

REPORT OF THE 2004 ATMS SYDNEY RESPIRATORY SYSTEM SEMINAR

MATTHEW BOYLAN

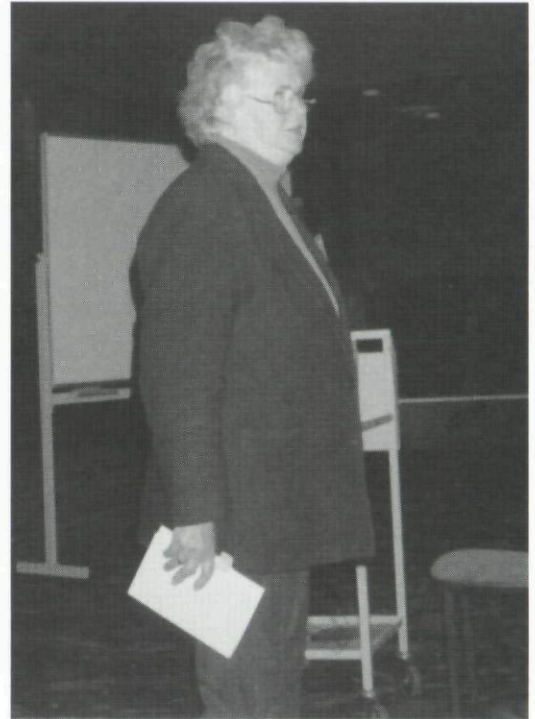
On a windy yet sunny June Sunday, a healthy number of practitioners attended the Liverpool Catholic Club in Sydney to hear four experienced practitioners explain their *Management of the Respiratory System*. This investment by the seminar participants was well rewarded with inspiring insights provided by all four speakers.

Master of ceremonies, the ATMS Head of Herbal Medicine Raymond Khoury, welcomed the seminar participants, before introducing the first speaker, Karen Bridgman. Karen provided a systemic approach to the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system, not just the basic science. She stressed that for "for optimal lung health and strong qi check all aspects of health ..." In doing so Karen set the scene for the overall conference tone. She explained that management of respiratory system complaints does not only involve the respiratory system, but also nearly every other body system, as well as factors such as the person's external environment, their lifestyle, their posture, how they breathe etc. In other words, a holistic approach is essential.

Karen did not ignore the science of the respiratory system, and provided some fascinating facts as to its scope. However Karen's main focus was related to how the respiratory system fitted in systematically. She started at the beginning, in the embryo, outlining the various links arising from the endo-derm between the respiratory system and other areas of the body such as the digestive and urinary systems, the liver and the pancreas. Karen succinctly highlighted the various interactive relationships within the body involving the respiratory system. For example bacterial translocation can result in peridontal disease or bacteria from the gut causing pneumonia.



Karen Bridgman



Dorothy Hall

On the other hand, lung disease may cause congestive heart failure. Key pathogens (eg *Mycoplasma pneumonia*, *Haemophilus influenzae*) and insulting agents (eg heavy metals, mercury, hydrocarbons) were discussed.

Karen pointed out the damage that may result to the lungs from poor nutrition. Consistent with the holistic approach, Karen also cautioned on the difficulties that may arise in having a person change their diet, for example the influence of family, friends and culture. Further, and highlighting the multifaceted world of health care, Karen also noted studies indicating that increased dietary carbohydrates (other than fruit) may cause reduced exercise tolerance in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Karen ended her very informative and interesting talk with some infection prevention and treatment strategies, the importance of the magnesium:calcium ratio in respiratory structure and function, and some herbs and nutrients applicable for lung repair.

Most appropriately introduced as the Matriarch of Herbal Medicine, Dorothy Hall provided two wonderfully entertaining and very informative talks. Almost immediately, Dorothy brought the seminar topic into sharp focus. We should not aim to 'manage' a person's respiratory disease, but instead understand it and get rid of it! In doing so, we must treat the person, not the disease. Dorothy stressed the importance of assessment of the patient. She suggested that if the practitioner has

not worked out two herbs and two Bach flower remedies before the patient tells the practitioner what is wrong with them, then the practitioner is having a bad day and needs to go home!

Dorothy outlined, with the aid of explicit photographs, several important iris signs relevant to the respiratory system. She noted the importance of looking for the cause of the problem, not its name, again emphasising the seminar's overriding theme that everything is connected. For example, nerve rings may show up in the iris at 3 or 9 o'clock, indicating breathing tension and/or chest tightness, or lymph congestion may show at those points suggesting that the lymphatic system is unable to properly eliminate respiratory waste products.

In her second talk, Dorothy outlined the personal pictures that may show up when a patient experiencing respiratory problems walks into the clinic. She stressed the need to ask why a person continues to experience respiratory problems (rather than suggesting they come back for another consultation when they next experience bronchitis!). Person pictures discussed included 'uptight people' who often have their muscles under such tight control so as to experience breathing difficulties. Interestingly, elite athletes may fit this picture, or the 'TB chest' (actual or a hereditary weakness) often indicated by a thin spare frame with a caved-in chest. Poor posture may cause respiratory difficulties, and this may be exacerbated by simple things such as a poorly designed armchair used by the person in their home (often fixed by simply using a pillow for added support). Other simple remedies suggested by Dorothy included outside exercise, laughter and the importance of keeping warm in winter.

Agreeing with an earlier point made by Karen regarding the Chinese perspective of the lungs being associated with grief, Dorothy added that respiratory problems may also result from fear. In fact, fear may be the larger contributor, and to this end Dorothy outlined the specific profiles appropriate for selected Bach flower remedies (Aspen, Mimulus and Rock Rose) for fear. Other Bach flower remedies discussed by Dorothy included those relating to a lack of energy or too much energy.

Between Dorothy's two talks was Diana Mund, who outlined nutrients important in respiratory function. Diana also drew the seminar's attention towards the need for a holistic approach. She noted that as food is the fuel for the body, the eating of appropriate food will help all aspects of a person, not just the respiratory system. She commented on three pertinent aspects of the patient's presentation that need to be considered when implementing a holistic treatment plan. These three aspects are the person's:

- (i) Environment/circumstance aspects,
- (ii) Physical aspects, and
- (iii) Emotional and mental aspects.

Diana noted that in addressing a person's nutritional needs it is important to identify which of the above three aspects was the underlying cause, the trigger, of the person's problems.

Diana encouraged that people become hunters of food again. That is, that our patients and we adapt our food intake to



Diana Mund

seasonal changes so that we eat local food that is in season. This will help strengthen the body in preparation for the change and create harmony in the body. Diana also outlined the individual micronutrients relevant to respiratory health.

Raymond Khoury provided the concluding talk for the seminar, discussing the herbal management of respiratory problems. Again stressing the importance of a holistic approach, Raymond noted that in all his many years of clinical experience, he is yet to see a pair of lungs walk into his clinic!

Raymond outlined in a concise manner his clinical observations regarding the respiratory system. Subsequently he discussed his principles of management. This very practical and useful section of Raymond's talk covered the aims and duration of treatment, as well as prescribing strategies.

Of particular interest was Raymond's discussion of the herbal materia medica, covering categories such as respiratory system specifics (*Verbascum thapsus* for lower respiratory conditions and *Sambucus nigra* and *Euphrasia spp.* for upper respiratory conditions), or most appropriate potentiating herbs (*Zingiber officinale* succus and *Capsicum annum*). Raymond also had a few choice comments regarding the trend to use 'newer' herbs in preference to the more traditionally used and proven herbs. Raymond did not just concentrate on herbs however, and outlined several dietary measures useful in treating respiratory complaints. Raymond concluded with general guidelines as to what classes of herbs might be required in preparing a herbal formula to treat upper and lower respiratory tract infections.

The day was not without some minor hitches (long lunch queues, sound system difficulties) beyond the control of ATMS. However the professionalism in which the seminar was arranged and managed meant that these difficulties had only a minimal, if any, impact on the seminar. And no report of the seminar would be complete without a brief mention of

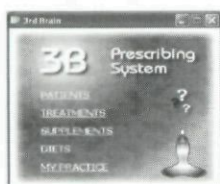
the good value 20 year anniversary 'ATMS show bag' provided to all who attended. Finally, I will know the date when in my clinic!

To sum up the seminar in a word, I would use invigorating. To hear first hand the clinical observations of such experienced therapists and teachers as Dorothy Hall and Raymond Khoury is indeed priceless. Too often seminars focus almost exclusively on the 'science'. Science is important, and perhaps becoming more so in our purported evidence-based medicine world. However it is not the only important aspect

of the way we, as natural therapists, treat our patients. A holistic approach and the utilisation of traditionally proven methods/remedies are two key areas where we often differ from the medical establishment. They are also often the reasons our patients come to us in the first place. It was therefore beneficial as a therapist to come away from a seminar feeling invigorated about these important key areas of our practice. It helps us not lose sight of the forest for the trees. As Dorothy Hall put it, "It is not just the body and the science. It is the person in their living circumstances." ❖



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Therefore, the ATMS policy is that telephone and Internet consultation, without a prior face-to-face consultation, is not keeping the practitioner's standard of professional work as high as possible and is in breach of the Society's Code of Ethics and is prejudicial to the interests of the profession and the Society.

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