

First, do no harm..... really ?

On behalf of all complementary medicine practitioners, I feel compelled to respond to the article in the April edition by Dr Mark Wilson entitled 'first do no harm'. It may be a very basic tenet of medicine, but truly does Dr Wilson or any of the public really believe that doctors have a monopoly on this most ancient philosophy. Certainly Hippocrates and the ancients held this belief, but Medicine through the ages has a patchy track record and to criticize complementary medicine and homeopathy ('the vibe of the thing'really..) as potentially harmful beggars belief.. . Complementary medicine providers are trained, skilled and experienced at their modality and should be accepted as partners in the medical system and not insulted by a smug Dr Wilson who apparently believes that Doctors have a monopoly on medical knowledge.

Until about 80 years ago doctors used herbs to heal. Herbs have been used in healing since the beginning of time in all cultures. Primitive people everywhere possessed remarkable knowledge of the medicinal value of certain roots, barks, seeds, flowers and leaves of the plant kingdom and this was passed down from one generation to the next. Today most of the world still uses herbs for healing, it is only the western world that feels smug enough to think they can improve on nature and history. Modern Pharmacology is the science of taking the active substances from plant and animal life and synthesizing a patentable drug that with expensive and very successful marketing convince us we can not live without.

I would agree with Dr Wilson on his point that conventional health care providers need to be much more conscious and inclusive of the role of diet in disease. Hippocrates dictum was 'let thy food be thy medicine ... Good health is not about which drug you take for a particular symptom, illness is not caused by the **absence of a drug** but rather the absence of a particular nutrient or group of nutrients, be they minerals, vitamins, essential fatty acids including the saturated fats with their abundance of vitamins A, D ,E and K, omega 3, 6 and 9 from flax, evening primrose and olive oils; valuable lauric acid in coconut oil ; adequate protein with it's accompanying fat. Of course added to the lack of nutrients is the toxic load from non-organic food and the chemical load our bodies have to cope with today.

Nutrition training is not a feature of medical training and is certainly not a big part of most doctors practice. As a population we are still being told to eat margarine and rancid vegetable oils, despite the research that they are extremely toxic; we are continually being told that butter is dangerous despite it's health giving nutrients A and D ; that saturated fats are bad for our health. Saturated fat is what all mammals produce - it is what our body recognizes, what our bodies can digest and assimilate what our bodies evolved on. We certainly did not evolve for thousands of years on trans fats, hydrogenated vegetable oils and fake butter. Apparently the legendary Anzac Corps soldiers did quite well on their traditional diet of meat, fats and unpasturised dairy products.!

We have lived the last 30 -50 yrs on a low fat, high carb recommendation and I am sure that as a population we are sicker than previous generations. Hasn't it been said that this generation coming through are going to be the first that will not out live their children - this is not a statistic I would be proud of being a part. I think it is time we changed the record. If doctors truly want to help their patients and 'do no harm' then finding 'alternatives' to the shopping list of medications (and tests) would be a great place to start.