

## Letter to Editor

### Summer reading lists: The importance of reading

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It is the beginning of summer and the media websites are out with their book recommendations for summer reading [1,2]. Let's take time to pause and look at the importance of having a lifelong reading habit.

Children benefit from having books at home. A more learned home environment supports a child's cognitive development and later wellbeing as adults [3,4,5,6,7,8]. Reading bolsters cortical growth in children [9]. Thus the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that, during health visits, providers advocate daily caregiver-child reading [10]. Public health entrepreneurs are finding innovative approaches to help children from low-income families gain better access to books [11].

Reading a wide-range of literature is a career booster [12]. Reading about a variety of topics increases creativity and builds knowledge about the world. Innovative leaders – including: Steve Jobs and Dr. Carson – are avid readers [12,13]. It is not just informative non-fiction reading that is worthy; reading fiction builds emotional intelligence [14]. Reading fiction strengthens the same neuronal pathways used to understand real human emotion, thus enhancing social acumen. Healthcare students benefit from reading medical memoirs – books that put a human face on disease [15].

Reading, as a lifelong leisure activity, may also help to preserve the cognitive capacities of middle aged and older adults [16,17,18,19,20]. Animal models indicate that cognitively enriched environments may reduce some of the molecular pathological changes associated with Alzheimer's disease [21,22,23]. The worldwide monetary cost of dementia is rapidly escalating and is expected to be more than \$1 trillion dollars next year and continue to grow [24]. The human cost is even greater. Delaying the average age of onset of Alzheimer's disease by just five years will greatly stem the trajectory of the prevalence this disease [25,26]. Health professionals recommend lifestyle measures to help reach this goal, including cognitive activity (such as reading), a Mediterranean diet, exercise, and stress management [27,28,29,30,19].

As healthcare professionals, let's make promoting a lifelong habit of reading a priority!

#### Conflicts of Interest Statement

Dr. Ross, PhD, MS is the Founder of the Delaware Gerontology

Institute, LLC (www.DEGerontology.com), which develops Activities products for elders, including extra-large print books, as well as doing scholarly work.

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