

Understanding Glandular Fever:

Glandular fever brings more young adults to their first experience with a herbalist in my practice, than any other condition.

The typical introduction to such a consultation is a mother bringing a high achieving 17yr old female high school student who has lost all her vitality and energy. She is sleeping 12 to 14 hrs per day, wakes up tired and has headaches, swollen glands and is missing lots of school. This has been going on for several months during which time she has had a couple of blood tests and maybe many other types of tests to 'rule out' serious conditions like tumours or exotic infections or whatever. Maybe she has had a couple of courses of antibiotics, 'just in case'. The first blood test showed nothing and the second one, 6 weeks later, demanded by the exasperated mother showed the Epstein-Barr virus. "Your daughter has Glandular Fever" says the Doctor. He/she then goes on to explain that the Epstein-Barr virus found in the blood stream causes Glandular Fever. The mother is told this viral condition is pretty common in young people of her daughter's age and that there is no treatment for the condition, apart from rest.

This is the point at which the mother goes looking outside orthodox medicine for an answer, and she ends up coming to the local herbalist either as a last resort or because she finds out I had successfully treated another child at the school for the same condition.

Glandular fever used to be called the 'kissing disease' in the part of Australia I come from but it is no more caused by kissing than by the Epstein-Barr virus.

It is coincidental that stress as well as kissing, starts to become more common in the young persons life at around 17 yrs of age. Some moralist in times gone by had propagated this rumour when trying to reduce this sort of fraternising between young people by making them afraid of getting ill from their experimentation with kissing. Doctor's Epstein-Barr had rightly identified the virus, which was then named after them, in the blood of glandular fever sufferers. They then made mistake number one in science.

As there was no current scientific evidence beyond the existence of this virus to explain the condition, they concluded that the virus had caused the Glandular Fever.

This only really goes to show that Dr.'s Epstein-Barr failed to consult with any traditional healers during the years they were studying the condition to ask what the healer thought caused Glandular Fever. Maybe they did consult but chose to ignore the healer's advice as 'unscientific'. I don't know what actually happened but I do know that a traditional healer would have told them that Glandular Fever is a stress-related illness. Very simple to understand and to treat. I have proven this for myself in successfully treating literally hundreds of cases during 20yrs as a practicing herbalist.

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I therefore conclude that the Epstein-Barr virus is purely and simply opportunistic and thrives in the blood of a person who has become severely depleted by stress and has consequently run completely out of Vitamin B support.

Just as kissing may enter a young person's life at around 17 years of age, so do much higher levels of stress than they may ever have previously encountered.

All nations secondary schooling systems are different but they commonly involve a graduation exam of some sort at around 18 years of age. The results of this determine whether that person can go on to University and more importantly which courses of study will be open to them. In Australia at present, popular courses like Medicine or Veterinary Science require extraordinarily high marks in the secondary school leaving or university entrance exam 95% or more average across 5 subjects commonly. This is not because academic excellence relates in any way to a persons ability to feel or to desire to care for sick people or for animals, except maybe inversely. It is simply because these and other professions limit their student intake to protect the income levels of graduates. Anyway, this particular argument is outside the scope of this discussion. Suffice it to say that a rapid increase in the level and duration of stress occurs in the young persons life during the buildup to, and the preparation for, this entrance exam.

The pressure goes on, the schools pressure the students as their reputation (and maybe financial security) is on the line. Sometimes the parents pressure the students. The students pressure themselves as they begin often, for the first time in their life, to sweat for month after month on this particular goal.

Glandular fever is always preceded by an over-demand, and then a collapse, in the Vitamin B support to the nervous system. Vitamin B is the vitamin, which we use more of when under stress. Coincidentally, our children rarely have rolled oats porridge for breakfast any more. Even if they were having it while younger, they have taken charge of their own diet by age 16 and switched to an advertised cereal, or just white bread toast or maybe just a cup of coffee. In Australia, New Zealand and the UK we used to be sent to school with a Vegemite sandwich made from a yeast extract which was enormously high in the B group vitamins. This is no longer common practice.

Here we have a huge reduction in Vitamin B intake at precisely the time when we need it most. Often also the young person has been on repeated or long-term doses of antibiotics to treat respiratory system infections or their teenage acne or something. The B group vitamins are taken up by the body in the small intestines with the aid of intestinal flora which are decimated by antibiotics. So, besides our intake being less, our ability to absorb them may also be compromised.

The young person sitting in front of me may not have had all of these factors impinging on their life at once, although they often do. They may not be 17 they may be 6 in which case there are major family stresses at work, a family move, losing a pet or a friend, or the parents fighting or divorcing. The young person may be in their 20's having moved away from home for the first time and in a job or situation which is very demanding or stressful. Mostly, the young person involved is one who takes their responsibilities seriously, who cares and who is sensitive. They are often some of our finest students and highest achieving sports-people.

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It doesn't matter what their age or situation is, in every single case the set of circumstances preceding their illness are the same. Their Vitamin B support collapses and they begin to become very tired and lethargic. They suffer from headaches and swollen glands and can no longer fulfill their sport, study and other commitments. They often feel bad about all this and put further pressure upon themselves. Sometimes there is some insensitive person telling them they are slack or lazy. They feel helpless and hopeless and struggle on gamely sleeping 12 to 14 hrs at night and waking up tired. Finally, someone notices and takes them to the Doctor who often finds nothing in the first round of tests. Often it is three months before I get to see them. It is usually less than three weeks before they are back at work and study and beginning to feel well again.

The stress, the diet and the antibiotics are all man-made factors. I am sure the set of symptoms now used to diagnose Glandular Fever did occur in times past. I am equally sure they are much more common nowadays in the industrialised countries of the East and in the West than in traditional societies in which the eating habits are far more sensible and the health, family and emotional support, far more satisfactory.

As a busy health professional I could easily just spend 5 minutes assessing the condition and prescribing Vitamin B12 injections along with oral Vitamin B complex tablets at twice the recommended dose.

I always however take a full hour to investigate and to explain to the patient, in terms which they can relate to, how they came to be in this situation and how we can work together to get out of it. This very often develops a far better understanding between the patient and their parent who can then understand and support the recovery. Often, the parent has to look into their own part in the causal factors. The young person is empowered by discovering that the circumstances are easy to understand and to change. This understanding and empowerment may help them manage their stress levels and dietary support for the rest of their lives and also prevent a relapse, which will almost certainly occur at some stage, if they are not properly informed.

My usual strategy in this consultation is to aim for a contract with the young person to make simple changes to their diet. A spoonful of dried oats on their favourite cereal and a couple of Vegemite sandwiches on wholemeal bread to take to school with their snacks and their lunch is often enough. I prescribe also a powerful Vitamin B complex supplement at twice the recommended adult dose level. I add to this Vitamin B12 tablets at twice the recommended dose for one month. I make up and prescribe a herbal metabolic and nervous system mix tailored to the individual personality and circumstances.

When the young person and their mother return in a month they are ecstatic. They are well on the way to recovery, sleeping better, headaches gone and studying well. If I had needed to prescribe injectable Vitamin B12, which I only do if there is extreme time pressure as in the case of final exams next week, I discontinue these after one month. If progressing well, I reduce oral Vitamin B's to the recommended dose. This program, along with herbal support, will continue for three months after recovery and then stop. During the one or two return visits over the total of 4 or 5 months on treatment, I reinforce the understanding of the condition and the dietary

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commitment.

This successful result produces two or three classmates as patients and so it goes on, year after year. No noticeable change showing up in the awareness of the general practitioners or the breakfast cereal manufacturers. No noticeable change occurring in the schools or the education system.

It is only a matter of time before some pharmaceutical company will come up with a drug to kill the Epstein-Barr virus and make a fortune for their shareholders.

Robert McDowell
Herbalist
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