

*'Modern medicine can only do so much.
The rest is up to you.'*

**If bacteria won't attack your food,
why would you?**

BY GRANIA LITWIN
Times Colonist staff

RENOWNED RESEARCH biochemist and author Dr. Mitra Ray doesn't spend money on organic vegetables. But she does buy free-range, non-medicated, non-hormonally treated eggs, chicken, meat and wild fish.

"I'm not a believer in the vegan diet," she said in a telephone interview from Seattle. "I think a little animal protein — if it's from clean, free range, organically fed animals — is good. This is where I spend my money, more than on organic produce.

"As far as I'm concerned it is the most important thing to invest in."

She explained that pesticides are carcinogenic and when consumed by animals they accumulate in fatty tissues. "Vegetables don't have much fat so they cannot accumulate toxic levels of pesticides."

She added there are also hormones in non organic animal proteins and some speculation they may contribute to early development in children.

"We are already seeing children as young as six, seven, eight entering menses. The worst case I heard about was a 2½ year old," she said, quoting a study of premature breast development and early menses published in 2000, in the journal of *Environmental Health Perspective*. It looked at the effect of a hormone-mimicking compound called phthalate, found in plastic water bottles and food wrap.



Dr. Mitra Ray will be speaking on longevity and the prevention of disease on May 11.

Ray, who received her bachelors of science from Cornell University and her PhD from Stanford Medical School, is credited with the discovery of an enzyme linked to retinitis pigmentosa and cancer related retinopathy. An expert on nutrition, preserving lean mass, and longevity, she is a frequent lecturer to medical students.

The National Institute of Health and the American Cancer Society have both funded her research and she has been published in such prestigious journals as *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, and the *Journal*

of *Cell Biology*. She was also a recipient of the Young Investigator Award from the Federation of American Societies in Experimental Biology.

Ray says people should eat whole foods whenever possible, and consume as much variety as possible, from all the colours of the rainbow: red cabbage, green broccoli, yellow squash, blueberries, bananas.

"A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is critical."

So are good oils if people are to avoid dementia and neurological problems such as Attention Deficit Disorder and autism, all of which are on the rise. "People should have one to two tablespoons of good essential omega three oils, like flax, borage, or fish oil, at least twice a day. All the cells in the body have membranes made of fat. Too little good fat leads to skin problems, constipation, brittle nails, brain and heart problems. The yin and yang of fat is really interesting: Vegetable oils are wonderful when cold, awful when processed or cooked. Never cook in vegetable oils, better to use a little butter."

Ray will be speaking on longevity and the prevention of disease at the North Douglas Church at 12 p.m. on Saturday May 11. Tickets \$10.

"She's an amazing woman and an inspiring speaker, because of her biochemical background and knowledge," says lecture organizer Frances Goldie, a three-time cancer survivor herself, who credits her remission to a combination

of whole foods and alternative therapies.

"Modern medicine can only do so much, maybe 10 to 15 per cent. The rest is up to you," says Goldie who notes Ray will debunk health and nutrition myths.

Ray will also discuss the importance of lean body mass and its relationship to weight management, the health hazards of being over-weight, and what can be done to reduce body fat. She will also talk about degenerative diseases (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, etc.), the impact hormones have on health, and the dangers of a diet consisting of too much processed food and not enough raw produce — all topics discussed at length in the biochemist's new book *From Here To Longevity, your complete diet for a long and healthy life*.

Now an independent health consultant living in Seattle, Ray contends, "We have a whole economy based on disease thinking and taking drugs, and you can't win at that game. Meanwhile the side-effects of drugs are now accumulating and people are dying not of one disease but several. Autopsies reveal people have bad hearts, diseased livers, overall serious degeneration of the body.

"I used to do research in the lab related to different degenerative diseases, but I came out of the lab with a strong belief in whole food nutrition," she said simply, explaining that in her 20s she started to suffer horrible back spasms from a much earlier body surfing injury.

"It came back to haunt me in my 20s, even though I had been running five

miles and day and was very fit. I had an awful spasm one day while running at Stanford and barely made it back to campus. The problem got worse and worse over the next 10 years, and I was spending hundreds of dollars a week on physio. The doctors couldn't help me and finally I went to see a chiropractor.

"I was taught to poo poo chiropractic treatment," said Ray who was born in Calcutta and grew up on homeopathic medicine, but was trained in western techniques. "But it helped me enormously and then I started also taking whole food supplements. Today I am 38 but feel as good as 20."

She says there are "all kinds of crazy diets out there" but she says whole foods, or whole food supplements, are the answer. When given the right raw materials the body can repair itself "to the extent that the DNA is intact. In other words, the repair capacity of a 90 year old will be less than that of a 20 year old, but the right diet can certainly prevent further damage.

"Whole foods are very fascinating. For instance there is an enzyme in pineapple that can help repair tissue. It is a natural anti-inflammatory and works to reduce edema. No one food can solve all your problems, you need variety."

She advocates avoiding all processed foods. "Have you ever noticed how processed cheese doesn't go mouldy for ages? I have a rule of thumb: if no self-respecting bacteria would attack your food, why should you?"