Laughter, the best medicine comes in liquid form.

Doc’s Spoonful of Medicine

#15. I’ve learned that many Fletton-folk are very, important, yet humble folk – like ASPIRIN.

There is hardly any village, anywhere in the world, where people do not know Aspirin. It has no translation, and needs none, not even amongst Fen-folk. Paracetamol, also word famous, is called Acetaminophen in some countries, but nowhere to my knowledge, is Aspirin known by its scientific name of Acetylsalicylic Acid or any other name, to the common dog walker in the park, on a sunny morning. More famous than film stars or pop stars, and yet so humble and unassuming. This drug is amazingly versatile and helps so many people world-wide. Mind you, in practice, it is not advisable for children (under 16yrs) because of the rare but serious (often fatal), side effect of liver and brain damage, called Reye’s Syndrome. There is also a small number of people who are genuinely allergic to Aspirin and to take it with “blood thinning medication” or anti-inflammatory drugs like Ibuprofen, requires medical advice. Some people do get heartburn or indigestion with Aspirin. Perhaps try it with a main meal, and definitely not with alcohol, which makes those side effects more likely.

Aspirin at full dose with the 300mg tablets, unites humanity in its use for pain relief, lowering of uncomfortable high fever (a smidgeon of fever is good for fighting infection and cancer, mind you), and for inflammation. Low dose Aspirin (75mg to 150mg) is used to prevent blood platelets sticking together and clogging up blood vessels, in the prevention of vein thrombosis in the legs and lungs, heart attacks and strokes, but also pre-eclampsia in pregnancy. There is good evidence that Aspirin seems to help prevent some cancers, notably bowel and rectal cancers, in particular, plus endometrial cancer, breast cancer and prostate cancer, in decreasing order of strong evidence.

You see what I mean about being famous, useful, and important, yet so humble and, seemingly “ordinary”, like many of the good people of Fletton. That’s not all. Aspirin has been around since Eve tempted Adam with a Royal Gala apple, or was it a Golden Delicious? I don’t think it was a Granny Smiths anyway. It is in a “Garden of Eden form” in the bark of the Willow tree and other salicylate rich plants, tabulated in ancient Sumer and ancient Egypt, that Aspirin was first used. Father of medical practice and ethics, Hippocrates, used salicylate tea to lower high fever and treat pain around 400BC. From the Middle Ages to the mid-eighteenth century, Willow bark extract was used for its specific and indisputable effects on pain, fever, and inflammation. Jousting, war, and pillage did not have “risk assessment” and all this “elf’n’safety” we have now. Life had more hazards.

The credit for synthesising pure Aspirin as a drug, goes to the German pharmaceutical company Bayer, and especially to Charles Frederick Gerhardt in 1853. Yes, long before Germany started winning World Cups (except 1966, of course). Other drug companies thought “it was all over”, then Bayer said, “it is now”! Aspirin was actually the Bayer trade name for the synthesised drug Acetylsalicylic Acid, but Bayer messed up the patenting, or sold it in some countries. This is like a POSH striker missing an open goal from six yards. OMG! As The POSH Doc, you can see why I take a packet of Aspirin for the headaches I often get on a Saturday!

Seriously though, because of its various properties, it makes sense to take Aspirin (if you can), during this CoVid pandemic and for three days after the vaccination. Pain, fever, inflammation of muscles of the heart (myositis), aching inflamed limb and body muscles, thrombosis in veins in the brain (often fatal), Aspirin helps to combat all of them and yet stay humble. I myself have taken a daily Aspirin 300mg tablet or half of one, morning and evening, since staring my research into CoVid-19 on 16th of March 2020. “Covid Stuff”! I am fortunate in not getting gastric side effects and I am fortunate to live amongst you humble, yet very important Fletton-folk. Wishing you all good health, Doc.