

## Press Release

**23rd May 2023**

### **A Healthy Diet Can Boost Gut Health, Reduce Stress and Improve Wellbeing!**

The colon is home to trillions of microbes which make up a unique ecosystem called the gut microbiome. Perturbations in this ecosystem are being increasingly linked to a range of conditions including stress, anxiety and depression, conditions which are prevalent in society today. Although limited, emerging data suggests that improving this ecosystem can have a major impact on brain health. This phenomenon is referred to as the gut-brain axis.

All life requires nutrition to survive and, not surprisingly, the gut microbiome is heavily reliant on our own food intake. We are now learning that the gut microbiome helps us to digest fibre, resulting in the generation of chemicals that have a positive impact on anxiety and depression via the gut-brain axis. By contrast, ultra-processed food invites the wrong types of microbes into our guts, which has a negative impact on our health.

The International Stress Management Association (ISMA<sup>UK</sup>) are hosting a Masterclass on this fascinating subject on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May, when four experts in the field of gut health, diet and wellbeing: Mona Bajaj-Elliott, Celynn Morin, Becca Meadows and Paul Dorrington, will talk about why gut health is so important, the good, bad, and the ugly of gut microbes and their impact on gut health and overall wellbeing.

They will answer questions such as: How can we change our gut microbes and improve our mental wellbeing by following a varied diet? What are the best ways in which busy people can actually boost their gut health? Where do we start with improving our diet and creating kitchen confidence? How can we create habits that stick? They will also offer top tips to achieve balanced nutrition.

Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA<sup>UK</sup>, said, "There is now no doubt that what we eat has a major effect on our mood and our mental health. Rates of stress and mental illness have been rising steadily in the UK for 30 years, and the latest statistics from the HSE<sup>1</sup> show that work-related stress, depression or anxiety account for 51% of all cases of work-related ill health. Professor Tim Spector and others point to research undertaken with hundreds of thousands of people, which found that a good diet is linked to reduced levels of depression, while diets high in junk food and low in fibre and diversity increase the risk<sup>2</sup>. ISMA<sup>UK</sup>'s Masterclass is therefore welcome as a contribution to this important debate which, hopefully, will result in improved diet and better mental health in the next few years."

<sup>1</sup> The Health & Safety Executive, <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>;  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh2122.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>*Spoon-Fed: Why Almost Everything We've Been Told About Food is Wrong*, Professor Tim Spector, <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/441061/spoon-fed-by-tim-spector/9781529112733>

### **Notes for Editors**

- ***From Stressed-Out to Gut-Happy: The Truth Behind What We Eat and How We Feel***  
For more information on ISMA<sup>UK</sup>'s online Masterclass, being held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May, go to <https://isma.org.uk/monthly-masterclass-events>. Places may be booked in advance on [Eventbrite](#) and are free to ISMA<sup>UK</sup> members. Non-members are asked to pay £10 per event.
- **Mona Bajaj-Elliott** is Associate Professor, Gut Infection & Immunity at Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, University of London. Her over-arching interest is in better understanding interactions between gut microbes and human health. Her work has identified several aspects of the good, bad, and ugly of gut microbes and their impact on gut health, especially related to paediatric food allergy and cancer treatment.
- **Celynn Morin** is a wellbeing consultant and professional speaker on reducing stress and increasing resilience. She has a practical and playful approach to helping business leaders and their teams enrich quality of life, by helping them connect mind, heart, body and spirit to support wellbeing. Celynn is actively interested in the field of epigenetics and gut health.
- **Becca Meadows** is a registered nutritionist, corporate wellbeing provider, and personal trainer. She supports women to optimise health, manage stress and improve resilience through evidence-based nutritional therapy and lifestyle medicine, using her experience of leading high-performance teams in the British Army to support behavioural change.
- **Paul Dorrington** is a multi-award-winning mental health recovery and vocational rehabilitation specialist, workplace wellbeing trainer, and NHS lead. In the NHS, he and his teams have helped hundreds of clients to recover and regain a meaningful working life after mental health difficulties. Paul works with businesses to help them take a proactive and preventative approach to mental health and workplace wellbeing.
- **The International Stress Management Association (ISMA<sup>UK</sup>)** is the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance, promoting sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, resilience, wellbeing and mental health for over 30 years. ISMA<sup>UK</sup> practitioners and consultants provide stress management services to individuals and businesses, assisting around 40,000 people who need professional help with stress-related issues every year. ISMA<sup>UK</sup> endorses and uses the HSE guidelines for managing stress in the workplace. To find out more about ISMA<sup>UK</sup>, visit [www.isma.org.uk](http://www.isma.org.uk).
- **Press Interviews**  
For all press and media enquiries please contact Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA<sup>UK</sup>, for an immediate response on +44 (0) 77 688 78910 or at [chair@isma.org.uk](mailto:chair@isma.org.uk).