



# 大康自然健康中心

## OPTIMUM HEALTH CENTRE

### Strategies for Health and Longevity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

During times of rapid changes, it is reasonable to expect that our survival depends on our ability to make timely adaptations. This is particularly so in the area of health care.

According to life expectancy figures, we are living longer. But we are not necessarily living healthier.

Infectious diseases which affected us in epidemic proportions one hundred years ago, including cholera, bubonic plague, diphtheria, tuberculosis, et. Al., have been controlled through improved sanitation, separation of sewage from drinking water and better living and working conditions (and not by vaccinations). Those infectious diseases are being replaced by a different group, many of which are chronic conditions.

Allergies, asthma, heart diseases, strokes, mental aberrations, cancer and AIDS represent as much as 80% of the disease affecting civilized society today. We increasingly have to become aware that the way we live and what we eat are vital factors influencing our general well being.

About 54% of us living in developed societies suffer from at least one chronic disease. You may think that this may be because we are living longer and thus more likely to be sick before we die. But the fact is among the chronically ill, 20% are 17 years of age or younger. One prediction is that by the year 2000, almost all of us will be sick with at least one chronic illness.

According to Dr. Frantz Ingelfinger, in his editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine, the 80% group of chronic diseases is not amenable to conventional medical treatments. (Dr. Ingelfinger, a Harvard professor, then editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, in a 1977 editorial, reported that eighty percent of the illness and symptoms of Americans cannot be helped by medicine and surgery at all. The Journal went on to state that medication and surgery currently help only ten percent of illness and that medicine and surgery actually cause ten percent of illness.)

Americans made 425 million visits to providers of “unconventional health therapy” in 1990 compared to 388 million visits to all family doctors, internists and other primary care physicians combined. Americans spent US\$13.7 billion on “alternative medicine” in 1990. That figure exceeds the amount Americans paid out-of-pocket for hospital care that same year (\$12.8 billion). (Eisenberg, et. Al. New England Journal of medicine, 328 (1993).246-252.)

This could explain why Americans in the year 1990 made more visits to alternative health-care practitioners than to conventional general practitioners, family doctors and internists.

There are similar trends occurring all over the world towards alternative, naturopathic and traditional forms of medicine and health care for the following reasons:

The changing nature of diseases: 70% of diseases were infectious one hundred years ago, 80% are chronic today.

Inability of conventional allopathic medicine to cure the chronic diseases.

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The rapidly rising cost of medical services, which for some sufferers are out-of-reach, even in affluent countries.

The “green” movement is helping us to see the parallel between the problems we have created in our body from indiscriminate drug use and operations and the problems we are encountering in our environment. Expansive growth has resulted in the exploitation of nature but it has become necessary to respect the ways in which we can learn to live in harmony with nature.

The feminist movement encouraged women to break free of the male-dominated medical system. Many early organizations on alternative health care were started and run by women.

Consumer rights movements have helped us to realize that we are entitled to better choices and we have not only the right to self-care, but also, more importantly, the responsibility.

We also realize that we cannot depend solely on our government, which is heavily influenced by medical opinion in health-care policy, nor the medical establishment to look after our health. It should be quite clear there exists a conflict of interest between a medical industry which is geared towards diagnosing and treating diseases, and our desire to be healthy and, therefore, no longer needing further medical treatment.

We are getting sicker younger and we are having to acknowledge that, in many of the cases, the medical community at large simply cannot respond. Our attention is increasingly turning to any number of the 100 other healing methods currently practiced.

But, how do we go about choosing the health care most suitable to our needs? Most of us are too scared (or too unwell) to take our health into our own hands. We were not prepared by our parents, our schools, to take more than just passive measures of self-care before seeking professional help. Many of us have been greatly influenced by the media not to trust any healing methods not recognized by the allopathic system. One such case in point is the on-going controversy regarding chiropractic treatments. Ironically, the American Medical Association has finally gone on record to report the benefits...but only after decades of campaigning, crusading and legal battling.

We need to learn more about our options. More importantly, we need to understand what it is that we are looking at. If you don't even know what you want, you will not find it.

Do we just want some medicine to suppress our fever, remove our pain, stop the runny nose, curb our cough, enable us to sleep, to have a bowel movement, suppress the itching skin, soothe our anxiety, phobia or some operations to remove the diseased organs? Or are we looking for something more. Beyond the removal of disease symptoms, we actually want to be healthy. But, what is health? Is it the absence of disease? Many of us have been to doctors and after thorough examinations and testing were told that there is nothing wrong with us. And yet, we don't feel healthy despite the absence of diagnosable disease.

HEALTH, according to the definition of the World Health Organization is A STATE OF WELL-BEING IN PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL REALMS. Health is not a mere absence of disease. Health also means that we should be able to stand on our own two feet to achieve this state of well being. If we can only have a bowel movement when we take a laxative, if

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we can only sleep when we take sleeping pills, if we can only suppress skin eruption when we apply ointments, if we can only control blood pressure when we take drugs, we cannot claim we are in full health.

So, be clear about your goal. Whatever treatment or services you receive should help you to achieve your goal of being healthy, and not just a measure of symptom control.

Next, you need to know what kind of treatment you are receiving. There are generally four different types:

**Palliative treatment.** You do something to make your symptom or discomfort go away but it comes back and you repeat your treatment and it goes away again but comes back again. Your overall state of health is not worsened in any other way. Examples are using some ointments to alleviate itching skin, an occasional medicine for headache, pain, fever, stomach gas, insomnia, constipation.

**Suppressive treatment.** Your palliative treatment eventually affects more serious organs and causes further dysfunction. One example is a child who becomes more irritable and moody with repeated antibiotic treatments, antipyretics and antihistamines for earaches and fever. The child comes down with more frequent colds, wheezing, and asthmatic attacks. Another example is when aspirin is used to relieve headaches. Continual use can lead to ulcers.

Anti-inflammatory drugs taken for arthritis lead to ulcers and hepatitis. Health deteriorates, with important organs affected.

Generally, we consider that organs fewer in number and better protected are more important and crucial to our survival and well-being than organs that are more in number and more superficially situated. Our brain is one in number and well protected by our thick skull and our heart is one in number and so considered more important than our liver (two lobes and several lobules), lungs (five lobes), kidneys (a pair) and they in turn are more important than our lengthy gastrointestinal tract, our numerous bones, muscles and extensive skin. (It is easy to forget, and worth remembering, that skin is an organ)

We also consider that there is a hierarchy in our health. Our mental state is a higher hierarchy than our emotional, which is higher than our physical state. If a person is suffering from physical discomfort and pain and, with or without treatment, becomes weepy, irritable, sad and later fearful, we consider that his state of health is worsening even though the physical ailments are under control with treatment.

**Substitution treatment.** Provides the body with substances, which the body normally produces to sustain health. Examples are thyroxin, insulin, oestrogen and dopamine to treat hypothyroid, diabetes, menopause and Parkinson's disease. Surgical hip replacement also belongs in this category because it substitutes the worn-out joint with an artificial one rather than attempting to restore the surface of the worn-out joint (regeneration therapy).

**Regeneration treatment.** Gradual restoration of an organ's normal function. Rather than provide the missing, or inadequate, hormones, neurotransmitters, et. Al., this treatment encourages production of the thyroxin by the thyroid gland, insulin by the pancreas and insulin-receptors by the body cells,

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oestrogen by the uterus, ovaries, and dopamine by the brain, regeneration of cartilage of the hip joint. Obviously, the best treatment is regeneration treatment but this is not always possible when the disease is too far advanced and our body's self-healing ability is incapable of making total repair. And we may have to settle for the next best treatment.

Finally, you need to understand the important phenomenon of HEALING CRISIS. In the process of recovery, our body sometimes undergoes a vigorous detoxification process as our vitality becomes stronger and our body is healthy enough to do some house cleaning. This is sometimes manifested in the form of fever, diarrhoea, inflammation, skin eruption and intensification of old symptoms for a short period of time and then a quantum improvement in health. If we do not recognize this as healing crisis and take measurements to curb the symptoms--thinking that the original treatment is not working and the condition is only worsening--we may hamper our own spontaneous recovery.

We can also be guided by HERING'S LAW OF HEALING (a German 19<sup>th</sup>-century psychologist) which states that during the process of healing our symptoms will travel from above and go down, inside to out, centre to periphery...first to come—last to go. One example is joint pain. Anyone who has suffered knows that the pain can migrate from one place to another: pain might start in the upper body but move to the lower, from shoulder to wrist and fingers, before going away.

Having understood some of the healing principles and different kinds of treatment, you also need to know more about the various therapies and systems of healing available. Equally important are the qualifications, personality and style of the practitioner involved. The more you learn about the available health-care services, the better will be the decision you make to achieve your goal of optimum health.

This book by Celia Bill is the first book of its kind in Hong Kong to help you to become a prudent health-care consumer.

It should be one of your most important resource books for living in Hong Kong.

Dr. Alexander Yuan,

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