



It's time to make mental health a priority

BY SUSAN JOHNSON
For the Sentinel

Many of us ignore physical symptoms—an aching tooth, a shoulder that locks up, early signs of diabetes or high blood pressure. Maybe we're afraid of the dentist, don't want to face possible surgery or don't want to deal with medications and lifestyle changes.

We may also ignore signs of depression and other mental illnesses for a variety of reasons. We might feel mental illness is a sign of weakness or fear that friends, family, or employers would judge us or discriminate against us. Already, too many Americans experience prejudice, discrimination, abuse and victimization based on a mental health diagnosis. And for too long, Americans paid for health insurance that did not recognize that treatment for mental health and substance use disorders is as essential as other medical treatment.

It's time for us to let people who are living with mental health conditions know that they are not alone, and that this

administration is providing important protections for people experiencing mental illness. A recent report from the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force includes a series of new actions and recommendations to ensure that insurance coverage for mental health and substance use disorder services is comparable to—or at parity with—general medical care because, just as with other illnesses, we can't afford to neglect our mental health.

Mental illnesses take huge tolls on individuals and society as a whole. The annual direct and indirect economic costs of mental illnesses in the U.S., particularly untreated mental illnesses, are estimated to be in the hundreds of billions of dollars. Productivity and income are reduced, healthcare costs for other illnesses rise, and addiction, homelessness, and disability rates rise. Most importantly, individuals and families suffer.

According to the most recent statistics, 43.4 million adults aged 18 or older experienced some form of mental illness in the past year, and the CDC proj-

ects depression will be the second leading cause of disability worldwide by 2020.

Though disabling when symptoms persist, depression is treatable, and most Americans greatly improve with treatment, services and recovery supports. Signs of depression include experiencing some of the following, most of the day, for at least two weeks:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Irritability
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Moving or talking more slowly
- Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches,

cramps or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment.

Physical diseases like diabetes, arthritis, or heart disease can increase your risk of depression. Factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, family history, major life changes, and where you live can also play a role in depression.

Help is available. If you or someone you love exhibits signs of depression or another mental illness, the first step is to get screened. In Oregon, you can call or visit Alcohol and Drug Help Line at 1-800-923-4357, Mental Health Crisis/Suicide at 1-800-273-8255, or Youthline at 1-877-968-8491 for assistance. For providers near you, visit Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Treatment Services Locator, or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

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Offbeat Oregon History

'Father of Oregon Geology' left his mark on the state — literally

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

If you've ever taken the National Parks Service tour of the Oregon Caves, you'll probably remember the part where the guide points out a stalagmite covered with names, scrawled out on its creamy surface in the crabbed longhand style of the 1800s.

The names are those of University of Oregon geology professor Thomas Condon and his students. And the students had journeyed all the way down to Cave Junction from Eugene — no mean feat of overland travel in those days — to learn about their state's geology firsthand.

It was a classic Thomas Condon move, this field-trip-with-the-whole-class thing. Condon was a true state treasure, and possibly the most gifted

college teacher in state history. And yet, oddly, he fell into the profession almost by accident.

Thomas Condon was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1922, and emigrated to New York when he was 10 years old. When he came of age, he went off to seminary, and when he was 30, as a newly minted Congregationalist minister, he embarked with his wife, Cornelia, on a sailing ship for a journey "around the Horn" to the Oregon Territory. They arrived in 1852.

The young Reverend was not initially very successful in his work. The church started him out in St. Helens, then moved him to Forest Grove, and then south to the Albany area. Nothing quite clicked. He was working long hours teaching and preaching; the congregations were small and slow-growing, and consequently so

was the Condon family's income.

But then, in 1862, gold was found in China Creek, setting off a gold rush in eastern Oregon and Idaho. All those hard-living miners needed spiritual guidance, and there wasn't much holding the Condons back; so they followed the gold trail out to the wild new frontier, settling into The Dalles.

It was there that Condon found his niche as a minister. At first, there were only five members of Condon's Congregational church, and they met for services in the top floor of the courthouse, above the jail; smoke and sound filtered easily through gaps in the floorboards, and on some Sunday mornings the rowdies in the hoosegow downstairs, just sobering up after an epic Saturday-night spree, would loudly sing along with the hymns using bawdy lyrics that they made up. Still, thanks in large part to the basic decency and humility of Condon himself, the church began to grow steadily.

Now, Condon had always been a geologist and rockhound, fascinated with fossils. In The Dalles, his collection really started to grow. All the

miners knew of his interest, and when they stumbled across old bones and interesting fragments, they collected them for him. He also found time to go on expeditions of his own — often with Bible in one hand, rock hammer in the other. He also found that the best place to write his sermons was out in the beauty of Nature.

During the Civil War, Condon's enthusiasm for fossils and geology spread to the soldiers at Fort Dalles, who took to collecting specimens while on patrol. Condon, who diligently kept up with the news from the nascent national geology/paleontology community, recognized some of their finds as really significant. So in 1865, he joined them on an expedition of discovery, like Darwin on the H.M.S. Beagle. And it was probably at this point that his geology hobby really started competing with his avocation as a pastor.

The expedition resulted in the discovery of the John Day Fossil Beds, one of the most productive sources of fossils from the early Age of Mammals in the world.

Soon Condon was correspond-

ing with the famous paleontologists of the day: Spencer Baird, Thomas Leidy, and of course the "Bone Wars" antagonists — Edward Drinker Cope and O.C. Marsh. He sent them specimens of his fossils to help them in their studies.

Marsh actually undertook an expedition with graduate students into the John Day Fossil Beds with Condon, in 1871. But Marsh not only refused to return the specimens Condon lent him, but didn't even name-check Condon in the scientific articles he subsequently wrote based on them; Marsh, it was clear, didn't consider Condon to be a "real" geologist. But although Condon persisted in writing to request the return of the specimens (for decades!), he never showed resentment for the obvious disrespect.

Meanwhile, Condon's "hobby" continued to take over his life. He started traveling across the state giving lectures on the fossil record. Condon's status as a Congregational minister was an important part of the acceptance of these fossils, too; he

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Fight breast cancer with flax and chia seeds

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" best describes what our focus should be regarding breast cancer, which is the most common form of cancer that affects women and the second leading



cause of death for women after heart disease. While a great deal of money and attention is focused on breast cancer awareness, it would make more sense to concentrate on preventing the disease from occurring in the first place.

There are nutritional strategies that are safe, easily implemented and have been proven effective in reducing the risk of breast cancer. Among the most powerful anti-cancer foods are flax and chia seeds, which are a rich source of lignans. Lignans have anti-estrogenic effects that

inhibit cell growth in breast tumors.

Let's take an in-depth look at lignans and why they are so effective in combating breast cancer: Plant lignans are one of the four classes of phytoestrogens (isoflavones, lignans, stilbenes, coumestans). Phytoestrogens are a group of chemicals found in plants that can act like the hormone estrogen. In particular, lignans are structurally similar to the main mammalian estrogen, estradiol. Plant lignans are modified by bacteria in the human digestive tract into enterolignans.

Enterolignans are structurally similar to estrogen and can bind to estrogen receptors. This capability allows lignans to either have weak estrogenic activity or block the actions of estrogen in the body. For this reason, plant lignans are classified as phytoestrogens, and there has been much interest in the potential contribution of lignan-rich foods to reduced risk of hormone-related cancers.

It is important to recognize the role of healthy bacteria in this process, because antibiotics can destroy beneficial bacteria in the gut, resulting in long-term reduction in enterolignans. Eating

commercial meats expose us to antibiotics, as does the overuse and inappropriate prescribing of these drugs by physicians.

Flaxseeds are the richest source of plant lignans, having about three times the lignan content of chia seeds and eight times the lignan content of sesame seeds. It is important to note that flaxseed oil does not contain lignans, because they bind to the fiber. The other plant foods on the list have about one-tenth or less the amount of lignans as sesame seeds per serving. Flaxseeds (85.5 mg/ounce)
Chia seeds (32 mg/ounce)
Sesame seeds (11.2 mg/ounce)
Kale (curly; 1.6 mg/cup)
Broccoli (1.2 mg/cup)

Enterolignans inhibits aromatase7 and estradiol production in general, lowering serum estrogen levels. Plant lignans also increase concentration of sex hormone binding globulin, which blunts the effects of estrogens. These benefits were documented when 48 postmenopausal women consumed 7.5 g/day of ground flax seeds for six weeks, then 15 g for six weeks — and significant decreases in estradiol, estrone, and testosterone were noted, with a bigger decrease in overweight

and obese women.

In a mouse model, a flaxseed diet (five percent, 10 percent) shows dose-dependent inhibition of breast tumor growth. Human trials also confirmed similar beneficial effects. A double-blind, randomized controlled trial of dietary flaxseed demonstrated dramatic protection.

Women ate either a control muffin with no flax seeds imbedded, or a 25 g flax-containing muffin, starting at time of diagnosis of breast cancer for just 32-39 days until surgery. Tumor tissue analyzed at diagnosis and then at the time of surgery demonstrated surprising benefits even in this short time frame. There was a significant apoptosis (tumor cell death) and reduced cell proliferation in the flaxseed group in just the one month.

Likewise, women eating more flaxseeds with a documented higher serum enterolactone were found to have a 42 percent reduced risk of death from postmenopausal breast cancer and a dramatic 40 percent reduction in all causes of death.

Flaxseeds are clearly super foods; even with a mediocre diet they offer powerful protection against breast cancer. An-

other interesting study on flax followed women for up to 10 years and found a 51 percent reduced risk of all-cause mortality and a 71 percent reduced risk of breast cancer mortality. In addition, intake of dried beans was associated with a 39 percent reduced risk of all-cause mortality. Endometrial and ovarian cancer have not been as extensively studied, but the few studies that have been conducted suggest a protective effect.

Bottom line: don't forget to take your ground flax seeds (or chia seeds) every day. When used in conjunction with dietary exposure to greens, onions, mushrooms and beans, dramatic reductions in the risk of breast cancer are possible.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. *The Eat To Live Cookbook offers over 200 unique disease-fighting delicious recipes and his newest book, The End of Heart Disease, offers a detailed plan to prevent and reverse heart disease using a nutrient-dense, plant-rich eating style. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com.*

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