

Editorial

Prematurity, the Greatest Threat

I think it was Humphry Osmond who remarked many years ago that a sheep too far ahead of the flock is a wolf in sheep's clothing. I have been thinking about this again since I read the chapter by Albert V. Szent-Györgyi, rediscovered by Jack Challem and published in the previous issue this journal.¹ What an amazing document! In this single lecture Szent-Györgyi envisioned the pattern of hypothesis and practice which is called orthomolecular medicine. Here are two of his recommendations: (1) we must distinguish between the minimum dose required to prevent a deficiency disease (the basis for the RDAs) and look for the optimum dose, that dose necessary to maintain optimum health. This dose must be determined by dealing with humans under the ordinary conditions of human stress, not on the basis of a few studies on animals on otherwise perfect diets, free from their usual stresses and free from the chemical pollutants we humans have to endure; (2) We must provide the nutritional, chemical, physical and social environment to which we have been adapted over millions of years of evolution. This is the most important working rule for all of our best zoos but is ignored for almost all of our human populations.

Orthomolecular medicine is based upon two main rules: (1) the use of optimum amounts of the nutrients to which we have been adapted; (2) the use of larger doses of nutrients for people whose requirement for many reasons cannot be met by even the most perfect of diets. Optimum health calls for the use of vitamins in optimum doses irrespective of the disease from which they may be suffering at the time. The one disease one vitamin concept is as archaic as the one disease-one drug con-

cept. The familiar rules of pharmacology were developed to deal with toxic drugs. They have little value in guiding us to the proper use of the non toxic nutrients.

Why did Szent-Györgyi's lecture and chapter have so little impact? Why were the classic clinical findings of Wilfrid and Evan Shute of the value of vitamin E vilified and ignored so long? Why were the findings of William Kaufmann that vitamin B₃ was very effective in preventing and reversing the ravages of age, especially the arthritides, ignored and forgotten, Why were Fred Klenner's remarkable findings that vitamin C could protect children against the ravages of poliomyelitis and could treat so many toxic conditions ignored and forgotten? Why was Irwin Stone's book on vitamin C ignored until Linus Pauling forced it into public consciousness? Why was Linus so vilified and attacked because he, a mere PhD and DSC at least 40 times, dared suggest that vitamin C would decrease the ravages from the common cold and even more when he found with Ewan Cameron that it was also very valuable in dealing with the cancers?

The answer is pretty clear. To the medical profession these ideas, like the sheep too far ahead of the flock, were too dangerous. They represented a tremendous need to readjust the old paradigms they had been taught and had been following with enthusiasm, they represented a need to change one's ideas and there is nothing more fearful than that. Men and women have been martyred for their ideas, not for their possessions. Pioneers like Szent-Györgyi, The Shutes, Kaufmann, Klenner, Stone and Pauling were really not sheep trying to lead the flock to greener pastures, they were wolves luring them on to their destruction.

But the situation is changing. The modern orthomolecular paradigm is gaining widespread acceptance. For many years

I was one of the wolves in sheep's clothing. But recently my medical colleagues have smelled my sheep's smell in spite of my wolves clothing. Recently a new cancer patient told me that he had advised his surgeon that he would consult a nutritionally oriented physician. When the surgeon asked him to whom he would go, the patient replied that he would consult me. The surgeon said, "Oh good, he is the only one we trust." He meant that he could trust orthomolecular medicine.

We must develop a philosophy and technique for examining new ideas objectively whether they are new or old. We can no longer look upon our colleagues who develop new ideas as enemies simply because these ideas are new and strange. Our colleagues who think of new ideas and who have worked hard to establish them on the basis of facts should be given careful attention, their views examined seriously and their studies repeated honestly and care-

fully. When we have achieved this goal we will find that new discoveries will not have to lie around for 40 to 50 years before they are resurrected and rediscovered. The cost of this long delay is too great and we can no longer afford the luxury of waiting while a few leaders of the field decide carefully and leisurely whether the ideas are worth reporting, worth publishing and worth trying out. If I and my colleagues had known about Szent-Györgyi's work when we began our studies it is likely the whole field would have exploded many years ago. It is not too late but I am sorry for the millions of patients who were denied their health because of the slothfulness of the healing professions, including my own.

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References

1. Challem JJ: The roots of optimal nutrition. *J Orthomol Med*, 1997; 12: 77-86.