
Cotacachi's Health Matters

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Welcome to the first issue of our community's new health related newsletter Cotacachi's Health Matters!

The main goal of this newsletter is to help keep everyone abreast of current medical issues, available medical services (traditional as well as alternative), and to provide a vehicle of communication among us to keep Cotacachi a healthy and safe place to live. The objective is not to use this newsletter as a way for anyone to make money, but to highlight health matters and health related services.

I should let it be known that I am not a writer nor do I have experience putting together a newsletter, so please hang in there as I climb the learning curve! Anyone in the reading audience is more than welcome to write articles for consideration that might be of interest. Also, please send comments and/or suggestions and of course letters to the editor! All of the above can be sent to me at: CotacachisHealthMatters@gmail.com

Once again, welcome to the first issue!

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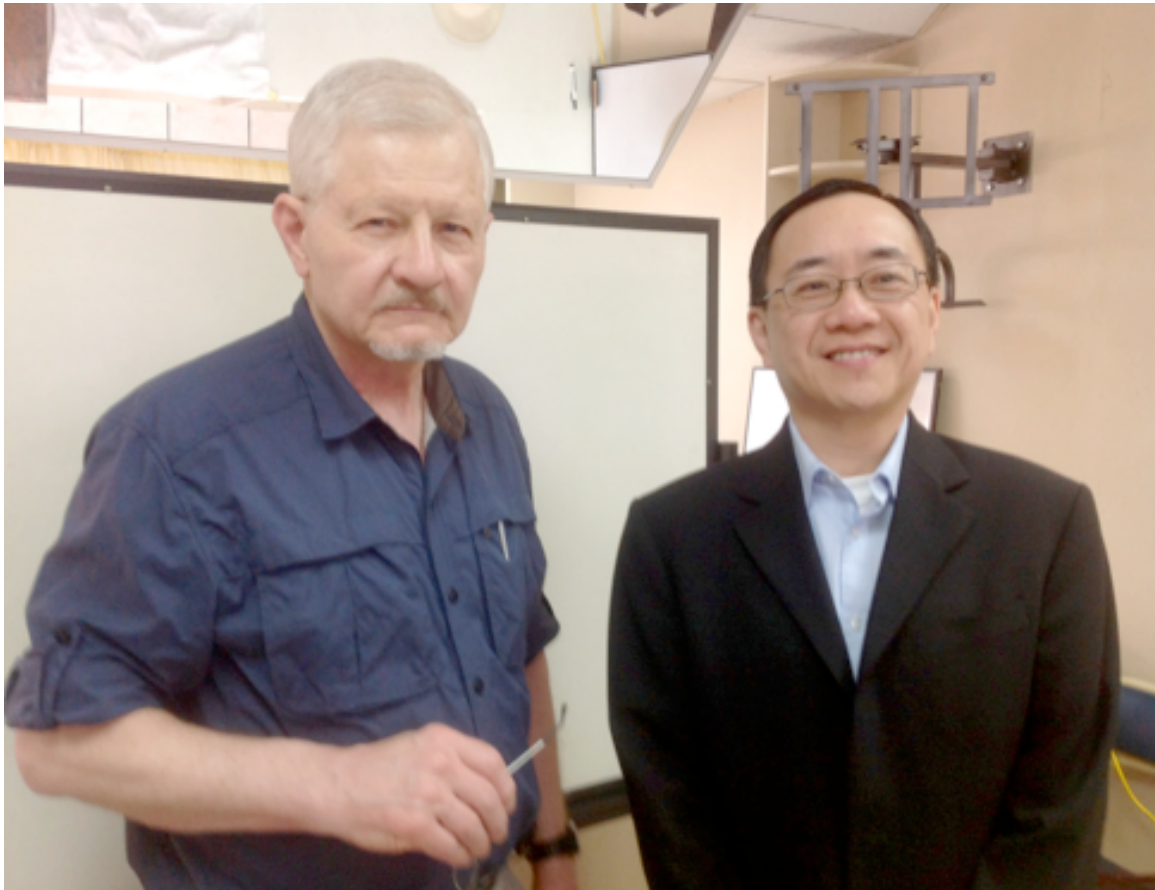
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If you need a Spanish speaking medical interpreter to accompany you to your medical appointments, you can reach me at 098 008 0249 or elmocat123@gmail.com

Hospice in Ecuador: A Call to Action!

A month or so ago I had the opportunity to attend three evenings of workshops in Cuenca that were conducted by Dr. David Small. David is a psychologist currently living in Washington state. He lived in Ecuador for 6 years back in the 70's and 80's and in October he and his wife will be moving to Cuenca.



Dr. David Small

Dr. Jimmy Cui

David has started a foundation called **Care Partners International** whose mission is to promote palliative care in Latin America. His foundation is currently focusing on the Cuenca area, but has plans to expand their training sessions to other areas of Ecuador, possibly including Cotacachi. You can get more information about his foundation at carepartnersinternational.org .

Hospice is a very new concept in Latin America. The hospice training provided by David, in tandem with local and foreign medical practitioners, is a series of four workshops conducted over the space of one year. Each workshop session is presented over three evenings. The workshops are aimed at doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, spiritual advisors and volunteers who are interested in providing hospice care. After attending and completing the four workshop sessions participants are awarded a certificate. The cost of the workshops is minimal (to cover printing, snack, etc). When training is complete, teams are formed. Each hospice care team includes a doctor, nurse, social worker, psychologist, spiritual advisors and volunteers.

Because of several recent illnesses in our ex-pat community we are now very much aware that Cotacachi needs its own hospice services. Currently FECUPAL (Fundación Ecuatoriana de Cuidados Paliativos) in Quito is able to assist with hospice care in Cotacachi, but because of limited resources their main focus is the Quito area. You can read more information about FECUPAL at <http://www.fecupal.com/>

If we want to have quality hospice services in our community, the citizens of Cotacachi need to organize their own hospice services. FECUPAL is offering assistance in developing our local hospice, but we need to step forward with the manpower!!!! If we have enough interest from people in Cotacachi who are willing to be active participants, David might be able to bring his training program here! We could potentially have several teams ready to provide care locally.

For those of you interested in actively participating in this project to bring hospice services to Cotacachi, please contact me at CotacachisHealthMatters@gmail.com

I would like to send out a special thanks to Lisa Silverman for introducing me to David Small! Thanks Lisa!

A Dose of Reality

Scenario: What would you do if you tripped and fell on Leather Street and broke a hip? In North America we all know what we would do if we or someone close to us has “fallen and can’t get up”! But what would you do if it happened here?

I’ve had the pleasure of living in Cotacachi for 4 years and will admit that these years have been among the best of my life and also among the most challenging! During these four years we all have seen many changes in town. One of the most obvious changes is the increasing number of foreigners deciding to call Cotacachi home. Most of these foreigners are of retirement age and some come with significant health issues, which is not uncommon for those in their retirement years.

As a healthcare professional with many years of experience, I would encourage those of you who are deciding if Cotacachi might be your new forever home to please trust your own intuition, use your own common sense and do your own research.

Deciding to make a permanent move to a small town in a developing country with limited resources is a BIG decision! And it’s an even BIGGER decision if you have health issues!

It’s very romantic to read an article in a magazine or on a website that lists all the positive things about living in Ecuador. However, I feel those magazine and website articles do a disservice to their readers by not including the fine print containing the vital issues one needs to consider before actually taking the plunge.

Things to consider...

- **What are my current health issues?**
- What potential health issues might I face in the future?
- How will I take care of my health in a developing country?

It’s very easy for us to be in denial about our own health status. Please be open and honest with yourself!

Obviously no one can predict the future, but based on your own health history and that of your family members, it is possible to consider what the future might hold.

Other things to ponder.....

- Where will I get my lab work done?
- Where can I get my prescriptions filled?

- Is the medication I take on a regular basis even available and how much will it cost?
- I don't speak Spanish! Why isn't everything in English? Why don't all of the doctors speak English? Why haven't I ever gotten around to learning Spanish?
- Where can I find a doctor who has experience dealing with my particular health issues? (Ibarra? Quito?) And what kind of transportation is available to get there in the middle of the night?
- How can I hire a home health aide? Are there home health aides in Cotacachi? (**No!**)

What kind of health care is available right in Cotacachi, especially for emergencies?

You have probably read in those previously mentioned articles that Cotacachi has a hospital, the hospital has an ambulance and all of the **care at the hospital is free.**

Those three facts are absolutely true! But each person needs to do their **own** research to help them decide where they want to go when they think they might be having a heart attack!

- **If health care is free** at the local hospital, I won't need to worry about having money set aside for future health expenses or to purchase health insurance, right? In one word, **NO!**

All of this is just food for thought!

- Do your **own research** before making the move.
- Come here for 6 months or more to **scout out the situation.**
- **Ask questions** of people already living here.
- Visit the local **pharmacies** and even make an appointment with a **doctor** to talk about your health issues and what type of treatment is available here.
- Take a tour of the local **hospital.** Ask about the services they provide and ask to see the **ambulance.** Hospital staff is always happy to give tours and answer questions.

All it takes is being open and honest with yourself and doing your own research. The time it takes to do this will make your possible move to a developing country less of an unknown and more of a healthy and pleasurable experience!

Immunizations

The following immunizations are available for adults **free of charge** at Hospital Asdrúbal de la Torre, the public hospital located on Calle Pedro Moncayo. Staff does not speak English.

1) Hepatitis B immunization- available Monday thru Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

What is Hepatitis B? Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that ranges in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness. It results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B can be either “acute” or “chronic.”

How is Hepatitis B spread? Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid infected with the Hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. People can become infected with the virus during activities such as:

- Birth (spread from an infected mother to her baby during birth)
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Direct contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments.

Can Hepatitis B be prevented? Yes. The best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting the Hepatitis B vaccine. The Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective and is usually given as 3-4 shots over a 6-month period. <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/B/bFAQ.htm#bFAQ15>

2) Yellow Fever immunization – available Monday, Wednesday, Friday

What is yellow fever? Yellow fever is a disease caused by a virus that is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Where does yellow fever virus occur? Yellow fever virus is found in tropical and subtropical areas in South America and Africa.

How can people reduce the chance of getting infected with yellow fever virus? Yellow fever can be prevented by vaccination. The vaccine is a live but attenuated (less potent) strain of the virus. People should also take actions to prevent mosquito bites when in areas of Africa or South America with yellow fever transmission.

<http://www.cdc.gov/yellowfever/qa/index.html#where>

3) Seasonal Flu Immunization – Available Monday thru Friday 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM starting at some point in November or December.

All of the standard childhood immunizations are available at the hospital free of charge.

For those in need of other types of immunizations there is a private office in Ibarra called **Vacunorte** that is located on Grijalva and Olmedo Streets. It's open Monday thru Friday from 8:30AM- 12:30 PM and 2:30 PM – 6:30 PM and Saturdays from 8:30 AM- 12:30 PM. Staff does not speak English! **Vacunorte** offers the following immunizations at the following prices (as of 29 April 2013). Prices listed are per injection, most immunizations are a series of injections.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Rabies | \$25.00 |
| Hepatitis A & B (combo) | \$21.00 |
| Tetanus/Diphtheria | \$6.00 |
| Yellow Fever | \$15.00 |
| Triple Viral (mumps, measles, rubella) | \$10.00 |
| Hepatitis A | \$20.00 |
| Typhoid Fever | \$20.00 |
| Varicella (chicken pox) | \$20.00 |
| Pneumococcal (pneumonia) | \$18.00 - \$75.00 |
| Seasonal Flu | \$12.00 |

The best place for the most accurate and up to date immunization information is the site for the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** at www.cdc.gov/

Cynthia Goes to Ecuador

Cynthia Collett is a friend of mine (and maybe a friend of yours too) who came to Cotacachi with health issues, minimal resources, poco Español and without ever having visited Ecuador before. In the future I feel that more and more foreigners will be arriving in Cotacachi in the same situation.

I sat down with Cynthia to ask her what her decision making process was before she arrived and also, in hindsight, what she would have done differently knowing what she knows now. For those of you who know Cynthia, you know she is a very articulate, intelligent and candid person. She posted a blog article in response to my questions. She is very willingly offering the readers of this newsletter the opportunity to read her posting. You can read it at:

<http://cynthiaecuador.blogspot.com/2013/05/seniors-in-ecuador.html#more>

(I would like to make several small corrections to Cynthia's post. The hospital does have a standard X-ray machine (as well as a dental X-ray machine and a mammography machine), but from time to time their equipment may not be

Essential Oils and Your Health

By Lezley Sulieman

Essential oils have been used as health and beauty aids for adults, children and animals for many centuries the world over. Penicillin and subsequent antibiotics have largely taken over the role they played as go-to substances to combat illness. Australia's melaleuca (aka tea tree) is just one example of an important oil that addresses everything from wound healing to fungal infections and much more.

As you may know, it is the over use of antibiotics that has contributed to the emergence of the so called superbugs we are now facing. Essential oils have no such downside.

Distilled from the flowers, leaves and roots of the plant, the oil is considered the vital essence of the plant. What this means for us is that the oil is significantly more potent than the herb itself. It's missing the point to dismiss aromatherapy as a lovely smelling self indulgence. Remember that most of our drugs are chemical fabrications based on discoveries from the plant world.

Traditional uses for Essential Oils include:

ANTI-MICROBIAL, ANTI-BACTERIAL, ANTI-VIRAL

BURNS

HEADACHES

MUSCLE AND JOINT DISCOMFORT

WOUND HEALING

HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

COSMETICS

TOOTHPASTES-ESPECIALLY HELPS WITH GINGIVITIS AND GUM PROBLEMS

KILLS MOLD AND FUNGUS

SLEEP DISORDERS

DISPELS NOXIOUS SMELLS (IE. CAT LITTER)

BUG REPELLANT

BUG BITE RELIEVER

CONCENTRATION

MOOD SWINGS

WEIGHT LOSS

DIGESTION

PARASITES

IMMUNE SYSTEM



Lavender

So now you're thinking that this sounds like snake oil and it's ridiculous that one thing can do all this. Keep in mind that there are scores of different types of oils and they fill various niches. (That being said, lavender does come pretty close to being a first aid kit in a bottle.) What I won't be listing here are major side effects like your brains spilling out your ears if you use essential oils, unlike common TV drug warnings.

However, there are some precautions to be taken when using oils. Look for organic, therapeutic grade oils especially if you are using them for healing purposes. Keep in mind they are very potent and when you use 'hot' oils like cinnamon you should mix a few drops with a carrier oil like coconut, almond or olive oil. Because they are so potent you need very little for each application.

High quality oils can induce sticker shock, but an antidote is to remember that one small bottle goes a long way.

Essential Oil Use in Child Care

Minor childhood ailments can be treated successfully with essential oils. And while I would never recommend disregarding your pediatrician's advice, we did find we were able to limit our visits to well child checkups with the use of essential oils and herbs. More precautions need to be taken in treating children with essential oils as they are very sensitive. I recommend either cutting the oil with a carrier oil like coconut or olive oil or just putting a drop or two on clothing. Be aware that some oils do stain.

Lavender is a great oil for children and was a constant friend in our household. It went into the bath, on pillows and to school sprinkled on collars during cold season.

Eucalyptus emerged when a cold snuck up on them and helped them breathe easier.

Now in their twenties, they both still use essential oils for skin issues, travel sanitation and digestion. It can even aid concentration. My daughter diffuses it in her house to keep her own little one healthy. That method is especially helpful since her family includes two dogs, ten chickens, a cat, a crawling baby and a husband.

In Cotacachi we have DoTerra Oils available at Serendipity and I am able to order whatever you want from the US. There are also people here who use Young Living Oils and can probably order those as well. And I just discovered that our town renaissance man, Remington, knows quite a lot about essential oils so you might be able to chat him up over your chicken dinner. Don't tell him I told you.

Next issue I will share some information about Lavender, which is my all time favorite oil.

Its uses are many and can be used on the most sensitive individuals though I always recommend testing it first, as with all the oils.

I would be happy to chat with anyone interested in learning more about essential oils and their uses. I can be reached at Lezley123@gmail.com.

Safety and Security and How It Relates to Health Matters!

At some point in the future each of us, one of our family members or one of our friends will likely develop a sudden and serious illness or have an accident that will require emergency medical attention. That is our reality no matter where we live. Have you thought about how you would handle a medical emergency if/when one were to arise? Living in a foreign country, especially if you haven't been here very long and even more so if you don't speak the language, presents barriers to accessing appropriate and safe health care.

One thing each of us can do to help increase our chances of getting appropriate and safe health care is to take the time to type up our personal health information and keep the sheet in an easily accessible place. The information we should consider including is:

- **Name and phone number.**
- **Cedula** or passport **number.**
- Name of **next of kin**/close friend and phone number.
- Any known **drug allergies** and type of reaction.
- List of **medications and dose** (including supplements) along with the reasons you are taking them (a local health care provider might not recognize the name of a medication/supplement from another country).
- **Current health issues** (ie diabetes, high blood pressure).
- List of **past surgeries** and reason for the surgeries.

Once you have this information typed up, put it into Google translate (or translating program of your choice) and translate it into Spanish. Print off copies in both Spanish and English and put the copies in a convenient location. You may even want to carry copies with you when you are out and about.

We never know when we will be in a situation where we can't speak for ourselves!

That's it for this issue of Cotacachi's Health Matters. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, send me a message at CotacachisHealthMatters@gmail.com

Obligatory disclaimer: Nothing in this newsletter is meant to replace the advice of your health care provider. If you are ill, contact your health care provider! And as always, do your own research before making any health related decisions!