

LATROGENIC ILLNESS: THE DOWNSIDE OF MODERN MEDICINE

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During the past century, a medical establishment has evolved that has made itself the exclusive provider of so-called scientific, evidence-based therapies. The paradigm used by this establishment is what we call the orthodox medical approach, and for the first 70 years of this century, little effort was made to challenge it. In the past 30 years, however, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of an alternative approach to medical care, one that, either on its own, or as a complement to orthodox medicine, emphasizes nontoxic and noninvasive treatments, and prevention.

Unfortunately, this new perspective has been fought vigorously. We've been told that it's only the treatments of orthodox medicine that have passed careful scientific scrutiny involving double-blind placebo-controlled studies. Concomitantly, we've been told that alternative or complementary health care has no science to back it up, only anecdotal evidence. These two ideas have led to the widely accepted "truths" that anyone offering an alternative or complementary approach is depriving patients of the proven benefits of safe and effective care, and that people not only don't get well with alternative care, but are actually endangered by it.

By getting society to accept these precepts, orthodox medicine has maneuvered itself into being the sole provider of information about disease and its treatment, and has taken charge of curricula, accreditation, and insurance coverage in the health care arena. All 50 states have enacted strict proscriptions at the state medical board level against using so-called unscientific medicine, meaning anything that is not, according to the orthodox consensus, common-use medicine. Hundreds of physicians have been prosecuted and punished for not confining their treatments to the accepted paradigm, some to the point of having their licenses revoked, being imprisoned, or suffering bankruptcy. And it has been of only secondary importance whether or not their patients have claimed to benefit from their treatments. The prosecutors—the state attorneys general working hand-in-hand with state medical boards and "anti-quackery" groups supported by pharmaceutical interests—have influenced such federal enforcement agencies as the FDA, the USDA, and the Justice

Department. They've also influenced such bodies as the National Institutes of Health as to which modalities receive funding and get incorporated into the standard medical model, thus perpetuating the status quo.

It is the purpose of this review to question the status quo. Specifically, we'll be looking at a variety of areas—cancer, heart disease, mental illness, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, etc.—and asking some basic questions:

Are the orthodox medical modalities safe and effective, i.e., have they been proven so by qualified science?

If they have not been proven safe and effective, then what are the risk/benefit ratios of using these modalities?

What are the costs, in terms of morbidity and mortality, as well as dollars and cents, of using these modalities, both to the individual and to society as a whole?

After a careful consideration of the answers we can determine how much of the existing mainstream medical model should be supported, and how much should be rejected and replaced with new approaches.

It is vital to note that all the studies referred to here are from mainstream medicine's own respected journals, such as the Journal of the American Medical Association, the New England Journal of Medicine, and The Lancet. Thus this white paper's criticism of the various therapies comes not from the "alternative" world but from the very heart of orthodox medicine itself and from researchers using the gold standard of rigorously set-up controlled studies. So there is nothing subjective or political about the conclusions. Also, I should mention that this work was done over a period of eight years, during which time over 10,000 studies were analyzed. The studies contained herein are just samples; many more could have been included but were not because of space considerations.

With more than 5000 physicians questioned, it is apparent to this author that the vast majority of medical procedures are done with the belief that they are safe and effective, rather than with proof that they are. Even after procedures and medications have been shown (a) not only not to work, but (b) to cause injury and death at a statistically significant level, they continue to gain in popularity and use. This is one of the reasons we have not had greater gains in combating the major diseases in recent decades. And it is

also why there is an urgent need for physicians, legislators, journalists, funding agencies, curriculum developers, insurance companies, and peer review systems to take note of the substantial gaps in primary chronic care, and find better approaches.

The facts here speak for themselves. We are a society that states that we live by the gold standard of scientific research, but this report shows that statement to be at odds with reality. It shows that we are routinely causing iatrogenic conditions and unnecessary suffering—not to mention wasting vast sums of money—through a systemic negligence of the facts. This situation must be challenged, and remedied.

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