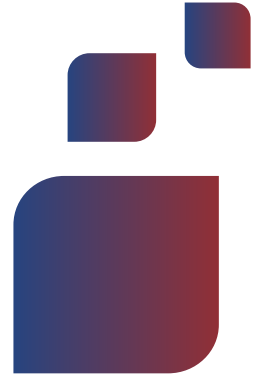


Your Health



Osler Quote of the Month:

“It is astonishing with how little reading a doctor can practice medicine, but it is not astonishing how badly he may do it.”

Your Health

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Health Gem of the Month:

The Peril of our Western Medicine Dogma

In this newsletter and in our website blog we are highlighting alternative health care. The Western model of care posits that the body is numerically defined. With enough testing, we can determine discrete measurable “abnormalities” and repair them. “The human body is as measurable as a bar of steel,” one early Eugenicist and Flexnerian doctor stated, and we have not moved far from that mantra in 2024.

The numerical approach to medical care is flawed on a number of basic levels.

- ✂ There is no accounting for individual nuance and preference and the ways in which individual bodies have their own normal that change with time and circumstance.
- ✂ Because elders are poorly studied and have many abnormal numbers that are appropriate for them, they are subjected to over-testing and over-treatment leading to disability and death.
- ✂ The range of what is construed to be normal continues to be manipulated in a way as to make more people appear sick. This generates polypharmacy, overtreatment, and harm.
- ✂ Some “abnormal” numbers don’t benefit people if they are “fixed,” whether high PSA levels or blocked heart arteries or cholesterol. In fact, treating them may cause more harm, even if the abnormal measurements are improved.

By moving our medical gaze to the patient and away from mere number fixing, we can help people without deceiving them and flooding them with tests and drugs and fear. That is how most of the world does things, including in the Blue Zones where people live the healthiest and longest. Our measure-diagnose-fix mantra may feel right to our cognitive biases, and it certainly fills the pockets of doctors and others in the health care system to the tune of \$4 trillion a year, but it rarely helps people beyond the illusion of numerical cure, for as we tackle numbers our nation’s life expectancy has dropped and the burden of chronic illness and poor health has increased.

What’s new at PPC

Although we have discussed it before, we want to again mention our nutrition program. The path to good health lies in eating well, and often what doctors and others promote as good nutrition (such as low fat and low carb diets) are the very antithesis of how to replenish the body’s energy and reduce bodily inflammation. We have information about nutrition in every newsletter and on the website, including videos and recipes, and we encourage everyone to join our free nutrition program which includes:

- ✂ Monthly interactive zoom meetings to discuss particular nutritional issues with pragmatic advice and sometimes shopping and cooking tips.
- ✂ Free kits to help you become healthier; we last distributed broccoli sprout kits, and we will be doing fermenting, sour dough, and much more.
- ✂ Periodic outings of nutritional importance; we are planning a trip for dinner to MarysLand farm this year, covered by the practice.

Long Term Care Corner

Alternative health care options in Assisted Living

America's long term care landscape is one of the most medicalized in the world, with ambulances, tests, and long medicine lists being the norm. All this measuring and drugging does not help people; copious studies show this (see my book *CuringMedicare*). It's best to focus instead on the whole person rather than solely his/her numbers.

On top of backing away from medicalizing frail elders, options exist for gentler patient-focused care including yoga, meditation, counseling, exercise and balance programs. Some of the instruments of non-western cure discussed in *The Last Word* are often logistically difficult to implement in long term care, but they work as well in elders as they do in the young. In the end, our goal is to help people be healthier and happier without too many medical interventions, and alternative care achieves that even if we can't measure the beneficial results.

Medication Factoids

Deprescribing

Typically in this section we talk about the risks and benefits of certain drugs, but in this issue we will discuss the risks and benefits of stopping drugs. Individual drugs can cause severe harm in elders, even if they fix numbers or have theoretical advantages including statins, blood thinners, and diabetes medicine.

And of course, piling on many drugs in an older body is a recipe for disaster. Polypharmacy is known to increase death and disability in the elders, and many scholars define it as taking more than 5 drugs a day. While some drugs may be necessary, most are far more harmful than helpful, especially when taken together. We don't want to fix numbers in older people, we want to help bodies help themselves, and far too many medicines work against our own health.



Testing Corner

Why testing isn't validated in the elderly and can be dangerous.

What is a normal blood pressure at age 80, a normal sugar, what if we push numbers too low? Is it worth measuring cholesterol, getting stress tests and echocardiograms, urine tests, prostate exams, mammograms? We seem to believe that testing opens a window into disease, but studies and experience show just the opposite. Since we don't know how to define normal in elders, and we don't know what YOUR normal is based on your own body's individual constitution, very often too much testing only leads to over-treatment, polypharmacy, dangerous medicalization of normal conditions, and endless fear.

Most elders have some benign cancers floating around their bodies, they have some blocked arteries, Finding problems in the elderly usually opens the door to what should be left alone as many "abnormalities" are compensatory changes to help preserve function and longevity, or are so benign that it is more dangerous to "fix" them than let them be. Studies show that the best gauge of when to test is based on someone's status and symptoms. Tests not geared to answer a particular question can lead us down bumpy roads leading to decline and death. It's best to test as little as possible, to be less concerned about "abnormal" results, and to base everything we do on how someone is doing, not on what an excess of tests tells us. In the end, a patient's body is always smarter than the trove of numbers derived from a doctor who is digging too deep.

Nutrition Corner

The Non-Western Diet

Alternative health begins in the gut. So much of our body's function is contingent on a robust gut microbiome. Also, many foods provide nutrients that bathe our body and brain from within. In fact, much of the Western diet, including some of the diets pushed by doctors and faddists—low fat and low carb especially—damage our microbiome and don't provide us with the ingredients we need.

We need fat! It is crucial for the brain and many of the body's systems, and eating fat doesn't clog arteries as some doctors fallaciously contend. While many fats help feed the microbiome—especially certain nuts and oils—no fat harms the microbiome. The only dangerous fat is the one humans invented—trans-fat, or margarine—because doctors said it was safer than real fat. Similarly, while simple carbs—sugar and white flour—increase inflammation and harm the microbiome, high-fiber carbs like legumes and fruits and vegetables and grains are the healthiest foods we have.

Non-western diets are all about good carbs and good fats, and all about avoiding simple carbs and trans-fats. And it's all about variety; lots of grains and legumes and fruits/vegetable and fats and fish and meat. Good foods are colorful and filled with many ingredients all working together to feed your body and brain. There is no magic in this diet, it's really all about science and taste!

In the News

- 🔗 We have [discussed how Paxlovid has no evidence of meaningful benefit](#) in two very poor studies, and how dangerous it can be to elders, especially given its prolific drug interactions. Now [a new study](#) shows that it won't help prevent long-COVID, something that should have been clear since it triggers recurrent COVID in many people. In fact, 20/1000 more people had long COVID when they took Paxlovid than when they didn't. When will we stop using this expensive and dangerous drug prescribed to the tune of billions of dollars a year?
- 🔗 We know that exercise is crucial to good health; those who exercise have been shown to reduce their incidence of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, depression, death, and dementia, often by as much as 50%. [A new study](#) even demonstrates that merely standing rather than sitting for part of the day will reduce chronic illness and increase longevity. As the author of Blue Zones notes, those who live longest don't typically go to the gym or run marathons, they just move much of the day. That (along with good diet) is the best path to good health.
- 🔗 As COVID fades into a cold, looking back on the past three years is instructive should another frightening pathogen strike our shores. We already know masks don't work, but are they harmful? [A new study](#) shows that mask wearers have a 40% increase in infections than those of us who don't wear them. They may cause psychological harm, carbon dioxide retention, and fatigue. At least we know next time that masks aren't the answer!
- 🔗 We discussed how taking too many medicines can be dangerous. [A new study](#) punctuates what we already know: too many medicines increase falls in elders. While every medicine has a theoretical benefit, most are feckless in the elderly and in combination cause harm.
- 🔗 We discussed the danger of over-testing. This [wonderful article in New Yorker](#) shows the danger of the total body MRI. Beware of too much testing; it opens doors best left closed.

Recipes of the Month

Today we have two recipes to share. Click the video link and then the pdf of the recipe to learn more.

Brownies



Cookies



Download



Download

All Recipes Will Be On Our Website. Check Out Our Nutrition Videos, Nutrition Information, And Join Our Nutrition Program That Is Filled With Tasty Perks!

The Last Word

Alternative Medical Treatments that are Accessible and Easy

As noted, Western medicine is predicated on measuring and fixing numbers deemed to be aberrant, often without any firm scientific basis and often manipulated by pharmaceutical companies and doctors to make more people appear sick. A mantra of Western medicine is: If it's not measurable, it's not real, and if it is measurable make sure it's what we consider normal by any means possible. Such hubris falls in the face of centuries of non-Western treatments that have no measure as a barometer of success but are used by people who are far healthier than we are and who seem able to avoid medicines and tests and yet live longer and better. Let's talk about a few:

One caveat of alternative treatments is that there are energy flows in our body that must be kept in balance if we are to thrive. They are not measurable, but when disrupted manifest as sickness and fatigue. Grounding is a technique to pull excess and inflammatory static electricity out of our bodies. The simple theory of grounding—used primarily in China and Korea—is that barefoot walking or standing is necessary if we are to pull electrical charge out of our bodies. Because we wear shoes and walk on rugs, we are full of static charge. How to fix it? Walk or stand barefoot on grass, on a floor, on a beach for at least a half hour a day. If you can't do that, purchasing an inexpensive grounding pad and putting your bare feet on it will do the trick. [A patient gave me this information](#), which is helpful to any who seek to try it. And really, what's the harm?

Similarly, magnetic treatments follow the same pattern; to wear a magnet or sleep with a magnetic blanket can help pull out static charge. Some of us have been amazed when after an MRI (a powerful magnet) we have less pain or feel better. Others use magnet earrings or bracelets. Again, there are no studies, and it is possible that such weak magnets have little benefit, but they are also not harmful.

Acupuncture seeks to redirect energy flow to help put it in balance. Many acupuncturists contend that illness derives from disrupted flow, and they are expert at trying to determine the nature of the disruption and—through needles and pressure—redirecting flow in the right direction. While again we can't measure energy flow or know the precise way acupuncturists can find and fix a problem, we do have a few thousand years of experience to show us how well this can work, and many of my own patients have benefited greatly by acupuncture treatments. Sadly, most insurance doesn't cover this treatment, and it can be expensive and logistically challenging, but could also be immensely helpful with no downside.

Chiropractors too redirect energy flow, in this case energy emanating from the spine. We know that the spine is the source of our body's nerve system, and the theory of chiropractic care is that when the energy from these nerve endings goes array much of our body is put out of balance. Manipulation of the spine can help restore balance, and in that sense it helps more than just alleviating back pain. Good holistic chiropractors are trained to do just that, and again, they have a long history of success.

Yoga and meditation are simple at-home inexpensive ways of getting to the same place. Energy build-up leads to inflammation and simultaneously is exacerbated by and exacerbates stress. Through yoga techniques we can reduce that stress, redirect the energy, and help our bodies and minds heal. Meditation can achieve the same result. Many studies suggest that people who engage in yoga and meditation regularly live longer and healthier with less dementia and fewer chronic illnesses.

Eating a varied healthy diet, moving and exercising any way you can, avoiding excessive medicines and tests that make you feel sick, and engaging in some of these simple techniques to improve our energy flow can go a long way to making us healthy outside of the pincers of Western medicine. We have been trained to believe in the myth of a test-diagnose-treat mentality, to think that measurable numbers define us and must all be pushed into an arbitrary and generic range of normal, but history and science tell us just the opposite. It's not the numbers, it's the person, and non-Western health care is people-focused, cheap, easy, absent of side-effects, and ultimately a very graspable path to health and long life.