

## Take a vacation, it's good for your health, professor says

Vacation is a time to calm your nerves, take your mind off work, and, of course, realize that your life is in shambles and depression is inevitable without a major overhaul. At least that is how Dr. Mel Borins, a University of Toronto professor, sees it in his new book, *Go Away Just for the Health of It*. Released this month, Dr. Borins' 11-year project is a quirky collection of personal experiences and scientific evidence that outlines the benefits of taking a regular vacation. "If you read my book and don't feel like going on a holiday," says Dr. Borins, a professor in U of T's family and community medicine department, "I'll give you your money back." The first half of the 288-page tome recounts people's personal vacation victories, including the tale of a 22-year-old woman who ventured to Europe, suddenly looks at herself and realizes she does not like the person she is. "Sometimes when you leave the place you are and look at your life from a distance, you want to change things," Dr. Borins says. The same happens to a happy couple who, after spending an entire week by each other's side, realize they never want to be beside each other again. Other stories have a happier tone, such as the one about an old man whose fondest memories of his father stem from the two weeks a year they ventured from home on a family vacation. Dr. Borins says everyone knows that a good, relaxing holiday does wonders for lowering stress levels and increasing life satisfaction. "This is common sense," he says. "But there's actually some scientific research that shows it." That is where the second half of the book comes in. Did you know that woman who vacation only once every six years, or less frequently, are twice as likely to have a heart attack as their counterparts who take two or more holidays per year? Or that, over a nine-year period, men who take an annual vacation are 21% less likely to die than men who avoid holidays? Other studies show that work efficiency, family relations and overall happiness all improve when people enjoy regular vacations. Dr. Borins says it comes down to a simple choice. "It's cheaper to afford a vacation in order to improve your marriage or prevent job burnout than to pay for psychotherapy or mood-altering drugs." The book is \$19.95 and available at most bookstores.

*Michael Friscolanti, National Post*