Essiac Cancer Cure?

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Essiac

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Essiac, a harmless herbal tea, was used by Canadian nurse Rene Caisse to successfully treat thousands of cancer patients from the 1920s until her death in 1978 at the age of ninety. Refusing payment for her services, instead accepting only voluntary contributions, the Bracebridge, Ontario, nurse brought remissions to hundreds of documented cases, many abandoned as "hopeless" or "terminal" by orthodox medicine. She aided countless more in prolonging life and relieving pain. Caisse obtained remarkable results against a wide variety of cancers, treating persons by administering Essiac through hypodermic injection or oral ingestion.

The formula for the herbal remedy was given to Caisse in 1922 by a hospital patient whose breast cancer had been healed by an Ontario Indian medicine man. Essiac came within just three votes of being legalized by the Canadian parliament in 1938. Over the years, many prominent physicians voiced their support for the efficacy of Caisse's medicine. For example, Dr. Charles Brusch—a founder of the prestigious Brusch Medical Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a former physician to President John F. Kennedy—declared that "Essiac has merit in the treatment of cancer" and revealed that he cured his own cancer with it. In a notarized statement made on April 6, 1990, Dr. Brusch testified, "I endorse this therapy even today for I have in fact cured my own cancer, the original site of which was the lower bowels, through Essiac alone."

Despite such support, Rene Caisse lived under the constant threat of persecution and harassment by Canadian authorities. Today, Essiac is unapproved for marketing in the United States and Canada. However, Resperin Corporation of Ontario provides Essiac to patients in Canada under a special agreement with the Canadian Health and Welfare department, which permits "emergency releases of Essiac on compassionate grounds" while still deeming it "an ineffective cancer treatment." Another company reportedly has the authentic formula for the herbal remedy in Caisse's handwriting, plus eight of her formula variations for specific cancers, including cancer of the prostate. It recently made Essiac available through various distributors. A number of herbal distributors claim to sell the original Essiac tea. Prospective users should carefully weigh the background of all vendors and examine all claims with caution.
Rene Caisse refused to publicly divulge the precise Essiac formula during her lifetime, fearing that a monopolistic medical establishment would either try to discredit the formula or use it to reap enormous profits. Also, she wanted Essiac safe for immediate use on suffering cancer patients, but medical experts demanded prior testing on lab mice. Caisse repeatedly offered to reveal the exact formula and method of preparation if the Canadian medical authorities would first admit that Essiac had merit in the treatment of cancer. But the doctors and politicians argued that they realistically couldn't give any such endorsement until they first knew what was in the herbal mixture. The result was a stand-off.

The principal herbs in Essiac include burdock root, turkey rhubarb root (Indian rhubarb), sheep sorrel, and slippery elm bark. Burdock root, a key active ingredient, is also a major ingredient of the Hoxsey herbal remedy. As discussed in the chapter on the Hoxsey therapy, two Hungarian scientists in 1966 reported "considerable antitumor activity in a purified fraction of burdock.1 In addition, as also discussed, Japanese scientists at Nagoya University in 1984 discovered burdock contains a new type of desmutagen, a substance uniquely capable of reducing cell mutation either in the absence or in the presence of metabolic activation. So important is this property, the Japanese researchers named it the B-factor, for "burdock factor."2 Another herb in Essiac, turkey rhubarb root, was demonstrated to have antitumor activity in the sarcoma-37 animal test system. Herbalists, however, believe that the synergistic interaction of herbal ingredients contributes to their therapeutic effects. They point out that laboratory tests on a single, isolated compound from one herbal formula fail to address this synergistic potency.

Through her work with cancer patients, Caisse observed that Essiac broke down nodular masses to a more normal tissue, while greatly alleviating pain. Many patients would report an enlarging and hardening of the tumor after a few treatments. Then the tumor would start to soften. People also frequently reported a discharge of large amounts of pus and fleshy material. Masses of diseased tissue were sloughed off in persons with breast, rectum, and internal cancers. After this process, the tumor would be gone.3

Caisse theorized that one of the herbs in Essiac reduced tumor growth while other herbs acted as blood purifiers, carrying away destroyed tissue as well as infections related to the malignancy. She also speculated that Essiac strengthened the body's innate defense mechanisms, enabling normal cells to destroy abnormal ones as Nature intended.

Even if a tumor didn't disappear, Caisse maintained, it could be forced to regress, then surgically removed after six to eight Essiac treatments, with much less risk of metastasizing and causing new outbreaks. "If there is any suspicion that any malignant cells are left after the operation," she stated, "then Essiac should be given once a week for at least three months, supplying the body with the resistance to a recurrence that is needed."

She wrote, "In the case of cancer of the breast, the primary growth will usually invade the mammary gland of the opposite breast or the auxilla, or both. If Essiac is administered either orally or by hypodermic injection, into the forearm, the secondary growth will regress into the primary mass, enlarging it for a time, but when it is all localized it will loosen and soften and can then be removed without the danger of recurrence."4 Caisse spoke from personal experience, having administered thousands of Essiac injections to gravely ill patients, always under the supervision of a physician.

In 1983, Dr. E. Bruce Hendrick, chief of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, urged Canada's highest health officials to launch "a scientific clinical trial" of Essiac. In a letter to the Canadian Minister of Health and Welfare, Dr. Hendrick reported that eight of ten patients with surgically treated tumors of the central nervous system, after following an Essiac regimen, had "escaped from the conventional methods of therapy including both radiation and chemotherapy."5 Yet today, patients in Canada must go through a bureaucratic maze that makes it difficult or impossible for them to receive Essiac therapy.

The story of Essiac began in 1922, when Caisse, a surgical nurse working in a Haileybury, Ontario, hospital, noticed an elderly patient with a strangely scarred, gnarled breast. When Rene asked the woman, who was nearly eighty, what had happened, the woman replied that some thirty years earlier, she had developed a growth on her breast and an Indian friend had offered to heal it with herbal medicine. This woman and her husband then went to Ontario, where doctors confirmed the diagnosis of advanced cancer and told her the breast would have to be surgically removed. Opting instead to take her chances with the Indian herbal healer, the woman returned to his mining camp and drank the brew daily. Her tumors gradually shrank, then disappeared. Over two decades later, when Caisse stumbled across her in the hospital, she was still totally cancer-free.

Caisse asked the woman for the herbal recipe. "My thought was that if I should ever develop cancer, I would use it," Caisse later wrote.

In 1924, Caisse's aunt, Mireza Potvin, was diagnosed with advanced cancer of the stomach and was told she had six
months at the most to live. Remembering the Indian brew, Rene asked her aunt's physician, Dr. R. O. Fisher of Toronto, for permission to try it on her dying relative. Dr. Fisher consented, and Rene gathered the herbs to brew the tea. After drinking the herbal concoction daily for two months, Mireza Potvin rallied, got well, and went on to live another twenty-one years.

Soon Caisse and Dr. Fisher teamed to treat cancer patients who had been written off by their doctors as terminal. Many of these patients, too, showed dramatic improvement. Working nights and weekends in Toronto in her mother's basement, which Rene had converted into a laboratory, she and Dr. Fisher experimented on mice inoculated with human cancer. They modified the combination of herbs to maximize efficacy. It was at this point that Rene named the herbal treatment Essiac (her name spelled backwards).

One of Rene's first cases was a woman who had cancer of the bowel complicated by diabetes. In order to avoid further problems, the patient stopped taking insulin in 1925. Under Essiac therapy, the woman's tumor at first became larger and harder, almost obstructing her bowel. Then, as she continued her Essiac injections, the tumor softened, got smaller, and disappeared. Oddly enough, the woman's diabetes also disappeared during the course of Essiac treatment.

Dr. Frederick Banting, world-famous as the codiscoverer of insulin, reviewed this case in 1926. According to Caisse, Dr. Banting concluded that Essiac must have somehow stimulated the pancreatic gland into normal functioning, thus clearing up the diabetic condition. If this reported result is true, Essiac would appear to have potential in the treatment of diabetes.

Nine doctors petitioned the Canadian federal health department in 1926, urging that Caisse be allowed to test her cancer remedy on a broad scale. In their signed petition, they testified that Essiac reduced tumor size, prolonged life in hopeless cases, and showed "remarkably beneficial results," even where "everything else had been tried without effect."

In response, Ottawa's Department of Health and Welfare sent two investigating doctors armed with official papers to arrest Nurse Caisse or restrain her from practicing medicine without a license. When Rene explained to them that she was treating only terminal cases and accepting only voluntary contributions, the two interrogators backed off. One of them, Dr. W. C. Arnold, was so impressed by Caisse's clinical reports that he persuaded her to continue her experiments with mice at the Christie Street Hospital in Toronto. In that series of tests, mice implanted with human cancer responded to Essiac injections by living longer, their tumors regressing.

In 1935, the Town Council of Bracebridge turned over to Rene Caisse-for one dollar-per-month rent-the old British Lion Hotel for use as a cancer clinic. Over the next seven years, Caisse treated thousands of patients in this building, which had been repossessed by the village for back taxes. This unique arrangement came about after Dr. A. F. Bastedo of Bracebridge referred a terminally ill patient with bowel cancer to Caisse. Dr. Bastedo was so impressed by the patient's recovery, he persuaded the town council to make the hotel building available to Rene.

Shortly after the clinic opened, Caisse's seventy-two-year-old mother, Friselde, was diagnosed with cancer of the liver, inoperable because of her weak heart. One of Ontario's top specialists, Dr. Roscoe Graham, said she had only days to live. Rene began giving daily injections of Essiac to her mother, who had not been told she had cancer. After ten days of treatment, Friselde Caisse began to recover. She regained her full health, with diminishing doses of Essiac, and lived another eighteen years before passing away quietly from heart disease.

"This repaid me for all of my work," Rene reflected years later, "having given my mother 18 years of life which she would not have had. [It] made up for a great deal of the persecution I had endured at the hands of the medical world."

After word of Caisse's impressive results spread to the United States, a leading diagnostician in Chicago introduced her to Dr. John Wolfer, director of the tumor clinic at Northwestern University Medical School. In 1937, Wolfer arranged for Rene to treat thirty terminal cancer patients under the direction of five doctors. Rene commuted across the border to Chicago, carrying her bottles of freshly prepared herbal brew. After supervising one and a half years of Essiac therapy, the Chicago doctors concluded that the herbal mixture prolonged life, shranked tumors, and relieved pain.

Dr. Emma Carson, a Los Angeles physician, spent twenty-four days inspecting the Bracebridge clinic in 1937. A skeptical investigator who originally intended to stay in Bracebridge for just a couple of days, she scrutinized the clinical records and examined over 400 patients. In her detailed report, Dr. Carson wrote:

Several prominent physicians and surgeons who are quite familiar with the indisputable results obtained in response to "Essiac" treatments... conceded to me that the Rene M. Caisse "Essiac Treatment" for Cancer is the most humane,
satisfactory and frequently successful remedy for the annihilation of Cancer "that they had found at that time" . . .

I also visited, examined and obtained data at patients' homes where they were pursuing their business vocations as ably as if they had never experienced the afflictions of Cancer. They declared their restoration to normalcy was indisputably due to Miss Caisse's "Essiac" treatments.... They emphatically declared "were it not for Miss Caisse's Essiac remedy for Cancer, they would have departed from this earth" . . .

As I examined each patient regarding intervening progress during the preceding week and recorded notes of indisputable improvements . . . I could scarcely believe my brain and eyes were not deceiving me, on some of the most seriously afflicted cases....

The vast majority of Miss Caisse's patients are brought to her for treatment after Surgery, Radium, X-Rays, Emplastrums, etc., has failed to be helpful, and the patients are pronounced incurable. Really the progress obtainable and the actual results from "Essiac" treatments and the rapidity of repair was absolutely marvelous and must be seen to convincingly confirm belief.

Another independent investigator of the Bracebridge clinic was Dr. Benjamin Guyatt, a University of Toronto curator and anatomy professor. After making dozens of inspections of the clinic during the 1930s, Dr. Cuyatt summarized his findings as follows:

The relief from pain is a noticeable feature, as pain in these cases is very difficult to control. On checking authentic cancer cases, it was found that hemorrhage was readily brought under control in many difficult cases. Open lesions of lip and breast responded to treatment. Cancers of the cervix, rectum, and bladder had been caused to disappear. Patients with cancer of the stomach, diagnosed by reputable physicians and surgeons, have returned to normal activity.

. . . The number responding wholly or in part, I do not know. But I do know that I have witnessed in this clinic a treatment which brings about restoration, through destroying the tumour tissue, and supplying that something which improves the mental outlook of life and facilitates reestablishment of physiological functions.7

Supporters of the Bracebridge nurse presented a bill to the Ontario parliament in 1938 to allow Caisse to treat cancer patients with Essiac free from the constant threat of arrest to which she had been subjected. Over 55,000 people signed a petition supporting the bill, including patients, their families, and many doctors. The bill failed to pass by three votes.

This set the stage for the creation of the Royal Cancer Commission, which many believed was a judicial farce. Comprised of six orthodox physicians with expertise in surgery, radiation, and diagnostics and led by an Ontario Supreme Court justice, the commission was charged with an impartial investigation of alternative cancer therapies. Public hearings opened in March 1939.

Even though 387 of Caisse's patients showed up to testify, only 49 were allowed to be heard. One after another, patients and ex-patients testified that Rene Caisse had restored them to health and saved their lives after they had been given up as dead by their orthodox doctors.

Annie Bonar testified that her diagnosed uterine and bowel cancer had spread after radium treatments until her arm had swelled to double its size and turned black. Weighing ninety pounds the night before she was to have the arm amputated, she opted for Essiac therapy instead. After four months of the herbal treatment, her arm was back to normal and she had gained sixty pounds. A series of X-ray exams revealed she was cancer-free. The Royal Commission, however, listed Annie Bonar's case as "recovery due to radiation."

Walter Hampson, another patient of Caisse who testified, had cancer of the lip, diagnosed by a pathologist. Refusing radium, he underwent Essiac therapy and was restored to normal. Despite the fact that he had never had an operation (other than the removal of a tiny nodule for analysis), the commission classified his case as "recovery due to surgery." These examples could be multiplied many times.

In addition to misattributing recoveries, the Royal Commission also labeled numerous cases as "misdiagnoses," even though the patients had been diagnosed as definitely having cancer by two or more qualified physicians. Using duplicitous tactics like these, the commission was able to conclude that "the evidence adduced does not justify any favourable conclusion as to the merits of 'Essiac' as a remedy for cancer...."
In 1942, a disheartened Rene Caisse, fearing imprisonment due to her medical work, closed her clinic. Over the next thirty-odd years, she continued to treat cancer patients in great secrecy from her home. Documents indicate that she was under surveillance by Canada's Health Department during the 1950s.

At the age of seventy, in 1959, Caisse was invited to the Brusch Medical Center in Massachusetts, where she treated terminal cancer patients and laboratory mice with Essiac under the supervision of eighteen doctors. After three months, Dr. Charles Brusch, eminent physician to the New England elite, and his research director, Dr. Charles McClure, concluded that Essiac "has been shown to cause a decided recession of the mass, and a definite change in cell formation" in mice. "Clinically, on patients suffering from pathologically proven cancer, it reduces pain and causes a recession in the growth; patients have gained weight and shown an improvement in their general health.... Remarkably beneficial results were obtained even on those cases at the 'end of the road' where it proved to prolong life and the quality of that life.... The doctors do not say that Essiac is a cure, but they do say it is of benefit."

The Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research tested one of the herbs in Essiac, sheep sorrel, between 1973 and 1976. Caisse sent a quantity of the herb to Sloan-Kettering, along with detailed instructions on how to prepare it as an injectable solution. On June 10, 1975, Dr. Chester Stock, a Sloan-Kettering vice president, wrote to Rene: "Enclosed are test data in two experiments indicating some regressions in sarcoma 180 of mice treated with Essiac" (emphasis added). Despite these promising results, the tests ground to a halt when Rene was horrified to learn that instead of boiling the herb, as she had instructed, the scientists were freezing it.

In 1977, Rene sold the formula for Essiac to the Resperin Corporation, a Canadian company. Resperin's tests on Essiac, though initially encouraging, dragged on for years. Patients in Canada seeking Essiac through the government must first find a physician who will sponsor them and submit the appropriate official form. The physician should contact the Health Protection Branch of the Canadian Health and Welfare department to arrange to purchase the product from Resperin Corporation. The physician's request should roughly read: "I have a patient who has (type of cancer) affecting (body parts or organs). I request permission to treat the patient with Essiac on an emergency basis." The physician should mail the request to the Health Protection Branch, Bureau of Human Prescription Drugs, Director's Office, c/o Emergency Drug Division, Tower B- Second Floor, 355 River Road, Place Vanier, Vanier, Ontario K1A 1B8. Many doctors are reluctant to do this, however, fearing establishment pressure or ridicule. Even if the necessary forms are submitted, permission to use Essiac is not always granted.

A report issued in 1982 by the Health Protection Branch of the Canadian Health and Welfare department finds that "no clinical evidence exists to support claims that Essiac is an effective treatment for cancer." This blanket condemnation ignores sixty years of clinical documentation and observational evidence as well as laboratory studies. The report says:

In 1982, 112 physicians who had received Essiac under these circumstances, were asked to submit case reports. Seventy-four responded on 87 cancer patients. Of these, 78 showed no benefit.

Investigation of the nine remaining cases revealed that the cancer was progressing (four cases), the patient had died (two cases) or that the disease had stabilized (three cases).

Of this last group, all the patients had previously undergone some form of cancer treatment which could have stabilized the disease.

The report does not explain why only 74 of the 112 physicians responded. Were the other 38 doctors perhaps afraid to submit responses favorable towards Essiac, fearing orthodox ridicule and peer pressure?

It is also not clear whether the 78 patients that "showed no benefit" experienced a reduction in pain or an improvement in appetite. These important components of cancer care are generally not counted as a benefit in such studies.

Were any of the 87 patients, all severely ill, given intramuscular injections of Essiac, as Rene Caisse so often administered in advanced cases? Critics of the report say that no patients were given intramuscular injections.

Was the herbal mixture prepared correctly, or were the herbs possibly frozen and damaged, as was done at Sloan-Kettering? Were the oral doses given frequently enough? Neither answer is known.

In three cases, "the disease had stabilized." What does this mean? Had the cancer stopped growing? If so, that is highly
significant.

What about the four cases where the "cancer was progressing," plus the two cases where the "patient had died"? Why are these counted among the "remainder" rather than among those that "showed no benefit"? Doesn't that mean they did show some benefit, and if so, what were the benefits? The report does not say.

Even a casual analysis of these poorly run trials illustrates the bias that pervades much of the research purporting to be objective and scientific.

Gary Glum, biographer of Rene Caisse, calls the Canadian government report an outright deception. He says that some of the people listed in the report as "dead" were actually alive and well and that a number of them showed up on Caisse's doorstep in 1978, the first year of the study, to thank her profusely for having saved their lives. Glum views the report as one more attempt by Canada's medical orthodoxy to discredit Essiac.

A Los Angeles chiropractor, Glum spent three years researching Caisse's story. In his biography of the nurse, Calling of an Angel (see Resources),9 published in 1988, Glum says he obtained the formula for Essiac from a woman who had achieved total remission of her cancer after treatment by Rene. This woman, according to Glum, was given the Essiac formula in writing by Caisse. The unidentified woman, as Glum tells it, tried to alert the world to the efficacy of Essiac in treating cancer, and in the late 1970s, she took her case as far as the Michigan Superior Court but was then constantly harassed by FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and FDA officials.

Glum says that he later verified the authenticity of the Michigan woman's formula with Mary McPherson, an Ontario woman who was Caisse's close friend. McPherson lived and worked alongside Caisse for many years, after the Bracebridge nurse cured McPherson's mother of cancer in the 1930s. McPherson confirmed by telephone that she did in fact meet with Glum and that his formula was indeed correct, although there were variations that Rene occasionally used.

Glum's critics contend that the formula Glum gives in an instruction sheet accompanying his book is inaccurate. They charge that it is missing at least one key ingredient and is drastically off in the ratios of the various herbs. The critics allege that Glum's version of Essiac is not the true Essiac and that it is potentially harmful to patients.

Glum steadfastly denies this. He points out that he put himself at great personal and legal risk to divulge what he maintains is the correct formula. He asserts that he is the only person in the alternative cancer field who has openly publicized the exact details of a purported cancer cure, unlike others who keep the details of their therapy secret, or proprietary. Thousands of copies of Glum's book were seized and held at the United States-Canada border by Canadian authorities, who say the book is advertising of an unapproved drug. The book was finally allowed into Canada through the strenuous efforts of a high-ranking Canadian politician, yet thousands of confiscated books have still never been released, according to Glum.

Glum says he paid the unidentified woman $120,000 for the Essiac formula and insists that he will never recover the money. He claims that his formula is identical to the Essiac tested by medical researchers in the Soviet Union and China when Resperin officials were attempting to interest the medical establishments there in a cancer cure.

According to Glum, the herbal potion prepared by following the instructions supplied in his book has helped many cancer and AIDS patients get well. Some AIDS patients taking the herbal tea report that drastically low T-cell counts have risen to normal.

Sheila Snow, who coauthored a pivotal 1977 article on Caisse for Canada's Homemaker's magazine, believes that Glum's version of Essiac "is the recipe Rene used in the 1930s when she prepared the remedy in her Bracebridge clinic for hundreds of patients, and quite conceivably the one passed along to the Resperin Corporation for its clinical studies." In a July 1991 article on Essiac in the Canadian Journal of Herbal Medicine, Snow gives the exact recipe and preparation instructions presented by Glum. In her opinion, "We owe a large debt of gratitude to Dr. Glum for having the courage to take on this enormous responsibility-no small task!-at great personal financial expense, time and energy."

Dr. Charles Brusch, cofounder of the Brusch Medical Center where Rene worked in 1959, reported in a letter dated August 3, 1991, "I have been taking this [Essiac] myself since 1984 when I had several cancer operations, and I have every faith in it. Of course, each person's case is different as well as each person's own individual health history.... Someone may respond in a week; someone else may take longer, and whether or not someone is cured of cancer, the
Essiac has been found to at least prolong life by simply strengthening the body."

Brusch went on to note that "I was given the true original formula by Rene when she worked with me in my clinic." He added that he passed along this authentic formula to Canadian radio producer-broadcaster Elaine Alexander of Vancouver, who had been following the Essiac story for twenty years and had interviewed on her program many cancer patients who had been cured through Essiac. Documents indicate that in November 1988, Brusch transferred Caisse's herbal formula to Alexander, who then arranged to have the product manufactured and sold through a distributor. Alexander's Essiac is offered strictly as a nutritional product, under a different brand name, with the manufacturer making no claims regarding its reputed value in treating cancer.

Alexander points out that the method of preparation, the precise ratios of the ingredients, and the correct dosages are all crucial to Essiac's efficacy. She says that Caisse continually improved on Essiac over the years through experimentation and that she believes Glum's version of Essiac may be "an early, primitive version" of a formula Caisse later strengthened and perfected. Alexander further claims that the various "specious facsimiles" of Essiac on the market can be quite dangerous.

Testimonials from cancer patients who achieved complete remission or considerable improvement using Essiac are obtainable from Elaine Alexander. These remarkable letters document cases of the last fifteen years and encompass many types of cancer, including pancreatic, breast, and ovarian cancer; cancers of the esophagus, bile ducts, bladder, and bones; and lymphoma and metastatic melanoma.

Muriel Peters of Creston, British Columbia, one of the people who wrote to Elaine Alexander to describe her experience with Essiac, was diagnosed in 1981 with a malignant tumor the size of an orange on her coccyx, the triangular bone at the base of the spine. She underwent surgery a week later. The surgeons told her, "We got it all," but according to Muriel, "By the time they had found the tumor, it had begun to flare up the spine among the nerve endings, so they could not cut there." She had twenty-nine radiation treatments following the surgery. In September 1982, sensing numbness in her lower abdominal area, she went to the Cancer Clinic in Vancouver and was told by a head surgeon that the tumor had spread to her spine and was inoperable, and nothing more could be done.

When her brother-in-law mentioned a man with cancer who had been given three months to live but was cured "somewhere down South," Muriel Peters followed up the lead. One month later, she visited the Bio-Medical Center in Tijuana, Mexico, and began the Hoxsey herbal therapy. Within three months, sensation returned to her lower abdomen, but this was followed by "three months of excruciating pain which no pills could relieve." She then began taking Essiac in liquid form, which she obtained from the Resperin Corporation through her doctor. After twelve days, the pain subsided. "From then on I was on my way up."

For the next year and a half, Muriel took Essiac daily. She also remained on the Hoxsey regimen, which consisted of an herbal tonic, vitamin supplements, and a special diet stressing fresh vegetables, greens, and fruits. "I felt the two complemented each other," Muriel explains. "Without the diet and the vitamins, I really doubt if either of the tonics would have been quite enough. The body has to rebuild what the cancer has broken down, therefore healthy foods are needed by the body to reconstruct itself."

About a year after she started her dual program, Muriel returned for tests to the Vancouver Cancer Clinic. Incredulous, the attending doctor told her, "For reasons unknown there have been notable changes in your body."

"When the doctor left the room," recalls Muriel, "the attending nurse asked me what I was doing to bring about these changes, and I only said, 'I'm on a diet and vitamins.' The nurse asked, 'On your own? I replied, 'No, by doctors directing.' She then said, 'Well, as long as you're not going to Mexican quacks, as many are doing."

A complete medical checkup in September 1989 found Muriel Peters cancer-free and in excellent health. At sixty-eight, she reported, "I'm the healthiest person in British Columbia. I love life and living.... I have learned what life is all about." X-rays and blood tests in January 1991 confirmed her to be in complete remission, nine years after she was diagnosed with inoperable, "hopeless" cancer.

Elaine Alexander says she met a Vancouver physician who, in 1990, had spoken with an oncologist at Canada's Health Protection Branch in Ottawa. This physician, according to Alexander, was told by the government oncologist, "It is known, at this office, that Essiac is effective against brain tumors, especially brain stem tumors." Critics of Essiac will no doubt dismiss this story as a self-serving fabrication. Yet Gary Glum has a remarkably similar story. He recalls a man who telephoned him to say that his two-year-old daughter had been diagnosed with an inoperable, advanced brain tumor and
was given just weeks to live. The man, according to Glum, was calling to thank him for writing Caisse's biography, through which he had learned about Essiac. His daughter had been saved by the herbal remedy and, at age five, was in perfect health.

Are these stories just a singular coincidence? Glum and Alexander do not speak to each other. Their relationship, if anything, is one of rivalry, each party feeling that he or she possesses the "correct" Essiac formula. So it is ridiculous to suggest that they "compared notes" in order to concoct similar accounts of Essiac's reported efficacy in treating cancer.

It is more likely that Caisse experimented with her basic recipe over the years and that some of the contemporary products purporting to be Essiac reproduce major variants of her formula. Confirming this theory would require exhaustive detective work beyond the scope of this book. Readers are urged to thoughtfully evaluate any and all claims. Caution is advised since a number of the purported versions of Essiac on the market today do not even contain the principal herbs, instead substituting one or more incorrect ingredients.

The Canadian herbal remedy developed by Rene Caisse is not being recommended in this chapter as a "magic bullet" for all cancers. There is no hard evidence on what percentage of Caisse's patients survived five years or more. Nor is there any reliable statistical evidence on the efficacy of contemporary Essiac or Essiac-like herbal formulas. Despite the dramatic, near-miraculous cures Caisse undoubtedly achieved, an unknown percentage of patients under her care succumbed to their disease, perhaps too severely ill to be treated.

The world has become an infinitely more polluted place since the 1920s and '30s, when Caisse did her pioneering work. Carcinogenic, toxic chemicals and radioactive isotopes that pollute our water, air, and food also reside permanently in the cells of our bodies, weakening our natural immunity and possibly making the remission of cancer more difficult. For these reasons, combining Essiac with nutritional and other approaches may make the most sense.

References

9. Ibid.

Resources

RBC Herbal Inc
http://drclarkia.com  Essic Ready Mixed available in small packages
http://drclarkia.com/store/comersus_listCategoriesAndProducts.asp?idCategory=68
Reading Material

Calling of an Angel, by Gary L. Glum, Silent Walker Publishing (P.O. Box 92856, Los Angeles, CA 90009; no phone number), 1988. Can also be ordered directly from the author at P.O. Box 80098, Los Angeles, CA 90080; 213-271-9931. Includes an instruction sheet for a purported recipe for Essiac.

The Treatment of Cancer With Herbs, by John Heinerman, BiWorld Publishers (Orem, Utah), 1984. Out of print; order photocopies directly from the author at P.O. Box 11471, Salt Lake City, UT 84147; 801-521-8824.


THE 4-CENTS-A-DAY FOLK REMEDY:
ESSIAC: THE SECRET'S OUT

From The Cancer Chronicles #18
©1993 by Ralph W. Moss, Ph.D.

It is sometimes claimed that alternative treatments are a cruel rip-off that further impoverishes desperate cancer patients. But what about Essiac (TM), a Native American remedy popularized by the late Canadian nurse, Rene Caisse (1889-1978)? While Essiac-type formulas are available at a reasonable cost in many health food stores, the brew is potentially even less expensive, since it is derived from weeds found in many backyards.

Essiac's use is growing in both the U.S. and Canada, where it is legal, but only for terminal cancer patients. Because of its underground popularity, some entrepreneurs have tried to cash in. Companies have come out with competing formulas to trademarked Essiac, some with deceptively similar names or claims to authenticity. Some patients complain about the confusion.

Canadian author Sheila Snow has been studying the question for 20 years. In a 1993 book*, she writes that "certain groups and individuals have been flooding the Canadian market with products reputed to be made from [the] original recipe." Naturally, "each distributor denies the authenticity of other competitor concoctions."

Yet, according to Snow, there is one way to increase the chances of getting an authentic version of Essiac—make it yourself, either from wildcrafted herbs or from those purchased from respectable dealers.

All companies agree that four basic herbs are always present in this Native American formula; some of these have immune-modulating properties (see R. W. Moss's Cancer Therapy, pp. 146-148). According to Snow, the authentic Essiac decoction can be homemade from ingredients obtainable from any good herb store. The prices we cite below are from one such firm, chosen at random from the New York phone book: Aphrodisia (The total cost of these dry ingredients is $21.74).

According to Snow, these dried herbs can be used to create enough liquid brew for a daily one ounce
dose for 18 to 24 months. In other words, homemade, this treatment costs about four cents per day. No wonder, in the era of $150,000 bone marrow transplants, Essiac is becoming more popular.

Snow gives complete instructions for preparing the brew. One thoroughly mixes these dry ingredients in a bowl, then pours the dry mixture into a wide-mouth glass jar and shakes well. One mixes 1 1/2 quarts of distilled water to every ounce of the dry mixture and boils it up in a stainless steel, lidded pot. After boiling hard for 10 minutes, turn off the heat, says Snow, scrape down the sides of the pot, and stir well. The pot then sits for 10-12 hours. To preserve a supply, one must sterilize the implements and reheat the liquid until it is steaming hot, but not boiling. One strains the mixture and puts it in bottles. The caps of the bottle are tightened and then and set aside to cool. Once the bottles are opened, they should be refrigerated, but not frozen.

It is important to question the source and authenticity of the herbs. For example, there are over 100 species of "sorrel" but it is important to make sure one is getting real sheep sorrel (Rumex acetosella), and not some substitute, such as ordinary garden sorrel (Rumex acetosa).

The final product looks somewhat like apple cider or light honey and has a mild, earthy aroma and a flavor that some patients refer to as "punk"—a little like dry, decayed wood. To use, Snow says one should:

- Shake the bottle gently to mix any settled sediment.
- Take 1 oz. of the decoction in 2 oz. of hot water on an empty stomach, 2 to 3 hours after supper each night.
- Refrain from food or drink for 1 hour after taking it.
- Allow at least 3 hrs. to elapse between using Essiac and any prescription drug or treatment.

Some patients complain of nausea and/or indigestion after taking Essiac, says Snow. This may be because they take it on a full stomach. Large doses of burdock root tea have also been found toxic in certain cases. For more information, see the article on Essiac in Cancer Therapy as well as Snow.

NURSE CAISSE'S HERBAL BREW

- 13 (measuring cup) ozs. burdock root (Arctium lappa), cut into small pieces;
- 4 oz. (scale weight) powdered sheep sorrel (Rumex acetosella) herb;
- 1 oz. (scale weight) powdered slippery elm (Ulmus fulva) inner bark;
- 1/4 oz. (scale weight) Indian or Turkey rhubarb (Rheum officinale, Rheum palmatum) root.

Resources

RBC Herbal Inc
http://drclarkia.com  Essiac Ready Mixed available in small packages
http://drclarkia.com/store/comersus_listCategoriesAndProducts.asp?idCategory=68

From: "R. Mathis Hurt"
Date: Sat, 21 Nov 1998 10:01:57 -0500
Subject: [cancercure] Essiac Formula (CHEAP)

About Essiac - now here is as full a rundown as I can give you.
Where to Get Essiac?
RBC Herbal Inc
http://drclarkia.com  Essiac Ready Mixed available in small packages
http://drclarkia.com/store/comersus_listCategoriesAndProducts.asp?idCategory=68

Ingredients:

20 parts burdock root,
4 parts slippery elm bark,
1 part turkish rhubarb root,
16 parts sheep sorrell,
1 part Blessed Thistle,
1 part Kelp,
1 part Red Clover,
1 part Watercress.

Formula: How to Make Essiac

I make it 2 gallons at at time. This is what I do:

I get the ingredients from herb products. All are packaged separately. You can ask them for the "essiac" formula. If you don't, they will not tell you about it because of FDA insanity.

Then I mix them together in a poly bag, and I divvy them up into a dozen ziplock baggies containing one cup of mix per baggie. Then I put all the baggies into a larger ziplock plastic bag, put that in a brown paper sack, and store that in the freezer. I do not know if the freezer hurts the herbs, but I imagine they keep fresher longer that way.

Then I make the formula of one cup of mix per 2 gallons of pure water. You do this by putting the water in a stainless steel or enamel pot, adding the cup of mix, bringing to a boil. Let sit 6 hours, then stir vigorously. Let sit another 6 hours, bring to a boil, strain out the goop, and save it is sterile bottles. You must keep it in a cool dark area. The caps on the bottle have poly inserts to they make an airtight seal. Therefore, you do not have to refrigerate until you open a bottle. I keep mine in the pantry in the original box the bottles came in. When I finish a bottle, I rinse well, run it through the dishwasher with normal dishes, then cap it loosely and put it back in the box in the pantry upside down so I know it is an empty. Just before my final boiling when I am making a batch, I get out the pressure cooker and sterilize all the bottles by steaming under pressure for 20 minutes. I NEVER put the lids in because the heat destroys the poly inserts. Instead, I soak the lids in vinegar for an hour and just shake the dew off them before capping the bottles. You can tell if you did the sterilization and sealing right because if you did not, a bottle will go bad and taste rancid after a while in storage.

Regarding the issue of straining the goop
Things get kind of sloppy when trying to strain out the goop. All the
ingredients are powdered or ground except the burdock root which is in small chunks like a diced onion. So, after soaking and boiling, it becomes a sloppy goop. One could argue that the goop is good for you, but I do not find it very palatable, even though it does not really taste bad. Some formulas encourage you not to throw it out, but to bottle it too, even if you have to use a blender or food processor to remove the small chunks. I have not done this. But if you do leave the goop in the liquid, I do not imagine it will hurt you at all. That means you will be taking an elixir that is very thick after you shake the bottle. It also means you will need 16 to 20 bottles when you make a batch.

I have found the easiest way to strain the goop out is to get a second pot, pour the first into it through a moderately fine strainer, and toss out the chunky goop. There will still be a massive amount of sediment because most of the ingredients are powdered. Then, I let the pot sit for about ten minutes. I use a big ladle to dip gently into the pot, and I pour it through a funnel into the bottles. When I am way down at the end of the fluid, I skim as much as I can and do not worry if I get some sludge in the ladle. That is usually my 13th bottle, the one that goes in the refrigerator. Then I pour the rest of the goop out.

I have tried straining through cheesecloth, but it is a nasty mess and takes a long time. I have not tried no straining at all, just letting it sit till it all settles. The reason is that the boiled mix has a sludgey looking slag on top and it just doesn't look right to me.

I would appreciate it if any of you who make this formula give your comments to me about different methods you use and how they worked.

How Much It Makes

Since I do not have cancer, I use only 2 ounces a day. A dozen baggies makes a lot, and it lasts a long time, like this:

One cup of ingredients (a baggie) makes 2 gallons. The amber bottles hold one pint, or 16 ounces. Therefore, one bottle lasts me 8 days. The two gallon mix makes about 13 bottles because 3 or 4 pints are lost during the straining and boiling process. So I store the 12 bottles and put whatever is left in a jug in the refrigerator. So one batch lasts me about 100 days. The whole passel of 10 to 12 batches will last me 1000 days.

If you have a spouse, you should give him or her a dose a day too as a cleanse, a preventative, and an immunity boost. I do this with my wife. One passel will last 500 days, well over a year. If you have cancer, you would take 4 ounces a day, so the passel would last you that long too.

How to Administer it.

Before ingesting the Essiac, shake the bottle vigorously. There will be some sediment in it. It is suggested that you mix 2 ounces of Essiac tea liquid with 2 ounces of pure distilled water, heat it, and sip it at least
1/2 hour before eating and 2 hours after eating ("between meals"). I take mine every morning when I get up. Since I also make it for my wife, I put 4 oz in a measuring cup, add 4 oz pure water, nuke it in the microwave, divvy it into two teacups, and sip. She likes it, and so do I. It has a robustly earthy flavor. It is a soothing way to start the day, and a nice little way to show love for my lifemate. It makes me glad to know that she will never get cancer, even though it "runs in the family".

General Anti-viral Remedy

While I take Essiac regularly, I do not get sick with viral infections. No colds or flu. When I stop taking it, I am more susceptible. Therefore, my personal opinion is that Essiac prevents (or helps to prevent) viral infections. Thus, if I DO get sick, I will immediately start taking Essiac in the dose of an ounce every hour or two throughout the day with a teaspoon of Cat's claw (which you can buy cheap by the pound from herb products company). Also, several times during the day, I take 15 drops of Echinacea under the tongue. An ear ache or sore throat disappears in one or two days when I do this.

What it Does and How it Works
Here is what I got from the Minnesota Wellness directory comments on essiac:

The Essiac formula, when broken down, shows many of its parts to be anti-tumor, anti-mutagenic (burdock root) and immune system enhancing. The real benefits of Essiac are that it is a wonderful detoxifier and regenerates the liver and pancreas. An interesting side effect of the tea is the reversal of type II diabetes.

R. Mathis Hurt
http://www.datadepo.com/cancercure

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http://drclarkia.com/store/comersus_listCategoriesAndProducts.asp?idCategory=68

Free support on using Essiac is available in The Essiac Support Forum

Support on Alternative Cancer Remedies is available on The Cancer Alternatives Support Forum

Cancer Therapies 100 Frequently Asked Questions