

Are you Riding a Dead Horse? Lyle Loughry, Copyright 2007

"Medicine, as we know it, is dying. It's entering a terminal phase."

This observation was made a few years ago by renowned Health Reporter, Nick Regush. Nick wasn't just any reporter, he was a journalist specializing in medical and scientific issues, an award-winning investigative reporter who worked for the Montreal Gazette for twelve years, served as a consultant to the Center for Bioethics, affiliated with the University of Montreal, and worked freelance as a medical analyst for CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio and a producer for CBC TV's The Fifth Estate, a news magazine featuring investigative stories. Nicholas Regush wrote several books and numerous magazine articles and produced features for ABC TV's newsmagazines, Day One and Nightline. He produced medical features for six years for ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings and wrote more than one hundred columns ("Second Opinion") for ABCNews.com.

His last published book was "The Virus Within." Previous books include, among others, "Safety Last," an investigation of Canada's health protection system, and "Condition Critical," a probe of Canada's health care system. Until his death, Nicholas lived his wife Barbara Lewis, a singer-songwriter in Montreal.

Immediately following the opening quote by Nick, he wrote, "There is no way to be nice about this. There is no point in raising false hopes. There is no treatment or vaccine in sight. There is no miracle breakthrough on the horizon. What began as an acute illness reached the chronic stage about a decade ago (early 1990s) and progression toward death has been remarkably swift and well beyond anything one could have predicted. The disease is caused by conflict of interest, tainted research, greed for big bucks, pretentious doctors and scientists, lying, cheating, invasion by the morally bankrupt marketing automatons of the drug industry, derelict politicians and federal and state regulators -- all seasoned with huge doses of self-importance and foul odor." Wow, what an indignant!

Currently, the United States spends about 1.5 trillion dollars for healthcare, and the projections are that it will double in less than 10 years. The sad tragedy is that we are spending all of this money on disease management focused on drugs and surgery, and our return on this investment is profoundly poor. More and more people do not have the energy they need to get through the day, while millions of others are suffering with painful crippling diseases because they have violated basic health principles, including the one you

hardly ever hear or read: "You must take more responsibility for your own health!"

Often, negative health and lifestyle choices are made because of a lack of knowledge, including those made by your doctor, believe it or not. A popular and well-known physician and medical researcher who practices "complimentary medicine," Dr. Joseph Mercola, D.O., had at one time as the main title of his Web site this provocative statement, Drugs and Doctors May be the Leading Cause of Death in the US.

Although he made the analysis and popularized it, the original study was published by Dr. Starfield, a full professor of public health at the most prestigious hospital in the United States, Johns Hopkins. Her study listed the published research documenting the various causes of deaths that doctors contributed to. Dr. Mercola compared the totals to cardiovascular diseases and cancer and came up with the headline.

Dr. Mercola relates that, by the time he got around to contacting Dr. Starfield by e-mail, he found that she disagreed with his headline. She informed him that she thought doctors were actually the number one cause of death, because of their failure to inform their patients about the truth of health. Dr. Mercola thought this might be a bit too harsh, even though only a year earlier, JAMA (the Journal of the American Medical Association) actually published a study that supported her statement that doctors may indeed be the leading cause of death in the United States.

JAMA had previously reported that, "70% of doctors treating Medicare patients flunked an exam on prescribing for the elderly," and in another study JAMA revealed that your chances of being incorrectly diagnosed in America's hospitals run from "67% to 75%, depending on whether you go to an inner-city hospital or to a suburban hospital."

"Let's face it, modern medicine is far from perfect! The medical field is rife with fictions, fallacies, and outright fraud! Contrary to the omniscient image they like to project, ignorance and incompetence are as prevalent among doctors as they are in any other profession, probably even more. Despite its up-to-date image, medicine is in many ways old-fashioned, and stubbornly resistant to change. Obsolete and valueless procedures continue to be used long after they've been disproven."

So says a former "establishment medicine" physician, Dr. William Campbell Douglass II, who for 29 years had a successful private practice in the Southeast. He witnessed, firsthand, the flaws and failings of traditional medicine:

* Incompetent doctors who are never disciplined, and are allowed to continue practicing, and to harm their unsuspecting patients.

* Unnecessary surgeries

* Poisonous and mis-prescribed drugs

* Dubious and sometimes faked research studies, endlessly touted as "scientific proof"

* Millions of Americans cut open and killed, simply because the technology exists, and because surgeons and hospitals rake in big bucks using it.

Dr. Douglas characterizes so-called modern medicine as a "nightmarish, upside-down system that favors the interests of doctors, hospitals, the drug industry, and government regulators. Everyone benefits--except the patient!"

In a new (2007) book titled, "How Doctors Think," Dr. Jerome Groopman, the noted oncologist and chief of experimental medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, examines the thought processes and assumptions that lead to misdiagnoses. I believe he's being generous when he notes that "fifteen percent to 20 percent of medical diagnoses are wrong, and half or more of these incorrect diagnoses result in serious injury or death. Additionally, over a quarter of all radiological tests, including CAT scans and MRIs, are also misread." Dr. Groopman notes that, on average, a doctor will interrupt a patient during the first 18 seconds of a visit. Groopman calls this problem anchoring -- quickly seizing on a particular diagnosis, and letting that judgment color all subsequent thinking. He also identifies a second problem, attribution, where stereotypes lead doctors to make bad assumptions about patients.

Dr. Groopman ultimately attributes the root of the problem to a general lack of independent thinking, observed noticeably among medical residents he guides on hospital rounds. Rather than reading charts, listening to a patient's concerns and observing the signs of illness, many of his young charges rely instead on cookie-cutter recipes for various health conditions preloaded on their computers. Doctors lean heavily on technology because of a lack of time. This often prompts physicians to make snap decisions without getting to the real cause of the problem, part and parcel of a failed and conventional health care paradigm. "Misdiagnoses are not rare at all," says Groopman.

As many as 98,000 Americans each year reportedly die due to medical errors. But even that is actually just the tip of the iceberg. Clever manipulation of the official government death rates conceals the fact that the conventional medical system, not heart disease or cancer, is really the leading cause of death in this country. Yet, in all fairness, physicians themselves are not the ultimate and primary reason, because they are under the pernicious influence of the multi-billion-dollar marketing umbrella of the drug companies.

Biochemist, Russ Bianchi, is an expert in nutritional bioavailability and a highly respected formulator of many recognized nutritional branded products. Russ is also an acclaimed speaker and author of food technology and nutritional articles, and has been often quoted in the media. He likes to remind people that the vast majority of MD's in America are trained to treat patients, and NOT prevent illness. According to Russ in a recent article, "Virtually NONE of these MD's have any reasonable clue about good nutrition, and accept, chapter and verse, whatever Big Pharma shovels them in treatment protocols of drugs; some good, and many very BAD, as we have seen with a long and continuing stream of drug recalls. Just today, 1/29/07, following on the heels of 10,000 being laid off at Pfizer last week, Cardinal Health announced it was selling off its pharmaceutical manufacturing holdings ... the rats are leave the sinking ship. The consumer is just beginning to be informed on how to protect themselves from Big Pharma, through articles, books, the media, and information websites, and it can only improve long term quality health for us all."

Finally, just months before Nicholas Regush's unexpected and untimely death in October, 2004, Special Projects Editor Barbara Lewis asked Nick, why his passionate concern with medical diagnosis? His reply was: "Because a lot of people seem to think they know what the problem is, but they don't. The mess that passes for medical diagnosis is far more critical than we are being led to believe, particularly by the mass media." He went on to say, For instance...We have illusions about medical diagnosis that we desperately need to shed. Too many people think its a question of getting the right doctor...you know... "my doctor is better than your doctor." Or the one I love best.... "I hear he's very good."

No, no, no! The problem is an engineering problem. It's a question of knowledge assimilation. I mean, how can anyone retrieve, digest and remember the huge volume of information, day in and day out, and then apply all that information to the specific needs of individual patients? They can't. It's impossible when they're using memory alone or bad medical charts filled with unstructured notes, usually chicken-scratched in. This is lunacy!"

So, is there any wonder that so many errors are occurring - everywhere...This happens in cancer, cardiology, infectious diseases, in fact, all of medicine. The primary cause of malpractice lawsuits in the U.S. is medical misdiagnosis. One report after another tells the story of a systems failure, not just that a bunch of doctors who were at the bottom of their class managed to get a good share of the patient load. Any doctor who claims he or she can regularly do good diagnosis on the basis of all the experience obtained over the years is full of it. It's arrogance to think any person can do work from memory. Sheer insanity! If they really cared about their credibility and their patients they would scrap their inadequate, inane, often indecipherable medical charts and buy a good computer with any number of excellent programs available today that would enable them to gain access to a data base lying outside their limited brains.

Then, they would learn to apply that knowledge in such a way that it would better meet the needs of individual patients. Every patient is unique. Every patient needs information from that huge data base that can be retrieved and applied in such a way that guesswork is reduced as much as it is possible these days to do so. Of course, no system is perfect but the current one is a nightmare.

Dr. Lawrence Weed, who once practiced medicine at the University of Vermont Medical Center, has said: "Expecting your doctor to know everything without accessing information is like expecting your travel agent to keep all airline and rail timetables in his or her head." He wrote extensively that guesswork, which is routine, leads to unnecessary care, high costs and a hidden epidemic of medical injury. Without electronic tools, it's a craps shoot. But even though he has made important inroads - getting awards for his work and getting more and more doctors to learn his systems - he remains very much marginalized, because medicine has become a whore. And there are more whores per square mile on that turf...hooking up with drug companies and medical device manufacturers and test makers...than most people realize.

But there's more to it than that...there's the arrogance taught at medical school that memory is a treasure and that listening to the big kahunas on the wards pontificate about medical expertise is a roadmap to great diagnosis...all this gets entrained and it's hard to get many doctors to shift gears. Give up their "I'm an ace" self-assessments? You're kidding, right? Better to treat the patient as some dim bulb and provide the quick diagnosis, and preferably with some chemical prescription attached to the revisit reminder, to make it even more worthwhile.

Who really knows just how many diagnostic errors are made, and who's really counting? And how would we really know, given the terrible state of medical

information systems? Tens of thousands in any given country to be sure. Maybe millions in some. If we believe the autopsy studies done, it's possible that a major error is made 25 per cent of the time. There are suggestions in the medical literature that the percentage may be much higher. And the big problem is that fewer and fewer autopsies are getting done, and so a major marker of error in medicine is going down the river.

When a doctor says his patients have been doing well on something, my immediate attitude, based on many years of hearing this, is well, hell, prove it. Do you have any data? Do you really know whether you didn't create additional problems for your patients? What some doctors say is that they "follow" their patients. What on earth does that mean? Does it mean they track them with spy cameras, run weekly tests on them, ask them intimate questions about life preferences and deep emotions? What it usually means, unfortunately, in many cases, is that the patient periodically receives the same stupid diagnostic approach in an alternative clinic as he or she does in a conventional one. Does this amount to better care? The most well-meaning alternative doctor is going to do dumb things if he or she relies totally on memory and so-called "experience."

I've become extremely disenchanted with conventional medicine, as you might have detected. In all the years that I have interviewed physicians of all persuasions, I have either come away thinking that I had met someone who could be a friend or someone who should be reported to the idiot police. Funny, there has not been too much in-between. I would have to say that most of the good doctors, if I can call them that, still can't seem to get it through their heads that they cannot - and should not - practice medicine by being good at guessing about all the possible explanations for a patient's unique condition. And once again, I emphasize the word "unique." Medicine is failing because the unique conditions of patients are not being adequately met.

SUMMARY: The escalating levels of lies, myths and mistakes disclosed in this article suggest a terrifying conclusion: modern medicine has the power and potential to really hurt you! This chemistry-and-technology-has-all-the-answers philosophy is an arrogant, failing notion that has cost Americans trillion of dollars, millions of lives, and incalculable misery and pain!

This website has several informative articles that could prove priceless to you if you are interested in being better informed about what you need to understand about pursuing wellness. One article, entitled, Modern Medicine-- Flawed Origins helps you understand the major flaw in the thinking of most allopathic doctors. Another, entitled Death by Friendly Fire, is based on more recent studies than the ones mentioned earlier in this article, and are

considered a must-read by those who have taken the time to consider it. Death by Friendly Fire thoroughly and painstakingly reports on the real death toll resulting from hospital and physician mistakes in America, and gives you hints on how you can avoid the same fate. The other articles are also worth your time to consider. I strongly recommend that you spend some time on this website, and acquire some of the knowledge that you will need to successfully pursue wellness.