

Is Natural Medicine Unscientific?

by Iva Keene MRMed. ND. - Thursday, December 17, 2009

<https://natural-fertility-prescription.com/natural-medicine-unscientific/>

Recently I contacted the owner of an infertility blog. The owner turned out to be a doctor who in a polite way told me she doesn't feel comfortable recommending natural fertility treatments and naturopathy to her patients. I was surprised by this as I work closely with several western medical doctors and have observed more and more doctors now looking to integrate natural treatments into their health giving portfolio's to offer their patients 'the best of both worlds'. More and more progressive doctors are embracing natural medicine for its many benefits but sadly there are many still stuck in the old paradigm of flatly dismissing approaches not taught in medical school or published in medical journals without further examination.

This doctor seemed to pride herself on being scientifically trained, and seemed to be suggesting that natural health practitioners are somehow un-scientific. So this sparked the idea for this post.

I politely pointed out a few facts to this doctor:

Firstly, depending on the country for roughly the last ten years most graduates of naturopathy, herbal medicine, homeopathy, osteopathy and most other branches of natural medicine are trained at reputable colleges and universities where they are awarded a degree in health sciences. In addition to being taught western medical subjects such as anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology, biochemistry, nutritional biochemistry, clinical research, clinical examination and more, they are also taught nutritional and herbal medicine, integrative pharmacology (examines drug-herb-supplement interactions) homeopathy, aromatherapy, iridology, various hands on therapies such as massage, psychology and patient practitioner relationship.

Put simply, the modern natural therapist trained at reputable institutions are equally trained in the underlying medical science as are orthodox doctors, however where they differ is the extensive training in the application of food, nutrients and herbs for assisting and promoting natural healing processes.

In most medical schools to this day students are given minimal education in nutrition (some sources quoting only 4 hours in the US), whereas naturopaths get 4 years of education in nutrition, dietetics, food as medicine, nutritional biochemistry etc...And that's fine, because doctors also know how to save your life when it's a matter of life and death and address severe symptoms quickly. Doctors and modern medicine are fantastic for acute conditions and accidents. If you get hit by a tram (God forbid) run to your doctor and not your naturopath!

However if you are plagued by a chronic condition such as infertility look to natural therapies as a first line of treatment which is precisely why I am so passionate about natural fertility and why I would like to see preconception care become the standard first line of treatment for infertility because infertility is, in most cases a chronic condition which responds exceptionally well to natural therapies.

I come from a family of orthodox doctors; one radiologist, one general practitioner, one doctor of pharmacy, two dentists and a knee surgeon. Yet no one in my family suggested that Hippocrates was 'unscientific' when he said 'Let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food' nor do they ignore the fact that 99% of patented pharmaceutical drugs are derived from medicinal herbs. Doctors have to swear the Hippocratic Oath as they are born into the world of Medicine. Naturopaths have to obey a set of Naturopathic Principles which also stem from Hippocrates, and are part of what was expected of doctors going back thousands of years.

These first principles are:

- **Primum non nocere** - First, do no harm; provide the most effective health care available with the least risk to patients at all time.
- **Vis medicatrix naturae** - Recognize, respect and promote the self-healing power of nature inherent in each individual human being.
- **Tolle Causum** - Identify and remove the causes of illness, rather than eliminate or suppress symptoms.
- **Docere** – ‘Doctor as Teacher’ – Educate, empower, inspire and encourage self-responsibility for health.
- **Treat the whole person** – Treat each person individually taking all individual health factors and emotional and social influences into account.
- **Health Promotion is the best prevention** - Promote well-being and disease prevention for the individual, the community and the world.

My dear father, who is a radiologist, always said to me that there is only one medicine, with many different complementary approaches. He also always taught me that one can not separate one part of the body from the rest, as the same food, blood and nervous system permeate each and every tissue in the body. My love of food as medicine comes from him. As a child I was a bit anemic, did my dad go for drugs to treat it? No, he bought me punnets of wild blueberries (which are so delicious) and my blood results went back to normal. Maybe back in the sixties, when the scientific community and majority of doctors thought that food had little or no connection to health, using food as medicine would have been ridiculed. These days doctors who ignore the connection between food and health not only show their ignorance but I believe are being negligent to their patient's health.

I work with a group of reputable doctors who practice integrative medicine where the best of the orthodox world and natural world meets to give you the best treatment possible. I urge you to choose your primary health care provider carefully, and ask them what they think of natural treatments to see how much they know. If they dismiss it with little explanation it should give you considerable pause. Work only with progressive and forward thinking physicians who keep their finger on the pulse of the latest scientific findings combined with evidence based natural complementary treatments.

After I pointed out to the doctor I mentioned, studies such as from Harvard and Foresight in the UK

showing 81% of conceptions among couples previously diagnosed as infertile after following a 'naturopathic' treatment of dietary and lifestyle modifications combined with adequate supplementation and herbs and that the same treatment increased the IVF success rate by nearly a half (from 25% to 47.1%) – I never heard back from her again.

What are your thoughts? Do you see a natural therapist regularly? Are you an orthodox medicine only advocate? I'd love to hear your thoughts on the subject!