

NATURAL HEALTH & IMMUNITY

by

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"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but interest his patient in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease". Thomas Edison

All healthcare practitioners, whether conventional or alternative/natural are intimately concerned with the dynamic that exists between health and disease. However, conventional medical practitioners and natural healthcare practitioners will have radically different understandings of both health and disease, and will therefore organise their treatment process accordingly.

In conventional medicine, health is most commonly defined as an absence of symptoms, whilst disease is most often determined and categorised from the nature of the accompanying symptoms. Therefore, if we are able to eliminate the symptoms then health should naturally result. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Health is therefore seen as good and disease as bad and something to be avoided or eliminated at all costs.

By comparison, natural forms of healthcare see symptoms as a manifestation of a deeper imbalance and therefore try to address the core imbalance without suppressing the symptoms. Furthermore, symptoms are seen as a way for the body to eliminate different forms of imbalance. Suppression of symptoms therefore shuts down this natural form of elimination and drives the original imbalance deeper into the body, thus making the situation more chronic.

One of the most important principles of many natural healthcare systems is that of **vitalism**. Vitalism is the concept that all material phenomena are reflections of an inner energetic state, and cannot therefore be explained in purely mechanical terms. The origins of the imbalances that give rise to symptoms may be manifold and are reflected in how we adapt ourselves to the experiences of our lives. These experiences may arise from one or more of the following:

- Mechanical (i.e. resulting from injuries and other external forces)
- Psycho-emotional (stress, repression, suppression)
- Nutritional (poor diet, mineral and vitamin deficiencies, malnourishment etc.)
- Fluidic (dehydration, water retention)

- Genetic (inherited predispositions to various disorders)
- Metabolic (metabolic disturbances might have their roots in any of the above categories)
- Shock and trauma (possibly resulting from any of the above)

In this view, health and disease are not seen as polar opposites of good and bad, but as a dynamic process that is related to how we interact with the experiences of our life. It has been recognised in many different traditions and healing modalities that the human system is not static, but is in a constant state of motion.

The vitalistic force expresses itself as a series of regular pulsatory rhythms that are palpable within the fluids and tissues of the body. Where these natural pulsations are strong, a state of health naturally arises. Where the pulsations are weak, disordered or even absent, the internal environment becomes more ambient for the development of one or more pathologies.

The following table outlines some of these important differences between conventional and natural forms of healthcare¹:

Conventional Medicine

Emphasises the physical
 Reductionist/separatist
 Disease centred
 Symptoms caused by disease
 Symptoms are to be eliminated
 Health is the absence of symptoms
 Empowers the health professional

Natural Medicine

Considers all levels of experience
 Natural
 Patient centred
 Symptoms a result of a deeper problem
 Symptoms seen as useful indicators
 Health is an internal balance
 Empowers the patient

It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has.

Hippocrates (father of medicine)

Causes of Disease

The body is always looking to achieve homeostatic balance. This can be achieved in many ways. However, one way in which the organism as a whole is able to balance itself is through its ability to discharge any imbalance that begins to accumulate internally. This may be in the form of physical imbalance, such as toxicity, cellular waste, pathogens and dietary elements. It may be in the form of metabolic waste processes such as carbon dioxide, faeces and urea. It may also be in the form of

¹ Adapted from The Clinical Medicine Guide, S. Gascoigne, 2001, Jigme Press, p.9

emotional imbalance. This occurs where emotions are not fully expressed in a way that is appropriate at the time. This can lead to emotions becoming suppressed giving rise to chronic tension and internal imbalance.

Normal Discharge - this form of discharge occurs through our everyday activities. These include breathing, sweating, urinating and defecating. If our internal state is in a condition of relative homeostasis then these processes will be smooth and regular. This will also be reflected in our emotional state and behaviour. Where the imbalance starts to build to a point where the normal methods of discharge are unable to cope, then the next level of discharge process take over.

Abnormal Discharge - at this stage, the discharge process changes its nature in order to respond to the imbalance, and it usually does this by becoming excessive. This may manifest as excessive sweating, frequent urination, diarrhoea/constipation, excessive coughing and sneezing and the development of fevers.

As the level of imbalance increases, the body needs to utilise more options in the discharge process. This commonly involves the largest organ of discharge in the body, the skin. Whilst the skin has many other physiological functions, including protection, regulation of body temperature and the synthesis of vitamin D, it is its ability to function as an organ of discharge that is of most clinical interest. Whilst a small number of skin complaints may have an external cause, the majority of them are due to internal forces attempting to discharge at the surface. Conditions such as eczema and psoriasis, as well as a number of others are always due to internal rather than external factors.

As well as skin problems, this level of imbalance is also reflected as upper respiratory tract infections, influenza, higher fevers, tonsillitis, ear infections and more chronic diarrhoea/constipation. These conditions can be seen as natural adjustment disorders where the body is utilising its first line of defence in order to restore homeostasis.

However, they account for the largest percentage of complaints that people take to their GP. In someone whose health has not already been compromised by other factors (e.g. other illnesses, the very young and the very old), the homeostatic balancing processes of the body will, if given sufficient time and space, kick in. Given there are no additional complications, these conditions are best left unmedicated to allow the body time to restore a state of balance.

Accumulation - if these conditions are routinely medicated, or if the process of healing is not allowed to run its natural course, then the ability of the body to discharge and adjust becomes suppressed. The effect of this is for the nature of the disorder to move more deeply into the body, giving rise to a change in the symptomatic picture and a shift from in the nature of the condition from adjustment to

accumulation. For example, regular use of antibiotics to treat minor infections can lead, over time, to a number of different symptoms. These include tiredness, diarrhoea, candida and an overall weakened immune system. Another example is the repeated use of topical creams to treat eczema will clear up the rash but, since the imbalance is no longer able to discharge through the skin it goes deeper, most commonly moving to the lungs where it manifests as asthma.

In essence what is happening is that the intelligence of the body, unable to discharge its imbalance, begins localising and storing it within the different structures of the body. This can be considered a sign of health. In other words, the body still has the ability to localise dysfunction to particular areas, thus preventing it from spreading throughout the whole system. However, due to this accumulation, the nature of the disorder now changes from acute to chronic.

Initially, this storage takes place in those organs and areas that have access to the outside e.g. bowel, breast, lungs, sinuses, kidneys, sexual organs so that when conditions become right, the body can once again begin the process of elimination.. This may give rise to different conditions associated with one or more of these organs e.g. irritable bowel, mastitis, sinusitis, kidney stones, infertility. This accumulation may even take the form of cysts and tumours within one or more areas of the body.

Degenerative - as the health of these organs becomes more compromised, the nature of the disorder moves deeper into the system. From here, it begins to affect the deepest levels of the body. These include the internal organs, central nervous system, blood and the bones. At this stage, the nature of the disorder becomes more deeply chronic and degenerative. Yet, even at this stage the intelligence of the body is at work. By allowing the body to restore its natural functioning once again, the elimination process can begin to move the body in the direction of health once again.

Doctors are people who prescribe medicines of which they know very little, to cure diseases of which they know less, in human beings of which they know nothing. Voltaire