

The Battle Continues

A Perspective by Dr. Ron Cherubino



As a young doctor, I had a dream. I dreamt of someday putting myself out of practice. I dreamt of people getting healthy and staying healthy.

I imagined them becoming so healthy that doctors would no longer be necessary. I hoped that by the year 2000 we would see a dramatic decrease in illness.

I believed that the principles and techniques that I was applying would become so widespread that people would get healthier and healthier. I saw health spreading like fresh air into a stale closed up room.

But I was wrong. I have realized for the past decade or more that we have not been moving in the direction of health.

Chronic degenerative disease is more widespread than ever before. Oh, it's true that we have more nontraditional health-care available, but not nearly enough. Educational material explaining the how's and why's of these alternatives and the wide-range of benefits offered, is sorely lacking.

I was dismayed to recently read in a professional journal that pharmaceutical companies and the Federal Trade Commission are waging an aggressive movement against alternative health-care. They have specifically targeted a number of areas including the chiropractic profession and are attempting to stop the distribution of educational literature and brochures.

These brochures explain how specific approaches and techniques work. The FTC is challenging the type of research that has gone into the understanding of these approaches. They are comparing the high budget research common to the pharmaceutical industry to the research supportive of nontraditional therapies.

Firstly, the pharmaceutical companies have an inordinate amount of money for independent research. Historically, this research is not only expensive but also anything but independent. It is most often the type of research known as directed research. This is where specific conclusions are sought after, even before the research begins. This so-called "scientific" research seeks to reach a desired conclusion. Many projects of this type are abandoned as soon as an undesirable finding is discovered.

The positive effects of nontraditional methods have been observed for many years. Chiropractic, which was discovered in this country, has been in existence for over 100 years.

The Chinese have used their form of observational medicine for 3000 to 5000 years. In actuality this type of observation is the basis for the scientific method. Sir Isaac Newton, Copernicus, Leonardo Davinci, Einstein

continued on page 2

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and others considered observation to be the heart and soul of this method. This is the same scientific method that is taught in the most basic course of scientific study in the U.S. and globally.

When I first heard about these attacks I was disturbed. After several days, I remembered a favorite old saying, Every knock is a boost. It was true years ago and it is still true today. The other part of that saying goes, What doesn't kill you will make you stronger. And there are those who would like to see alternative health care dead. That simply will not happen. It isn't as though the establishment is fighting against something that people don't want, or are protecting people from anything dangerous.

While traditional medicine is dealing with potentially dangerous and often times lethal drugs, we are dealing with methods, which have great potential to heal with no dangerous side effects. In spite of what they would like us to believe, the major danger that exists is to their corporate profits.

I would suggest that instead of holding alternative therapies to the standard of big money research, we begin to hold pharmaceuticals to the standards of observational medicine. Would the drugs that we are using today stand up to the scrutiny of observation over time? Not if past performance is any indicator of future results. Remember the birth defects caused by the "miracle" drug Thalidomide, the heart and lung problems created by Fen-fen and the lesser known but equally tragic results from Tambocor.

Thomas Moore, Senior Fellow at the George Washington University Center for Health Policy Research, in his book *Deadly Medicine*, tells us of the tens of thousands of heart patients killed from the effects of Tambocor. And it is still in use today. Whatever research was done before these drugs were used as medicine, pales in comparison to the incredible harm we have observed from their use.

The truth is that people want natural health-care because it works, without the side effects and dangers inherent to our current medical system. It meets standards and principles that are far higher than what traditional medicine has to this point lived up to.

There is a movement afoot for medical practitioners to begin to practice alternatively. As long as the intent is to practice alternative health-care, and not just capture a bottom-line profit, then that would be a victory for natural health-care. It is exactly what I would like to see.

Insurance companies are beginning to realize that people want alternative care. A letter that came by my desk several weeks ago from the insurance industry stated that "in the next five years insurance carriers will be unable to compete unless they offer increased coverage and access to nontraditional therapies."

What we have seen over the last five years from insurance companies, HMOs particularly, is the inclusion of alternative care in their policies. Unfortunately this appears to be little more than financial posturing. Commonly, one or two providers of a specific alternative specialty may have been allowed into the system where the need may exist for a hundred or more. In this way, when an insurance company approaches a potential business or client, they can legally state that the policy offers alternative health-care.

Unfortunately, they have not only limited the number of alternative providers but have carefully selected practitioners that intentionally limit the range and quality of services available. In this way they have profited by alternative health-care without having to really pay for it. Of course we are the ones that end up paying for it, not only with higher premiums but also with our very health.

One of the reasons the industry is trying to stop alternative health-care is because they see it as a threat. The pharmaceutical industry is aware that billions of dollars each year are being spent on alternative therapies. U.S. News and World Report, in a recent article, wrote of the 27 billion dollars per year that Americans are spending

continued on page 3

on alternative therapies. Just five years ago that dollar amount was around 14 billion. It is easy to see why big business wants a piece of the alternative health-care dollar. But they will need to start providing the services that people want or they will continue to lose ground. We are talking about providing natural, non-drug and non-surgical health-care, as a primary source of treatment. More and more people in the U.S. and around the world are choosing our kind of health-care first. And why not? Why would anyone choose drugs and surgery if they had a safer more effective treatment to choose from?

I think that we need to be encouraged and boosted by these attacks. We have the power to make change. If we collectively stay focused, refuse to listen to propaganda, refuse to close our minds, continue to let our desires be known and refuse to let big business run our lives, changes will occur.

I encourage anyone who has had a positive experience with any kind of nontraditional health-care to talk to their friends and neighbors, direct them toward sources of information, read and share books, visit appropriate Web sites. When you hear of health-care bills let your politicians know how you feel and where you stand.

Take opportunities, go into your human resources departments at work and let them know the kind of health-care coverage you want. If available, consider taking a better health plan that covers alternative care the next time you are able to make a choice. If your current health plan covers some alternative care but not the specific kind you want, complain to your employer and to the insurance carrier. Let them know that you are not happy with your current plan and that you will not put up with substandard health-care coverage. This fight is for your health and the health of your loved ones.

By pulling together, we can and will make a difference. We can see a future of children and adults living healthier and happier lives. We aren't going to see the full extent of these wonderful changes by next year, but we may see them in 5 or 10 years. However one thing is certain, we need to stay vigilant, because the battle is still raging!

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