

Captain Tony

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well. As I was leaving the bar after my visit with Tony, he reached into his pocket and handed me a press release from Mt. Sinai that explained the procedure he went through this year in February.

Capt. Tony credits his doctors with saving his life at that time. Tony's cardiologist in Key West, Dr Bruce Boros, who's been looking after Tony for years, sent him up to Dr. Robert Beasley, Director of Vascular and Interventional Radiology at Mt. Sinai. Tony had an 85% blockage in his right carotid artery which supplies blood to the brain, and his left carotid artery was completely blocked, putting him at high risk for a massive stroke, according to Dr. Beasley. The reduced blood flow also caused forgetfulness.

A stent was placed in Tony's right carotid artery to open the artery and increase blood flow to the brain.

Since 2001, Mount Sinai had been involved in clinical trials for the approval of a distal protection device used during carotid artery stenting to

capture any particles of plaque dislodged during the procedure that might cause a stroke. Mount Sinai's doctors are among those most experienced in the technique.

Dr. Leffert, an Internist with Pulmonary Medicine in Key West has been keeping Capt. Tony breathing for over ten years now. He says his lungs are shot from 70 years of smoking two to three packs a day, he figures over two million cigarettes! Tony calls Dr. Leffert his "miracle doctor," and holds her in such high regard that he told her husband he'd like to take her to Vegas, and out of respect, he promised to sleep in the closet! They never went to Vegas, but she is still taking really good care of our Captain.

The results of all this quality tender loving care - Capt. Tony is back and saying "It's good to be alive!" again. You'll find him holding court at Capt. Tony's Saloon on Greene Street in Key West every Wednesday through Saturday evening from 7 to 10 pm.

Restaurant of the Month Snapper's

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pitcher to put it all in?" They like theirs on the hot side, with wasabi, capers, jalapenos and a dill pickle.

In addition to the Bloodies, Donna appreciates the jazz guitarist and the fabulous expanse of ocean view. She also pointed out the sign that says "Stress relief - \$3.00. Ask the Bartender." The \$3.00 gets you a bag of fresh bait so you can go out on the dock and

feed the tarpon. A Sunday brunch with relaxing jazz, an unbeatable Bloody Mary, and leaping tarpon. It all qualifies as stress relief in my book!

Check out Snapper's ad on the back page for more information about the Bloody Mary Bar and their other specialties. They're MM 94 on the Ocean side. 852-5956.

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Anti-Depressants and Alternatives

While in the past depression has been discarded, it has proven to be an equal opportunity affliction, it affects every socio-economic, cultural, ethnic stratum of society. However, the following groups seem to be especially vulnerable:

- Women: In Canada and the United States have twice the risk of depression as men.
- Seniors: As we experience a decrease in neuron-transmitters or imbalance our mood changes.
- People who take certain medications: such as tranquilizers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), anti-anxiety drugs, anti-hypertensives, birth control pills, and specific anti-biotics.

An abstract of St. John's wort (Hypericum perforatum) or "Nature's Prozac", and more precisely an extract containing 3% hypericum has over the years become an alternative to drugs such as Prozac®, Zoloft®, Paxil® and other synthetic anti-depressants. The reason for this is the lack of significant side effects and its effectiveness. While stand-ard anti-depressants are successful in alleviating depression in many cases (60%-75%), they are also associated with many side effects. The drug Prozac® is far from being rated as a well tolerated drug as results from clinical test have demonstrated that 21% of patients taking the drug experience nausea, 20% headaches, 15% anxiety and nervousness, 14% insomnia, 12% drowsiness, 12% diarrhea, 9.5% dry mouth, 9% loss of appetite, 8% sweating and tremors and 3% rash and in addition 34% of men and women that used Prozac® experienced decreased libido. The

reactions to these drugs are to the point that Time® magazine (September 29, 1997) had this to say, "So far, the tools used to manipulate serotonin in the brain are more like pharmacological machetes-crudely effective but capable of doing plenty of collateral damage."

What are the alternatives? Let us start with a warning. Depression is a very real illness and should be handled under the care of a professional. St. John's wort, which has been used for two millennia, offers significant advantages over such drugs as Prozac®. St. John's wort is virtually free from side effects. Especially is this true when compared with the well known side effects of tricyclics and other anti-depressants. For optimal results use a St. John's wort that is 3% hypericin and taken in a dosage of 300mg three times daily. It is of the utmost importance that St. John's wort not be taken with any anti-depressant medication. Like with most natural-and some synthetic medicines, St. John's wort takes a while to work. As with most herbal medicines it is subtle and gradual. You should experience its benefits within two to six weeks of consistent use. To place this in perspective, many synthetic antidepressants take at least four weeks to work.

Is St. John's wort a cure all for our mental health? Of course not. However, in the context of a health diet, consistent exercise, and appropriate nutritional supplements, ST. John's wort can make a profound difference. Its effectiveness has been proven, and merits profound consideration by us all.

Ref.: American Journal of Natural Medicine, December 1995. The Secret if St. John's Wort Revealed.