finds that it beats hands down a traditional dry heat sauna, and the modern "far infra-red sauna".

(A "far infrared" sauna directly heats the body without heating the surrounding air. It induces a vigorous sweat at much

lower temperatures than traditional saunas.)

My View? I just feel sorry for my forager forebears who knew nothing of the delights of good soak in a hot tub! This is one example of how at least one modern lifestyle practice can be an improvement on Nature.

Erythritol Stroke risk

In a recent study, researchers exposed blood-brain barrier cells to levels of erythritol typically found after drinking a soft drink sweetened with the compound [29]. They saw a chain reaction of cell damage that could make the brain more vulnerable to blood clots – a leading cause of stroke.

Erythritol triggered oxidative stress, flooding cells with harmful, highly reactive free radicals, while simultaneously reducing the body's natural antioxidant defences. In addition, erythritol restricted blood vessels' ability to regulate blood flow, potentially starving the brain of oxygen and nutrients.

Even more alarming, erythritol appeared to sabotage the body's natural defence against blood clots. Normally, when clots form in blood vessels, cells release a "clot buster" called "[tissue plasminogen activator](#)" that dissolves the blockage before it can cause a stroke. But the sweetener blocked this protective mechanism, potentially leaving clots free to wreak havoc.

My View? The study was carried out on brain cells in a laboratory dish, not on live human beings. So even though the body naturally produces erythritol in small amounts, it would be foolish to reject these findings out-of-hand. They align with several large-scale observational

studies that have found that people who regularly consume erythritol face significantly higher risks of heart attacks, strokes, and brain fog. See: **Low- and no-calorie sweeteners linked to cognitive decline**, p1.

Continued from Page 1

How to use vaccines safely



... how ACIP had been 'captured' by the pharmaceutical industry.

The CDC and other federal authorities made false claims that: a) that if you are vaccinated you cannot get Covid; b) immunity from vaccine is better than immunity from having had Covid; c) if you take the vaccine, you won't transmit Covid to others.

None of these is true and, as a result, the public is losing trust in vaccination in general.

Kulldorff reflects on the global pandemic response including his home country, Sweden's no-lockdown strategy which had a better outcome with far less collateral damage, psychologically, physically, financially, and, ironically, "plummeting" childhood vaccination rates.

There are areas where vaccine policy could be more nuanced. For example, is it essential to inject a 24-hour-old baby with Hepatitis B vaccine when there is no risk of the mother being a carrier?

He also questions why vaccines are compulsory in United States' schools whereas in many other jurisdictions such as Sweden [and UK] vaccines are voluntary. And yet take-up rates are high because of public trust in the health service.

Kulldorff sees a major task for ACIP is to rebuild Americans' trust through high-integrity, non-politicized vaccine science.

Continued from Page 1

Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western thought (14)



Beauty is a fundamental constituent of reality that we "discover", not create. The essence of beauty is harmony and the appreciation of the relations between things. This holistic appreciation is a strength of the brain's right hemisphere.

Surrounding oneself with beauty is crucial for human well-being. He argues that things like hospitals and schools should be beautiful. (See: **Hospital Design for Humans**, [Nov 2012](#) [30]; **Garden view beats Brick wall view for Surgery recovery**, [July 2023](#) [31]) True beauty resists the "lie" and the superficiality of modern "trashiness."

He believes art, when functioning correctly, brings a "beautiful truth" into being that the soul immediately recognizes, bypassing mere cognition. He recalls the response of Amazonian tribesmen on hearing Maria Callas singing, they said: "we sense there is something sacred here".



[Or as Keats said of the beautiful 2,000-year-old Grecian Urn [32]: "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought as doth eternity".]

<https://bit.ly/3LdaJrG>

Like the ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle, McGilchrist suggests beauty has a transformative power that can lead to contemplating something greater than itself, such as the divine or reality itself.

For more background see McGilchrist videos: [33,34].

[Next Month](#): Part (15) and still to come: Truth, sense of the Sacred, Consciousness, Ultimate Reality.

Paleo in a Nutshell: Geoff's latest work encapsulates, concisely and easily, current thinking on living the way nature intended. www.paleo-nutshell.com

email: admin@NaturalEater.com



Paleo Harvest Cookbook: Over 170 delicious, Bond Precept conforming recipes www.paleo-harvest.com



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1 See: **New NIH Director**, [March 2025](#), <https://bit.ly/3GqAhyO>

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