

Nation

Researchers taste success with honey cure

By Jennifer Harper
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It could be sweet news, indeed. German medical researchers have announced that honey — yes, the breakfast favorite — is more effective in healing problem wounds, ulcers and skin conditions than standard antibiotics.

“In hospitals today we are faced with germs which are resistant to almost all the current antibiotics,” said Dr. Arne Simon, an oncologist with the Children’s Hospital at the University of Bonn. “As a result, the medical use of honey is becoming attractive again for the treatment of wounds.”

Dr. Simon is the first to ac-

knowledge that honey is a “millennia old” panacea for all sorts of ills, from baldness to intestinal distress. But the emergence of multi-drug resistant bacteria in the last decade has generated new interest in an old remedy.

With cooperation from specialists in a dozen German hospitals, Dr. Simon is planning a large-scale study on honey’s curative effects. He has already charted the success of traditional honey poultices on troublesome surgical wounds and skin conditions.

“Even chronic wounds infected with multi-drug resistant bacteria often healed within a few weeks,” Dr. Simon noted, adding that the honey method was particularly helpful for

young patients with weakened immune systems — deeming it “astonishing.” Honey also made dressings easier to change and even reduced distressing smells associated with some skin conditions.

Ancient Egyptians, soldiers in the field and assorted healers who have relied on honey over time may not have understood the science behind it all. The bees — who typically visit 2 million flowers to produce a pound of honey — may not know it either. It’s the bees themselves who are the heroes, however. During the honey-making process, they add an enzyme called glucose-oxidase, ultimately generating a mild form of hydrogen peroxide — an an-

tibacterial agent.

In the last five years, researchers in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the U.S. have found that honey is effective against about 60 strains of bacteria — including staphylococcus and *heliobacter pylori*, which causes stomach ulcers. Honey is also thought to reduce inflammation and provide a source of cancer-fighting antioxidants.

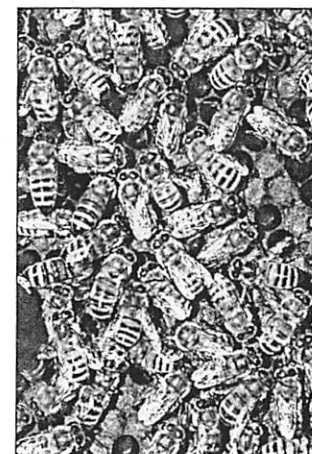
None of this has escaped the commercial sector. “Medical-grade honey” is now a reality.

MediHoney — sterile, prepackaged applications of honey — is now manufactured by Australia’s Capilano Honey to treat stubborn surgical wounds, oral infections and skin

conditions. New Zealand’s Comvita annually sells \$30 million worth of wound dressings that combine “medical-grade active manuka honey” — made from a local plant — and seaweed fibers.

British-based Medlock Medical and Advancis Medical also offer sterile honey dressings and creams, noting the only potential caution for patients is “known allergy to bee venom.”

Will Americans have access? Perhaps. According to a recent report from CNN, MediHoney has applied for approval from the Food and Drug Administration and expects an answer late this year — and a potential gateway into our annual \$2.8 billion “wound care market.”



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Researchers say the healing properties of honey come from glucose-oxidase enzyme in bees which generates a mild form of hydrogen peroxide, an antibacterial agent.