

What Causes Disease and What Heals

What Causes Disease?

The cause of disease, according to many, is a lack of circulation. Circulation here refers to the circulation of the vital force known in China as Chi. To practitioners in other parts of the world, it is also known as Prana (India), Ki (Japan), Pneuma (Ancient Greece) and a dozen or so other names.

Acupuncturists have said the cure for dis-ease is the circulation of this vital force. The chiropractic profession calls this vital force "innate intelligence." No matter what you call it, many health care professionals have observed that when innate intelligence or vital force is freed from blockages, healing occurs. Chiropractors traditionally use spinal adjustments to free the life energy; acupuncturists use needles on congested acupoints and other vitalistic professionals use other methods to that same end. Nutritionists recommend foods containing this life force. Homeopathic doctors give remedies to remove energy blocks to this vital life force circulation, and the list goes on.

What Heals?

"It is important to realize that drugs, powders, potions and lotions don't heal. Nor do chiropractic, medicine, acupuncture and psychotherapy. Doctors don't heal. Only the wisdom of the body heals."

Scott Walker, D.C.

Two Schools of Thought - Mechanism vs. Vitalism

The doctrine of mechanism holds that ALL natural phenomena can be explained by material causes and mechanical principles. Most mechanistic practitioner today use drugs and surgery. These methods FORCE the body to change. The doctrine of vitalism holds that life processes are guided by non material vital principle and are, thus, unable to be fully explained as physical and chemical phenomena. Most vitalistic practitioners today use natural methods which ALLOW the body to change itself.

In his book, "Divided Legacy: A History of the Schism in Medical Thought," Harris L. Coulter, Ph.D., observes that over the thousands of years of recorded history, two main philosophical camps of practitioners have repeatedly clashed over this exact question, "What heals?" This brings to mind another question, which must be answered first, "**What makes or usually keeps the body healthy in the first place?**" The two camps are "**Mechanism**" and "**Vitalism.**" Each viewpoint has had its peaks and valleys of popularity and usage. In this last century, mechanistic practices (allopathic medicine) have peaked and are now falling, as Vitalism (alternative health care) ascends.

Thus, we have the health care revolution we are now witnessing. To underscore this revolution, a study by D. M. Eisenberg (JAMA 1998 Nov 11; 280 (18): 1569) stated, "Extrapolations to the US population suggest a 47.3% increase in total visits to alternative medicine practitioners, from 427 million in 1990 to 629 million in 1997, thereby exceeding total visits to all US primary care physicians."

Although there is some cross over, most "US primary care physicians" are in the camp of Mechanism. Most alternative health care practitioners are in the camp of Vitalism.

What does all this mean to the patient?

Both camps have scientific support within their own practices and standards. Which camp is more meaningful to the patient is determined by what he or she perceives health to be. If the patient thinks that the absence of symptoms is health, then drugs (mechanistically based) are likely to appear attractive. For example, pain-killing drugs eliminate the symptom of pain.

On the other hand, if the patient knows that most "diseases," especially the major killers of today, are relatively symptomatically quiet until their final stages, he or she may have a different (and vitalistic) definition of health—which may include the concept of optimum functioning of all cells and systems of the body, regardless of symptoms. This patient knows that a person who is symptom free today may have a heart attack tomorrow. In addition, patients today generally realize all allopathic drugs have side effects. Thus, more and more people are turning to alternative health care.

Vitalistic practitioners do use symptoms to guide them to the CAUSE of symptoms. Within the practice of any vitalistic approach, a practitioner may utilize observable mechanisms to free the vital energy. Allopathic mechanistic medicine does have its place, and emergency medicine is a good example of this.

Thus, if a person has a heart attack or any other symptom, what is the best question to ask? An allopathically minded person may well ask, "What drug do I take?" A vitalistically minded person has at least two questions: "What CAUSED this problem?" and "How do I naturally correct this cause so my body can heal (vitalistically) itself?"

If you ask what caused the problem, then an appropriate course of action can take place. So then comes the question: "What causes 'disease'?" In the alternative health field, we use the term "dis-ease" to denote that ill health is a lack of ease, rather than an entity. In general, Mechanists are interested in the "disease," rather than the host organism. In general, Vitalists are interested in the host organism and reject the idea of "disease" being an entity. The bottom line is that Vitalists are interested in causes.