

A balanced medical equation

BY ERIN SPERLING

Since the beginning of medicine as a profession, there has been conflict between those trained in a conventional institution and those who are otherwise identified with the "fringe".

Such things as naturopathy, homeopathy and herbal remedies have often been shunned by the medical profession at large for being unconventional, without scientific support and possibly even hazardous. But perhaps there is something to be learned from non-conventional medicine.

This topic was discussed by visiting scholar Dr. Robert Buckman at the annual Dr. J. Murray Lecture Series, held in the Tupper Building on September 30. Dr. Buckman is an oncologist at Sunnybrook Hospital and a lecturer at the University of Toronto. His other credits include authorship of several books about healing and cancer, working with actor John Cleese on educational health videos in his native England and winning a Gemini award for a television series he hosted.

Dr. Buckman came to Dalhousie to address the issue of complementary medicine. He stated, "Complementary medicine is not merely a fad. Thirty per cent of people and Eighty per cent of cancer patients have been to a complementary medical practitioner."

Complementary medicine is not meant as an alternative to conventional, broadly practiced medicine, but rather a solid combination of both. In the past,

conventional medicine has been very scientific. Often a patient could be lost in the maintenance of scientific rigour.

"Doctors can be truthful and supportive of patients needs," said Buckman. "You have to direct the person, support the person and not the disease."

This follows with an important message from the philosophy of complementary medicine: "Patient = Person + Disease".

People have travelled as far as Mexico and beyond to get what they think is the best in health care, although much of it may not stand up to the hypothetical deductive theory of scientific practice.

"All scientific theories have not been proven; they have merely survived attempts to disprove them," said Buckman.

He did claim that there have been several complementary remedies proven effective after clinical trials although many work on the basis of a placebo effect. But even this has its benefits.

"Feeling better is not the same as getting better. A better quality of life but no increase in survival [is more likely]...except for [one particular case: (Speigel, 1989)] of support groups for women with breast cancer," stated Buckman.

However, a better quality of life in the case of a terminal illness can be a valuable thing.

"Unconditional positive regard can be as supportive as your mother's chicken soup," said Buckman.

"All scientific theories have not been proven; they have merely survived attempts to disprove them."

Not for sale

BY ANDERS KNUDSEN

VICTORIA (CUP) — The forestry company which holds the rights to the Clayoquot Sound area has turned down an offer from an environmental group to buy the license to log the land.

The Friends of Clayoquot Sound offered International Forest Products \$500,000 for Tree Farm License 54, which comprises 30 per cent of the Clayoquot Sound area and parts of the Sydney Valley. One of the few remaining rainforests on Vancouver Island is found in this area.

But the company, also known as Interfor, said no.

The group thought that given the fact that Interfor lost money on the licence area last year, it would like to have the opportunity to cut its losses while withdrawing from a politically volatile environment, according to Friends of Clayoquot Sound spokesperson Valerie Langer.

"We gave them a chance to cut their losses," Langer said. "We feel we have tried just about everything to stop logging in Clayoquot."

"They felt [the offer] was nowhere near adequate, and to put it shortly, they turned us down."

Officials at Interfor could not be reached for comment.

If they had successfully acquired the license, the Friends planned to establish a low-impact, locally focussed forestry

operation in the area. They planned to cut just 10,000 cubic meters in the area, as opposed to the 75,000 that Interfor is allowed.

"The problem is that [companies like Interfor] are huge corporations," said Langer. "They're structured towards high volume, towards quantity, not quality."

"We could provide eco-forestry and prove it could work."

Darcy Riddell, a member of the Sierra Club, another environmental group, says he is discouraged by Interfor's decision not to sell the license to the Friends.

"I think it shows that if you want to do sustainable forestry, it's absolutely impossible," said Riddell. "The key to sustainable forestry is that we need to have people in the community taking care of the forests."

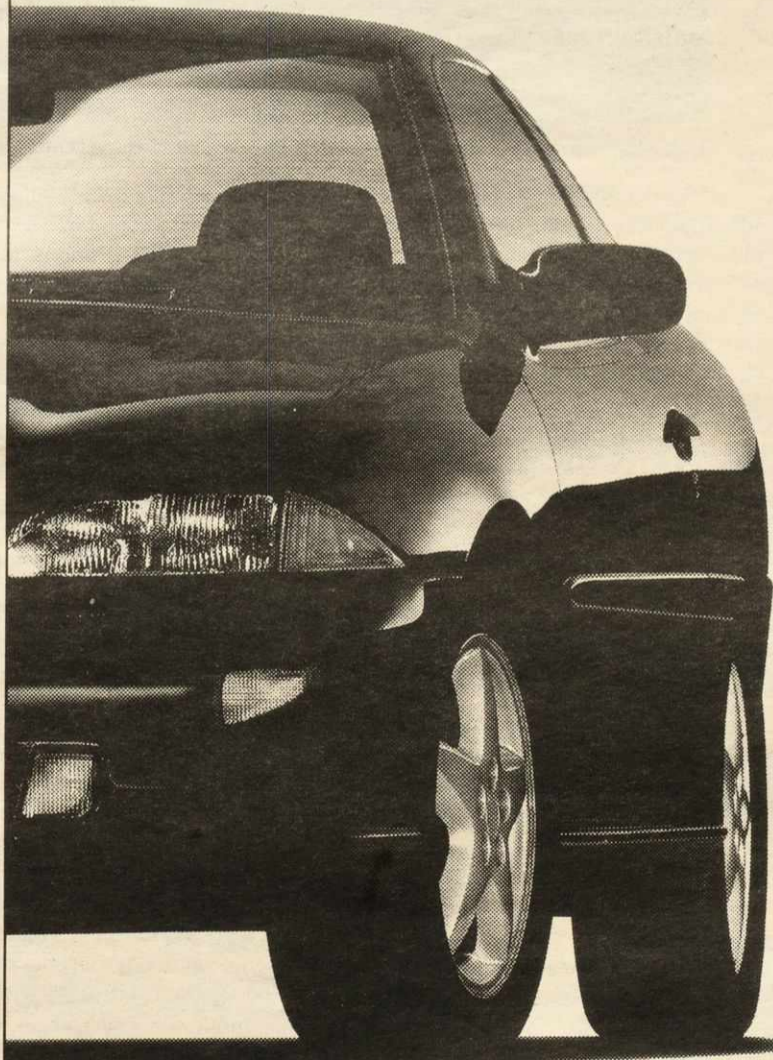
Interfor has had its logging in license 54 restricted since 1995 by the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices, a government committee established to ensure logging operations in the Clayoquot are ecologically sound.

Still, Langer and others say they have grave concerns for the Sydney Valley.

"We will have to blockade if they go into the Sydney Valley," she said. "They've dug in their political heels on this one. I don't think we have to argue that the last valleys shouldn't be logged."

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