

# Misunderstanding environmental illness

BY SHANNON MCKEOUGH

School is almost out, and I can't wait to finally get out of my Psych 1000 course. The class itself is not bad, but there are a lot of people attending the class who seem to have missed all of those "Scent-Free Policy" signs around campus — they really load on the perfume.

I have tried everything including asking these students not to wear perfume at school and moving away from them in class, and I've even tried talking to the professor. I'm not a big wuss, but by the end of class I'm practically dead. I've either coughed myself to death or almost passed out.

I've had serious health problems for the last four years. You can call it Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Candida-related health problems or Environmental Illness. These terms are pretty

much interchangeable, and all too familiar to a growing number of people. They all have devastating symptoms, and are subject to prejudice and misunderstanding by the general population as well as a lot of the medical profession.

I consider myself very lucky. I've received help and I know how to control my health, but there was a time when everything wasn't so peachy. At one point I was so sick that I couldn't get out of bed to use the bathroom by myself. I had to give up scholarships from school and take a year off. Still, my doctors told me there was nothing wrong.

So, when your doctor is tired of seeing your face and too narrow-minded or busy to explore other options, he/she sends you to a shrink.

"It's all in your head!" they say. The psychiatrist was the first

health professional to ever help me, and not because he pumped me full of Prozac. Instead, he introduced me to environmental health issues. I started doing a lot of research and reading and was amazed to learn how many other people were going through the same thing. I don't mean to tell a sob story. I just want to tell people that this problem is real, it's growing and it affects everyone in some way.

There are many people in our region, community and even university who suffer with these health problems. There is an increasing number of people that are just sick of being sick all the time and don't even know what's wrong.

Some of the symptoms of environmental illness include: extreme fatigue, depression, mood swings, sensitivity to scents, food allergies and sensitivities, mus-

cle and joint pain, irritable bowels, loss of memory, respiration problems, headaches, bad circulation, hives, rashes, frequent urination, food cravings and swollen glands.

The severity of the symptoms can range from mild to life-threatening. People are becoming sick from stress, bad diets (high in sugar, processed foods, fats and white flours), fungus in the body that is fed by unhealthy doses of drugs, and because of the molds and chemicals in our food, water and environment.

All of these factors, among others, are making our immune systems extremely sensitive and are slowly killing our bodies.

Fortunately, lifestyle changes can make a difference, but it's a long road. There are numerous therapies that can be employed, including a careful diet, vitamins and medication,

and avoidance of harmful scents and substances.

For all of us out there with a lot of food sensitivities, you know that it is almost impossible to eat out anywhere in Halifax. There is, however, an amazing place on Quinpool Road called Heartwood's Organic Food and Vegetarian Cafe and Bakery. It has something for everyone, regardless of your particular sensitivities.

It's important to learn more about this issue because there are a lot of people around who can suffer from the ignorance or arrogance of others. If not for that reason, then take preventative measures for yourself because you could become just as sick. If there is anyone out there with similar health problems who wants to get in touch, contact me through e-mail at [skmckeou@is2.dal.ca](mailto:skmckeou@is2.dal.ca).

## Movin' on up...

The Gazette congratulates the three staffers voted into the top editorial positions for the 1997/98 publishing year. They will be continuing the fine Gazette tradition for the paper's 130th year of publication.

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We are pleased to announce the new executive for 1997-1998

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There will be a meeting for ALL new DSS reps on Monday, April 7 in the Council Chambers, SUB - 7:00 PM

Attendance is compulsory

For info: 494-6710 or [dss@is2.dal.ca](mailto:dss@is2.dal.ca)

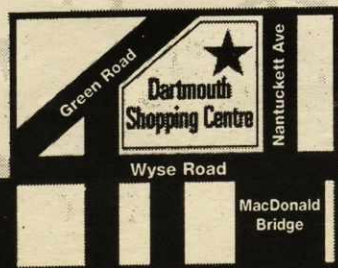
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