



# Summer 2023 AFTERWORDS

Newsletter of Active Retired  
Members  
Chapter 11



In this newsletter, I hope you find some thoughts and ideas worth pondering:

- The result from this weekend's referendum!!!
- A little piece I felt compelled to put together—some cautionary tales from both sides of the border on how the greed or stupidity never stops in threatening our public healthcare.
- With 2024 looming in the US—and PP trying everything to push for a Canadian federal election- it's a good time to review the effects of populism.
- Bryan Smith shared some Brian Bilston. We NEED our wise funny people right now.
- Mediterranean diet? Just as I prepare a hunk of pork for pulling, I feel guilty. But the Skeptical Raptor is such a good example of how research OUGHT to be done.
- Sharing the guilt—by announcing a summer contest for your favourite entertaining recipes!!!
- Prez Bryan already shared the contest our insurers offer. I've added a reminder and , in light of so many recent local traffic tragedies, an article on caution light accidents.

*AfterWords* is the official publication of the Active Retired Members of OSSTF, Chapter 11 Thames Valley (ARM C11). Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ARM C11 or OSSTF.



The ballot question was “Do you want our public hospitals to be privatized to for profit hospitals and clinics?”

- Total Votes: 386,068
- Spoiled Votes: 341
- Yes Votes: 7,001
- No Votes: 378,726

So ... as Natalie Mehra is her positive, effervescent and hard-working self, announcing the number of “yes” votes cast, your newsletter editor is taking a moment to compose a personal message. Being part of ARM, you have some enormously savvy Executive members (see below) to call upon for advice and information— and Chapter 11 is a member of the Ontario Health Coalition. I urge everyone to bookmark

<https://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca>

and to keep this information handy

Ontario Health Coalition

T. 416.441.2502

E-mail [ohc@sympatico.ca](mailto:ohc@sympatico.ca)

Clearly, friends, it’s not over—and vigilance (plus action) must continue to protect our public health system from grifters— and politicians.

This note of pessimism continues because my husband—whose own adventures with the medical and dental system this year could be a book of their own— has been dropping articles on my desk about health systems elsewhere on this continent. I hope some copyright cop won’t be knocking at our door, but I’ll summarize and quote as carefully as possible.

A recent *New York Times* article exposes a NOT FOR PROFIT hospital chain in the United States— “Allina Health Systems which runs more than 100 hospitals and clinics in Minnesota and Wisconsin and brings in \$4 billion a year in revenue”. Apparently chains like Allina get enormous tax breaks for promising to treat the poorest folk in their communities. But Allina cuts off patients with \$4,500 or more of debt remaining for their treatment anywhere in the hospital except the Emergency Room. Doctors and nurses reported having to “ration care” The Allina chain claims it doesn’t have a “written policy regarding the cancellation of services” - but *The Times* found a 2006 policy that instructs staff how to handle “the cancelling of services or termination of scheduled and/or physician referral services or appointment for unpaid debts” It DOES, however, suggest other routes to continue being seen for care—“one is by getting approved for a loan through the hospital. Another is by filing for bankruptcy”

The financial success has paid dividends. Allina’s president earned [\\$3.5 million in 2021](#), the most recent year for which data is available. The health system recently built a \$12 million conference center.

## **ARM Chapter 11      Executive 2022-23**

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But ... we're in Canada— with a Health Act.!!! Remember that the OHC analyzed Bill 60 to point out where oversight and regulations had been left “cloudy” at best.

But ... surely that can't happen in Canada, can it?

The second article dropped across my keyboard (my husband's aim is faulty, but his intentions are good) is from *The Globe and Mail*, with the rather disturbing headline,

### **Fellow Canadians: Visit British Columbia at your own risk**



Gary Mason wrote his article from Vancouver yesterday, sharing with the rest of Canada a letter written to the NDP provincial government by staff who work at Surrey Memorial Hospital. The public letter

- Warns of a dire situation in the emergency department—wait times of 72 hours and closures last summer in the Interior of BC
- Warns of “unsafe conditions” in the obstetrics and gynecology departments
- Threatens to divert ambulances to other hospitals

The BC Health Minister, Adrian Dix, had already told BC residents that “over the next two years” as many as 4,800 breast cancer and prostate cancer patients would be sent to Washington State private clinics for radiation treatment—at exorbitant cost. “Sadly, politics has been more about putting out fires and executing short-term strategies instead of looking forward and strategizing for the future”

And how did our western province get into this situation— with both Liberal and NDP governments in charge for decades? The following paragraphs deserve sharing verbatim:

“To be fair, governments have sometimes been failed by the experts, too. A B.C. health care commission report in 1991 found that too many doctors were contributing to rising health care costs. The solution? Cut back on supply, including the number of spaces at medical schools. The consequences of that decision are still reverberating today.

When doctors complained for years about the outdated and unfair fee-for-service model, their complaints were dismissed. Eventually, family physicians started disappearing. Now more than a million British Columbians can't find one. Last year, the government *finally* changed the way doctors are paid, which seems to have encouraged more of them to join the ranks.”

Experts, eh? Businessmen who can solve all of our problems more “efficiently” ...  
I am speechless.

So glad our own Joe Wilson braved only this bridge  
on a cross-county rail journey—  
not the BC health system





## From Donald Trump to Danielle Smith: 4 ways populists are jeopardizing democracy

In 1954, Richard Hofstadter, the eminent American historian of modern conservatism, asked a provocative question about his era's assault on progressive and left-wing ideals, known as McCarthyism: Where did this extremism come from?

He argued in a celebrated essay that even the prosperous, post-Second World War United States was not immune to the radicalism of authoritarian populism. The so-called Red Scare of the 1950s was "simply the old ultra-conservatism and the old isolationism heightened by the extraordinary pressures of the contemporary world."

Seven decades later, Hofstadter's words ring true again. Conservative movements are always fighting a rearguard action against modernity by falsely claiming to protect society from progressives who trample traditional values and sneer at the forgotten men and women who embrace them.

### Paranoid politics

With so much money and power behind it, this paranoid style of politics — with its enemies lists, demonization of opposition leaders and often violent language — has gone mainstream.

Conspiracy theories are no longer a stigma discrediting those who trade in salacious innuendo. Even mainstream politicians are now peddling them.

But is there anything to fear from the red-hot rhetoric of the paranoid style of politics? Some argue these circumstances are cyclical.

In Hofstadter's time, after all, American conservative politics turned away from fringe radicalism following the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963. The following year, Lyndon Johnson defeated right-wing Republican insurgent, Barry Goldwater in one of the largest landslides in U.S. history.

But the crisis we face today is bigger in scale and scope. It's been whipped to a frenzy by political leaders who seek to profit from the chaos that it incites via social media.

Populism was supposed to bring government closer to the people, but it actually places the levers of power squarely in the hands of authoritarians. Here are four ways populism has turned poisonous and poses existential threats to democracy:

### 1. The shrinking middle ground

Democracy without compromise erodes popular sovereignty by fragmenting the electorate and eliminating meaningful compromise.

We are now in a world of zero-sum political contests, with a shrinking middle ground. Conservative parties often force extreme referendums to maintain their grip on a deeply divided electorate.

Election campaigns have become dangerous contests over wedge issues designed to deepen cultural divisions using social media.

We saw this with Brexit as Boris Johnson and other populists stoked fears about immigration and Europeans. Donald Trump did it well with attacks on immigrants. Republicans are now doubling down on the abortion issue, even though they're facing pushback from some state legislatures and governors.

In Canada, Alberta's Premier Danielle Smith, whose United Conservative Party has been newly re-elected with a majority, has focused on demonizing her opponents and has allegedly engaged in anti-democratic conduct in her months as premier.

## 2. The working class isn't benefiting

Identity politics isn't empowering working people because the politics of revenge doesn't fix structural problems.

Nevertheless, conservative parties around the world are marketing themselves as parties of the working class.

Populists recognize the working class is essential to their success at the national level because of the "diploma divide" that now separates right and left.

There is a strong correlation between lacking a college diploma and supporting nationalist conservative movements at election time.

It used to be that working people recognized education as a path to prosperity. But massive tuition increases in the U.S., in particular, have betrayed the promise of universal access to a college degree.

Tuition fees are also heading in the wrong direction in the U.K., Canada and Australia. Education now reinforces class divisions rather than breaking down barriers to a better life.

## 3. The rich and powerful direct the chaos

Populism was supposed to empower people outside the corridors of power, but talk of retribution against liberal elites normalizes calls for political violence — always a bad thing.

In a war of all against all, it's not the wealthy who lose. It's ordinary, hard-working citizens. Furthermore, once a lust for vengeance takes hold in the general public, it's almost always being directed by elites with money and power who benefit financially or politically from the chaos.



Violent protesters loyal to Donald Trump try to break through a police barrier at the Capitol in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021. (AP Photo/John Minichillo)

## 4. Assaults on the rule of law

Authoritarian leaders have gained unprecedented institutional legitimacy by building successful movements based on fantasies of blood and soil. The paranoid style of politics has entered a new phase with a full-spectrum assault on the rule of law — from inside government.



Populists are lying when they argue they want to empower the rest of us by divesting judges of their authority to oversee democracy. They really want to breach the strongest constitutional barrier against authoritarianism.



Look at the situation in Israel, where Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist coalition seeks to destroy judicial checks and balances and allow the country's parliament to overrule its Supreme Court, a move that would ease the prime minister's legal woes.

Netanyahu has been charged with corruption and influence peddling.

Trump's attempts to undermine the legitimacy of judges are equally self-serving. As he runs again for president, he's already telegraphing his violent desires, promising pardons for the Jan. 6 insurrectionists.

## The road ahead for populists

The political dial is already spinning. The defeats of Trump and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro don't represent absolute rejections of their movements.

Despite an indictment for alleged financial crime and being found liable for sexual abuse in a civil case, Trump is still the 2024 front-runner.

Opponents of Hungary's Viktor Orbán formed a united front to oppose him in the country's 2022 elections. But Orbán was re-elected in a vote widely derided as free but not fair.

Opposing coalitions are an uncertain strategy in most cases, and they don't work at all in two-party systems. There is in fact no obvious electoral strategy for defeating populism, especially now that the far right has hacked the system.

## Red lights flashing

We can no longer view elections as contests between the centre-right and centre-left in which undecided voters make the difference between victory and defeat. Nor can we count on the right to step back from the abyss of culture wars. We can't even say for certain that the populism will recede in the usual cyclical manner.

Only decisive rejection can force the right to abandon anger and grievance, but voters are not yet turning their backs on the paranoid populists. It will take a lot of strategic ingenuity to beat them. And it will get harder to do so as they rig the game with rules designed to disenfranchise people who are young, poor or racialized.

***All citizens can do is offer is constant, concerted pushback against the many big lies told by populists. It's never enough, but for the time being, it's the only way forward.***

### Authors



Daniel Draiche  
Department of Politics  
York University  
Professor Emeritus



Marc D. Froese  
Burman University  
Professor of Political Science  
International Studies Program  
Founder



EMILY: "Does anyone ever realize life while they live  
it...every, every minute?"

STAGE MANAGER: "No. Saints and poets maybe...  
they do some."

— Thornton Wilder, [Our Town](#)

When I taught that play, I would add (silently) "and comedians...". Brilliant comedians, I thought, needed that same intensity of vision to see the incongruities and foibles of life— and make us laugh about them before we tackled change.

In an era like this one, when a comic poet can sell out readings in Glasgow and Liverpool— and send the internet rollicking with "likes" for his newest poems -Brian Bilston deserves some space in our newsletter:

#### **How to Avoid Mixing Your Metaphors**

It's not rocket surgery.  
First, get all your ducks on the same page.  
After all, you can't make an omelette  
without breaking stride.

Be sure to watch what you write  
with a fine-tuned comb.  
Check and re-check until the cows turn blue.  
It's as easy as falling off a piece of cake.

Don't worry about opening up  
a whole hill of beans:  
you can always burn that bridge when you come to it,  
if you follow where I'm coming from.

Concentrate! Keep your door closed  
and your enemies closer.  
Finally, don't take the moral high horse:  
if the metaphor fits, walk a mile in it.

*Brian Bilston*

# Mediterranean diet may protect the brain from dementia

by Michael Simpson 2023-04-19 Diet, Neurological, Nutrition

New peer-reviewed research shows that the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and seafood, may help protect the aging brain from dementia. This is providing more good news that this diet may have many benefits for human health.

As I usually do, I'll examine the new research and try to determine if it provides evidence for the claims about the Mediterranean diet and the risk of dementia.

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## What is the Mediterranean diet?

The Mediterranean diet is a diet that is common to the eating habits of people living in areas of the Mediterranean, including Greece, Southern Italy, and Spain. The diet generally includes proportionally high amounts of olive oil, legumes, unrefined grains, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.



It also includes moderate to high fish consumption, dairy products (generally, cheese and yogurt), moderate wine consumption, and low consumption of other types of meat foods.

Unfortunately, there is not a solid definition of this diet. In general, it is low in red meat, moderate in chicken and fish, and high in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and legumes. But, it does vary from region to region around the Mediterranean.

During the 1940s and 50s, scientists observed that people who consumed the Mediterranean diet seemed to be objectively healthier (broadly defined) and suffered from lower rates of obesity than other populations that ate other types of diets that included refined grains and non-fish meats.

## What is dementia?

Before I proceed, it's important to describe what are dementia and Alzheimer's disease (AD). Both are chronic neurodegenerative diseases that usually start slowly and worsen over time. AD accounts for 60-70% of dementia cases, even though the terms are sometimes conflated. To be clear, Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia.

Amyloid plaques, phosphorylated tau tangles, and neurofibrillary tangles are generally easily visible pathologies that can be observed by microscopic analysis of brain tissue from autopsies of those potentially afflicted by AD. These plaques and tangles seem to have an effect on nerve functioning. Despite these observations, the disease's precise pathophysiology, or development, is unknown. Of course, dementia includes these pathologies, but because it is a broader term, it includes other types of neurological conditions that are not related to AD.

Finally, the etiology of dementia and Alzheimer's disease is not well understood. Many hypotheses about the causes of these diseases have been proposed, but most lack evidence to support a scientific consensus. Of course, without a firm understanding of the causes of the diseases, it makes it difficult to develop treatments and cures.

## Mediterranean diet and dementia

In a prospective cohort study published on 14 March 2023 in *BMC Medicine*, Oliver M Shannon, Ph.D., with Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK, and colleagues analyzed genetic and dietary data from 60,298 adults, 60 years and older, from the UK Biobank. The Biobank is a database of UK residents that includes many epidemiological factors along with the participants' health outcomes. The researchers used two methods to quantify adherence to the Mediterranean diet — the 14-point MedDiet Adherence Screener (MEDAS) score, which is used widely in trials and observational studies, and the 15-point MedDiet PYRAMID score, which is used widely in epidemiologic studies.

Let's get right to the key results of this large study:

- During the mean follow-up of 9.1 years, 882 of 60,298 individuals developed dementia.
- There was a 23% reduction in the risk of dementia with the MEDAS score and a 14% reduction with the PYRAMID score.
- Using the MEDAS scoring system, the absolute risk of dementia in the low, medium, and high Mediterranean diet adherence groups was 1.73%, 1.50%, and 1.18%, respectively. Using that data, individuals with moderate and high Mediterranean diet adherence had 0.23% and 0.55% lower absolute risk of dementia than peers with low adherence.

- The individuals who had the highest adherence in MEDAS scoring had a 31.8% relative reduction in risk of dementia compared to the lowest adherence group.
  - Using the PYRAMID scoring system, the absolute risk of dementia in the low, medium, and high MedDiet adherence groups was 1.67%, 1.53%, and 1.21%, respectively. Moderate and high MedDiet adherence groups had 0.14% and 0.46% lower absolute risk of dementia than peers in the low MedDiet adherence group.
- The individuals who had the highest adherence in PYRAMID scoring had a 27.5% relative reduction in risk of dementia compared to the lowest adherence group.

## Summary

I have to give all of my usual caveats to this type of study.

It is an observational study that relies upon a diary from each participant which may not reflect their dietary choices accurately.

Individuals who have the highest adherence to the Mediterranean diet lead an overall healthier lifestyle. The highest adherence groups may not smoke, may have less obesity, or may exercise more. The researchers tried to account for these confounders, but it's difficult to find them all.

This observational study provides less impactful evidence than a double-blind, randomized clinical trial.

Now that the usual caveats are out of the way, there is a fair amount of biological plausibility that the Mediterranean diet could directly or indirectly have an effect on the risk of dementia. For example, there is a growing body of evidence that the diet can protect cardiovascular health which may be linked to a lowering of risk for Alzheimer's disease and dementia.


All that being said, I'm giving this study three out of five stars. Just so that I'm consistent, I'm going to only use four or five stars for clinical studies that are the gold standard of research. This is a very good, large, observational study, but there are enough limitations to only rate three stars. It's the best of these types of studies, but it does not provide us with overwhelming evidence that a Mediterranean diet is causally linked to a reduction in dementia risk.

That being said, the positive benefits of the Mediterranean diet are becoming overwhelming to me. I think I will convert to this diet. I enjoy many of the foods that are a part of it, so I shouldn't complain too much.

## Citations

Shannon OM, Ranson JM, Gregory S, Macpherson H, Milte C, Lentjes M, Mulligan A, McEvoy C, Griffiths A, Matu J, Hill TR, Adamson A, Siervo M, Minihane AM, Muniz-Tererra G, Ritchie C, Mathers JC, Llewellyn DJ, Stevenson E. Mediterranean diet adherence is associated with lower dementia risk, independent of genetic predisposition: findings from the UK Biobank prospective cohort study. *BMC Med.* 2023 Mar 14;21(1):81. doi: 10.1186/s12916-023-02772-3. PMID: 36915130; PMCID: PMC1001255





All right– time for a challenge. Summer is in— and the BBQ needs cleaning. Once it's ready to go, this recipe for sauce claims to be “the best” - but after chatting with some professional BBQ Masters at the last ARM luncheon, surely, methinks, we have recipes among us that would challenge this lady's claim. Her blog is *Tastes Better from Scratch*.

*I throw down the gauntlet! Keep an eye on your mailbox for another*

*ARM Contest Announcement SOON!!.*

## The Best Homemade BBQ Sauce

8 ounces of tomato sauce

1 cup ketchup

2/3 cups light brown sugar

1/4 cups unsulphured molasses

2/3 cup red wine vinegar


2 tsp. liquid smoke

1/2 tsp. paprika– smoked or regular

1/2 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. EACH of onion powder, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, and freshly ground black pepper.

1/8th tsp. EACH of chili powder, ground mustard, and ground cinnamon.

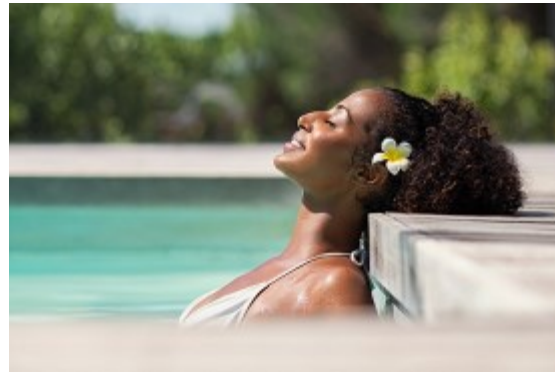
- Add all ingredients to a large saucepan and mix until smooth.
  - Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until mixture comes to a boil. Then reduce heat to simmer for 20 to 60 minutes, stirring occasionally.
  - Remove from heat and let cool. Sauce will thicken slightly.
  - Store in refrigerator in a jar for up to 3 weeks, or freeze up to 3 months.
  - Makes about 2.5 cups of sauce.
- 



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## Caution light crashes: Who's at fault?

A caution light, also known as an amber or yellow light, warns drivers that a red light is about to appear. This means the driver should stop if safe to do so; otherwise, proceed with caution. But what happens when a driver's choice to proceed through an amber light results in a collision? Read on for more information about caution light rules, fault determination and tips for avoiding caution light crashes.

### Rules of the road for caution light intersections

In Ontario, traffic regulations are governed by the [Highway Traffic Act](#) (HTA). According to the HTA, drivers must stop for a caution light if they can do so safely. If it is not safe to stop, the driver may carefully proceed into the intersection. If the driver is attempting to turn left through the intersection at a caution light, they must ensure they can complete the turn safely.

### Common causes of caution light crashes

Common causes of caution light crashes include:

- **Running a caution light:** When a driver fails to stop at a caution light intersection or accelerates to “beat the light”.
- **Failure to yield to other drivers:** When a driver fails to yield to other drivers who have the right of way at a caution light intersection.
- **Speeding:** When a driver approaches a caution light intersection at a speed that is too fast to stop or yield safely.
- **Rear-end accidents:** When a driver slows to stop at a caution light or to prepare for a turn and is rear-ended by the driver or motorist behind.

### Determining fault in caution light crashes

In a caution light collision, fault is typically assigned to the driver who failed to stop or yield at the intersection. Especially if they were attempting to make a left-hand turn. According to [Canadian Underwriter](#), it is more common for left-turning drivers to be found at fault for caution light collisions than drivers proceeding straight through the amber light.

If you are involved in a collision, your insurer will perform an investigation to determine your level of responsibility for the cause of the accident. In addition to the traffic signal and your direction of travel, your insurer will also consider other factors, such as your speed and distance from the intersection. Your degree of fault can be anywhere between 0% to 100%.

### Tips for avoiding a caution light crash

The best way to prevent yourself from being found at fault for a caution light accident is to avoid one altogether. While you can't control the actions of other drivers, there are steps you can take to prevent an amber light accident.

1. **Slow to a stop.** The caution light is a sign of slowing down, not speeding up. Begin slowing your vehicle when you see the traffic light turn amber. This gives you a better opportunity to observe your surroundings and safely come to a stop.
2. **Obey the speed limit.** While you should always follow the posted speed limit, obeying the limit gives you more time to slow down at a caution light.
3. **Yield to oncoming traffic.** If you're attempting to make a left-hand turn at a caution light, remember that oncoming traffic has the right of way. If you haven't started your turn, wait until the light turns green. If you've already begun your turn, wait until the intersection is clear and proceed carefully.
3. **Keep a safe distance.** Following a safe distance behind the vehicle in front of you ensures you have enough time to slow down and stop at a caution light.

Sometimes accidents happen, even to the most cautious drivers. That's why knowing you have the coverage you need to get back to where you started is essential.

If you're a current OTIP policyholder, contact us at [1-833-494-0089](tel:1-833-494-0089) to review your existing auto policy and discuss additional coverage options.

When you're stuck in a traffic jam but there's a dog in the car next to you

