Memorial Service for Dr. S. Sukenik

We lost a giant in our field.
Overview of the late Professor S. Sukenik’ works on Balneotherapy and Climatotherapy

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We used the data published recently by a team headed by the late Professor Shaul Sukenik, in order to shed light on the huge amount of work realized by this exceptional physician, who devoted his life to his family, his profession and the Dead Sea.

Particularly, he wanted very early - and always succeeded - to apply the strictest rules of clinical studies in the fields of Balneotherapy and Spa treatment, thus lifting them up to their highest level of credibility. Thanks to his works, one can stipulate with authority that Dead Sea treatments are beneficial in several rheumatologic disease and have a good safety profile.

The Dead Sea, the deepest and most saline lake on earth, has been known from biblical times for its healing properties. The systematic review presented critically the level of evidence for the claims of therapeutic effects of Dead Sea treatments in several rheumatologic, skin and lung diseases and, as well, reviewed these treatments’ safety.

The authors found bona fide evidence that Dead Sea treatments are especially effective in psoriasis due to both special characteristics of solar ultraviolet radiation and Dead Sea water balneotherapy. Dead Sea mud and balneotherapy have been found to be beneficial in rheumatologic diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and knee osteoarthritis.

In the safety analysis, no evidence was found for an increase in skin neoplasia, although skin actinic damage seems to be amplified in patients treated in the Dead Sea. Dead Sea treatments do not lead to worsening of high blood pressure. Substantial ingestion of Dead Sea water (generally in unusual near-drowning cases) is toxic and can result in cardiac rhythm disturbances because of electrolyte concentration abnormalities. Finally, laboratory analysis of Dead Sea mud did not reveal mineral concentrations that could represent a health concern for their intended use.

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