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# Editorial

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## Griep

As P W Botha resigned the Presidency I was just gaining enough interest in living to open half an eye in the direction of our portable TV screen in the bedroom. It was on the fourth day of illness. Both my wife and myself were down, she two days ahead of me. Friends, a two doctor couple had had a similar experience a month before. At one point they were debating about the moment at which the swop would take place. When would the doctor become the patient and the patient the doctor. You know, lets-see-who's-the-weakest game for the wimps or lets-see-who's-the-strongest for those with a big sense of duty. It's rather difficult if both are of the same inclination. I definitely belong to the former.

We had been exposed to various people with flu-like syndromes for two months but never really had the opportunity to b̄ ill. I went down on the only clear spot in my diary. That does make one think! With both of us in bed and half delirious sometimes, things weren't too bad. Trouble came when two days later we felt strong enough to complain. My wife felt she'd been crooked out of a visit by our GP. He would surely have given us something to get better and feel better! In elk geval, is ek beskuldig, sou ons dit alles kon vryspring as ons ingeent was teen griep. In my guns was darem ons bogenoemde vrinne wat wel sorgvuldig geimmuniseer was voor hulle griep episode. Die beskuldigings laat my natuurlik baie meer jammerre oor my toestand. Op 'n stadium het ek geweet dit gaan beter as gister, maar kon my glad nie indink hoe dinge erger kon wees as nou nie.

Die siekte het my twee dinge geleer – hoe lekker dit is om te kreun en

hoeveel verligting 'n rukkie se stoom-inasem kan bring. My hoes, my neus, sinusse en oorpyn het almal verligting gekry met stoom, eerder as met analgetika.

Nou is daar nog net 'n nie-meer-seer hoessie en 'n ongekende swakte oor. Sal definitief vorentoe meer liberaal wees met siekteverlof vir my pasiënte met griep!

My lessons for the week have thus been: rather don't get flu, and if you do, treat it with respect. And retire before others ask you to!

May P W retire in peace.

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## Food for thought

There is no difficulty when a link is made between a healthy diet and good health. Neither is there trouble when malnutrition and starvation is discussed in relation to the availability of adequate food supplies.

But watch the sparks fly when claims are made more specifically between particular diseases and particular foods – between hypertension and sugar, or maize meal and asthma. Immediately the crowd divides into a zealot or two, the silent untainted majority and the empiricist or zealot basher. I find myself in a strange position. There is without doubt the evidence provided by the reaction of individual patients.<sup>1,2</sup> Their improvement cannot be laughed off by "its just the placebo or spontaneous remission effect". The explanations and sweeping claims that zealots make after such cures make me angry and impatient. If

medicine is at fault today in not accepting and practising as if foods are and can be a major illness producing factor – the zealots are equally to blame. It is precisely their ability to explain every symptom and illness in relation to some foodstuff that keeps most of us in the state of unbelief. To be fair to the evidence that seems to be available and yet not promote a barrage of untested theories, we are placing a series of patient reports by Gus Borok.

I sincerely hope we will get a good response from both the sides of belief and unbelief.

## References

1. Brostoff J, Challacombe SJ. Food Allergy and Intolerance. London: Ballière Tindall, 1987.
2. Metcalfe DD. Diseases of Food. Hypersensitivity. New Eng J Med 1989; 321:255-7.

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