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Natural Medicine Substitute or Primary Care?

by Darrell S.C.S. Misak, ND, RPh

In this day of medical controversy over the use of "natural" or alternative supplements, you must ask yourself (and your doctor) if there is a theoretical and physiological basis for natural medicine. Better yet, you should ponder your own beliefs on how the body heals and decide what type of practitioner is best to assist your therapies.

A cursory examination of Classical Chinese Medicine, Ayurvedic Medicine, Native American Medicine, and even the Monastic Medicine of old Europe will demonstrate an emphasis on diet, digestion and lifestyle as the fundamental preservers of health. The evolved state of Naturopathic Medicine in the late 1800's incorporated the eclectic use of diet, botanical medicine, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, spinal manipulation, acupuncture, and spiritual development as the mainstays of therapeutic intervention, which have not changed to this day. Upon analysis, one can see a common understanding of the causes of illness and the restoration of health; this understanding developed from the observation of nature, and particularly from observing the natural progress of illness and recovery.

The foundation of what historically has been referred to as "nature cure" is based upon the observation that it is the nature of things to heal themselves. With human beings this is reflected as a disturbing factor, or a number of factors, disturbs the stable ecology of the body and illness occurs as a response or reaction. The illness goes through a more-or-less predictable process, the intention of which is the reestablishment of the normal functioning of the body as a whole. If the disturbing factors persist, we will see a chronic response by the body. The basic assumption is that nature is benign, ordered, intelligent, wise, and can be trusted.

The objective to stop disease progression is to identify and remove the cause while supporting and stimulating the body to restore function. To do this effectively, a physician must come to understand the nature of health, and both that which establishes health and that which disturbs it. This simple understanding creates a set of instructions or guidance for the physician.

The principles of Naturopathic Medicine are self-explanatory and can be found at the Web site for the American Association of Naturopathic Medicine (www.naturopathic.org) or the National College of Naturopathic Medicine (www.NCNM.edu). These principles are: 1) *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* – The Healing Power of Nature, 2) *Tolle Causam* – Remove the Cause, 3) *Primum Non Nocere* – First, Do No Harm, 4) *Docere* – The Doctor as a Teacher, 5) Treat the Whole Person, and 6) Prevention.

This can be contrasted with the standard medical approach, which is not based upon the study of health, but upon the study of disease. If nature cure is based upon the restoration of health, standard medicine is based upon the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The standard physician determines the specific nature and name of the disease process, and then brings to bear the various tools that science and experience have provided to

eliminate the disease or symptoms from the body. The basis of modern medicine, with all of its miracles, is suppression. From a Naturopathic viewpoint, the suppression of acute reactive states not only weakens the body's capacity to mount healing reactions, but also allow the disturbing factors and toxic substances to further accumulate. This occurs until we exist in chronic reactive states, which we call chronic disease. Ask you doctor to name one medicine that is "curative" in its action, instead of taking care of the symptoms. They all use antibiotics as the answer, but have you eliminated the cause of why you were susceptible to a particular infection?

How does all this fit into what is happening today? Most of you reading this article have tried some form of nutritional supplement or herb in an attempt to find a better state of health, or eliminate or reduce the need for medication. What I'm here to tell you is that the philosophy of natural medicine suggest that more is involved than a nutritional or herbal replacement for your prescribed medicines. The art of Naturopathic Medicine is based on a set of principles and practice that involves individualized therapy with identification of the causative factors for illness. In addition, in today's health management one must be able to integrate traditional and alternative therapies being aware of interactions, while working towards a drug free "holistic" state of health whenever possible.

To examine some of the things that disturb health, the top of my list would be inappropriate diet, weakened digestion, and lack of sufficient rest. In addition, you will find an excess of devitalizing nourishment, coffee, alcohol, various drugs (prescription/over-the-counter/"recreational"), lack of sufficient and appropriate exercise, unhappiness, and the emotional stress due to the difficulties of modern day life.

There is no perfect system of healing, but what we have in this method is a set of instructions based upon the observation of how healing occurs in nature. It is an earth-based system of medicine, making use of the simple remedies presented by nature. It is a comprehensive system, which honors the wisdom of the body. **May your wisdom and strength be found in the honoring of natural law, and the divine wisdom held within.**

If you review the two aforementioned Web sites, you will learn that a credentialed and licensable practice of Naturopathic Medicine is alive and growing in the United States. However, in Pennsylvania there are only 13 of these licensable practitioners, whose core education is the science and practice of Natural Medicine. To change this, support of House Bill 1070 will recognize these practitioners for licensure in Pennsylvania, provide you with the assurance of a "qualified" professional, and open the door for insurance reimbursement for alternative care. Get involved and seek out qualified care. For questions on how, call my office at (412) 563-1600.

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For more information about the **Five Phase Optimal Health Program**® or his services, go to www.PittsburghAlternativeHealth.com or contact Pittsburgh Alternative Health, Inc. at **412-563-1600**.