The Use of Drugs

A Statement Prepared Under the Direction of the General Conference Committee
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Definition of Our Terms

Rapid advances in the field of medicine, involving the use of substances generally classified as drugs, have led to a careful restudy of certain statements that have come to us through the Spirit of prophecy.

In the very first counsels that came to us on health matters the question of drugs was brought to our attention. Clear warnings were given as to the harmful effects of poisonous drugs. Attitudes toward this counsel have varied from complete disregard, on the one hand, to extreme views that would condemn as harmful any and all medications, whatever their virtues. Obviously neither of these positions is tenable. If, however, we are to relate ourselves intelligently to this question, we must examine the matter with an open mind to discover how this counsel bears upon today's rapidly unfolding medical advances.

Any intelligent discussion of so specific a subject requires proper definition of the terms employed. While we might individually adhere to our own interpretation of words, so long as these terms must be the avenues through which we convey thought one to another, there must be an accepted definition of the terms we employ. From Webster's Unabridged Dictionary we read that drugs are "any substance used as a medicine,
or in making medicines, for internal or external use. . . Any substance or mixture of substances intended to be used for the cure, mitigation, or prevention of disease of either man or other animals." To further clarify the expression "any substance used as a medicine," let us note the definition of "medicine." Again from Webster, medicine is "any substance or preparation used in treating disease." Many of the most useful drugs employed today are extracted from the leaves, roots, bark, or fruit of certain plants. Let us not fail to catch the broad implication of these definitions, "any substance . . . used for the cure, mitigation, or prevention of disease," "any substance . . . used in treating disease." Obviously, with this broad concept of the term "drug" we are going to be slow in applying any blanket condemnation to all substances of this general classification.

Moreover, with our full confidence in the counsel of the Spirit of prophecy, we recognize that there were good reasons for the precise statements relative to the undesirable nature of poisonous drugs referred to in these counsels. For a clearer perspective of our subject let us review certain significant facts in the medical history of the past century in the light of the counsel from the Spirit of prophecy.

Health and Medicine a Century Ago

Life expectancy one hundred years ago in America was little more than thirty years as compared with today's sixty-seven years. Death-deal-
ing infectious diseases prevailed often in epidemic proportions. Typhoid and other enteric diseases swept away thousands; tuberculosis often wiped out whole families; diphtheria took large numbers. Smallpox was still taking a heavy toll; pneumonia took many lives. Scarlet fever was rightly feared. Vaccination against smallpox was not widely practiced, and protective inoculation against other diseases was not known. Physicians were practically helpless in the face of the dangerous epidemic diseases. There was but little knowledge of the causes of disease.

There was little understanding of even the simpler principles of healthful living. This resulted in much illness not only in the country at large but also among Adventist believers and workers. On a number of occasions Mrs. White made reference to the unfortunate loss of time through illness, not to mention the great amount of suffering and the tragic early deaths among our workers. (References: 4T 264, 265; GW 243-248; CH 564.)

The Medical Approach

Physicians of this early day had few really effective weapons in their armamentarium. How could they effectively design a defense against diseases, the causes of which were unknown? They experimented with one substance and then another. Every compound known to the chemistry laboratory was tried for its possible effectiveness against disease. Among these there emerged certain poisonous drugs that, for reasons not now
apparent, were at one time rather generally employed in the treatment of a wide variety of diseases. There was no rational relationship between the drug employed and the cause of the disease, but it was the custom of the time to prescribe these drugs more or less indiscriminately. Writing of this in 1864, Ellen White states:

Multitudes of drugs have cursed the inhabitants of the earth, and have carried thousands and tens of thousands to untimely graves.—4 SG 133.

Nor was Ellen White alone in a recognition of the tragedy of the copious use of poisonous drugs at that time. Men of high circles spoke freely. Said Sir John Forbes, physician to Queen Victoria:

Some patients get well with the aid of medicine; more without it; and still more in spite of it.—Quoted in James White, Health: or How to Live, no. 3, p. 37 (1865).

And Alonzo Clark, M.D., of the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons, said:

All of our curative agents are poisons; and, as a consequence, every dose diminishes the patient's vitality.—Ibid., p. 31.

Medical literature of the time reveals that before the newborn babe could receive sustenance from its mother, "catnip tea, peppermint, or gin" might be administered, and if the child could not sleep, this was followed by "Godfrey's cordial, paregoric, or laudanum." (See Health: or How to Live, no. 3, pp. 45, 46.)

Bloodletting was common, and "for fevers mercury was the 'sheetanchor.'"
Little wonder that Professor Evans, Fellow of the Royal College of London, wrote:

The medical practice of our day is, at the best, a most uncertain and unsatisfactory system; it has neither philosophy nor common sense to command it to confidence.—Ibid., p. 36.

Commenting on the achievement of the National Food and Drug Administration in suppression of the patent medicine racket over the past fifty years, Newsweek magazine, May 28, 1956, quotes one historian as saying, "'It is a tribute to the robustness of Americans that they were not exterminated by the medicines they drank.'" It is obvious that we are not alone in condemning the practice of uncontrolled drugging. A number of these drugs, which were commonly prescribed, are described and named in the Spirit of prophecy and in contemporary medical literature.

During the years following the first writing of Ellen White concerning the free use of poisonous drugs, vast improvement has been made in the health of enlightened people everywhere. What else can we conclude from the very fact that they live on the average to nearly twice the age they did fifty or seventy-five years ago? We are all aware that during these years there has been great improvement in sanitation, in housing, in food supply, and in general living conditions. It would be impossible to estimate the very significant role of these improved conditions in this higher standard of health and longer life.

However, a very large factor in this lower incidence of disease and longer life is the discovery
of the causes of many diseases and of many rational medications specifically effective in the control or elimination of them. These medications, which in many cases are the only agency standing between us and a possibly fatal disease, are usually referred to as drugs. Whether we speak of antibiotics, vitamins, sedatives, sulfas, the antimalarials, the medications used against intestinal parasites, the antileprosy medications, or the materials used to inoculate against the deadly epidemic diseases, by our definition they are all "drugs."

Were these all included in the condemnation of drugs in the Spirit of prophecy writings? It is very clear that the author was speaking of drugs as then known, and she often uses the term "poisonous drugs" and speaks of their "free use." Was she also speaking of the lifesaving medications known today and mentioned above? It is at least significant that most of these medications were not known then, and among the very few which were known it is important to note that the White family regarded vaccination, among other treatments, as a rational lifesaving measure and accepted the protection of this medical procedure. For a clear understanding of just what was included in the condemnation of "drugs," let us examine the following references.

Characteristics of Then-Known Drugs

It is well that we tabulate some of the characteristics of the drugs to which we here have reference. From the Spirit of prophecy writings we read:
1. Drugs always have a tendency to break down and destroy vital forces (MM 223).

2. Drugs, in the place of helping nature, are constantly paralyzing her efforts (MM 224).

3. Many have been treated with drugs and the result has been death (MM 227, 228).

4. These drugs are referred to as "poisonous drugs" as opposed to "simple remedies." Thousands have gone down to the grave because of the use of poisonous drugs (MM 85, 227). By the use of poisonous drugs, many bring upon themselves lifelong illness (MH 126).

5. [Poisonous drugs] do not cure disease (MH 126). People need to be taught that drugs do not cure disease (CH 89).

6. Drug medication, as it is generally practiced, is a curse (CH 261). (Italics supplied.)

7. Nothing should be put into the human system that will leave a baleful influence behind (MM 228).

8. In the treatment of the sick, poisonous drugs need not be used (9T 175).

9. Many of the popular nostrums [drugs] called patent medicines, and even some of the drugs dispensed by physicians, act a part in laying the foundation of the liquor habit, the opium habit, the morphine habit (Te 83).

10. Drugs given to stupefy, whatever they may be, derange the nervous system (Te 83).

Drugging One Hundred Years Ago

A contemporary statement of what drugging was a hundred years ago—the time when Ellen
White first received light in vision concerning the perils of drugging (1858)—comes to us from Dr. Worthington Hooker, who claimed to be one of the more conservative users of drugs. In his book *Rational Therapeutics* he states: "The combination of calomel, antimony, and opium, which in various preparations is now so much used, is a remedy of very great value in the treatment of inflammatory diseases. . . . Mercury is a remedy of great value in the treatment of many chronic diseases. . . . [Bleeding] has been in some quarters too much given up. . . . [For colic and intermittent fever] quinine is often given much more freely than it formerly was."—Quoted in D. E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, p. 17.

From another contemporary writer in the *Family Medicine Chest Dispensatory* (1835), we have this further picture of these drugs, and the conditions for which they were prescribed. "Prussic acid, 'administered with advantage in consumption for allaying the cough'; asafetida, 'a medicine very serviceable in those hysterical affections to which delicate females are liable'; calomel, which is recommended as a cathartic, 'children requiring larger doses in proportion than adults'; lunar caustic, 'employed internally in epilepsy and externally for lotions'; ipecacuanha, to produce perspiration in colds . . . ; laudanum, 'for procuring sleep'; and nux vomica, 'administered to excite the nervous system, especially in palsy.'" Another writer in the same volume recommends cigar smoking for all lung and bronchial affections.—*Ibid.*, p. 22.
Identifying Poisonous Drugs

Here we summarize briefly the qualities of drugs referred to in the Spirit of prophecy writings. Also, we have both from this same source and from contemporary medical writers the names of drugs in common use at the time. These drugs—

1. destroy and break down vital force.
2. paralyze nature’s effort to recovery.
3. result in death.
4. are poisonous.
5. do not cure disease.
6. are a curse.
7. not necessary to cure of disease.
8. lay basis of liquor and morphine habit.
9. have among them some that are stupefying and that destroy the nervous system.
10. leave lasting baleful effect on the body.
11. are identified by name both by the Spirit of prophecy and by contemporaneous medical writers as follows:

a. opium
b. arsenic
c. calomel
d. strychnine
e. mercury
f. quinine (for digestive ailments)
g. morphine
h. liquor
i. antimony
j. asafetida
k. prussic acid
l. lunar caustic
m. ipecacuanha
n. laudanum and countless other chemical compounds as listed in the pharmacopoeia of that time.

We observe that most of these drugs have been eliminated from the practice of good medicine.
The few still employed are no longer used pro-
miscuously. Morphine, in appropriate amounts and
without appreciable harm, relieves the postopera-
tive patient, or the victim of serious accident of
the extreme suffering otherwise inevitable. It
affords relief to the terminal cancer victim.
Antimony is a specific treatment for certain tropi-
cal diseases. Quinine, formerly used very freely as
a digestive bitter, is effective in moderate amounts
in the treatment of malaria.

The Spirit of prophecy appropriately refers to
the foregoing list of substances, as then used, as
"poisonous drugs," and condemns them as con-
tributing to the aggravation of the disease. We
have the drugs referred to definitely identified.
Several incriminating qualities are specifically
mentioned. As we study a listing of the more
common drugs of that day, we recognize that
most of them are thoroughly discredited by the
medical profession of today. In place of these
poisonous drugs, which leave behind injurious
effects upon the system, we are introduced to
some excellent rational therapy in the practice of
medicine today.

Rational Therapy

The relationship between the counsel given
through the Spirit of prophecy on drugs and the
rational therapeutics current at that time should
be borne in mind. During the period in which
Mrs. White wrote, and with increased momentum
in her later years, the scientific world was quietly
developing new concepts of therapy based on the
idea of removing the cause of disease and assisting nature in the process of healing.

When the firm counsel on diet and therapy came to our early Adventists, there were in a few places health institutes, where scientific and rational procedures had been introduced and were employed in the treatment of a wide variety of diseases. Among the best recognized of these was the one “Our Home on the Hillside,” at Dansville, New York. It was to this health center that the White family resorted with serious illness in the year 1865. Here, under the treatment of Dr. Jackson, the director of the institute, improvement was evident. It was in such health institutes that our early believers received their first technical understanding of rational scientific therapy.

It is to be noted, however, that in June, 1863, before Sister White ever visited Dansville, or read about the “water cure” and other rational remedies used, she had received light in vision on this subject. When asked if she had not read the papers and works published by others she stated:

My reply was that I had not, neither should I read them till I had fully written out my views, lest it should be said that I had received my light upon the subject of health from physicians and not from the Lord.

And after I had written my six articles for ‘How to Live,’ I then searched the various works on hygiene, and was surprised to find them so nearly in harmony with what the Lord had revealed to me.—R. H., Oct. 8, 1867 (quoted in Story of Our Health Message, p. 71).

Observations by contemporary physicians of
repute bear witness to the independent origin of the information that came to Mrs. White on health matters. From Dr. Kellogg, writing in 1897, we quote, "It is impossible for any man who has not made a special study of medicine to appreciate the wonderful character of the instruction that has been received in these writings. It is wonderful, brethren, when you look back over the writings that were given us thirty years ago, and then perhaps the next day pick up a scientific journal and find some new discovery that the microscope has made, or that has been brought to light in the chemical laboratory,—I say, it is perfectly wonderful how correctly they agree in fact."—GCB, March 8, 1897, p. 309. Here, again, contemporary physicians point out that the counsel in the Spirit of prophecy writings supported the current research and therapeutics if it was rational and scientific. Thus it becomes abundantly clear that rather than there being conflict between the Spirit of prophecy counsel on health and the newly developing scientific knowledge of health matters, the latter was in full conformity with, and in support of, the light that came in these writings.

The Physician and His Medicine May Assist Nature

In her counsel regarding care of the sick, Mrs. White lays great emphasis on helping nature accomplish her work of restoration. See CH 168, 169. She points out the need to seek out the cause of the disease (CH 89), then, knowing the
cause, to treat it in such a way as to help nature in her effort to recover. Such is the very essence of good modern medical practice. Is this not in fact the use of natural remedies, those remedies that, in an effective and natural way, aid nature in its work of restoration?

Through the years the Spirit of prophecy counsels have given safe guidance, and as we have shown, have been sustained by true advance in medical science.

They have warned against "the free use of poisonous drugs" (MH 126).

They have pointed out that—

restorative power is not in drugs, but in nature. Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health. In case of sickness, the cause should be ascertained. Unhealthful conditions should be changed, wrong habits corrected. Then nature is to be assisted in her effort to expel impurities and to re-establish right conditions in the system (MH 127). (Italics supplied.)

Of our sanitariums, she wrote:

We advocate the use of simple remedies. We discourage the use of drugs, for they poison the current of the blood (CDF 303, 1908). (Italics supplied.)

In 1887 she asserted that—

right and correct habits, intelligently and perseveringly practiced, will be removing the cause for disease, and the strong drugs need not be resorted to (MM 222). (Italics supplied.)

Drug medication as it is generally practiced is a curse. Educate away from drugs. Use them less and less (CH 261).
"Do not administer drugs," she wrote to the leaders of a large medical institution in 1884, and then observed, "True, drugs may not be as dangerous wisely administered as they usually are, but in the hands of many they will be hurtful to the Lord's property" (Letter 3, 1884). (Italics supplied.)

"Work away from drugs," she urged Dr. Kellogg in 1899 (Letter 40, 1899).

Herein is set forth the goal toward which Seventh-day Adventist medical practitioners have strived and are striving—preventive medicine; the employment of remedies simple and harmless in their nature, specifically employed, which will aid the natural processes of the body in resistance to disease and recovery from disease in such a way as will "leave no baleful effects after their use" (Letter 82, 1897), and in emergencies—for the lack of something better of known qualities and certain results—the limited use of even poisonous substances "wisely administered" to achieve a given objective.

Here too was the practice of the White family, a practice that recognized the value of vaccination. This measure was substantiated by one of Mrs. White's secretaries, D. E. Robinson, in a letter written June 12, 1931, from which we quote:

You ask for definite and concise information regarding what Sister White wrote about vaccination and serum.

This question can be answered very briefly, for so far as we have any record, she did not refer to them in any of her writings.
You will be interested to know, however, that at a time when there was an epidemic of smallpox in the vicinity, she herself was vaccinated and urged her helpers, those connected with her, to be vaccinated. In taking this step Sister White recognized the fact that it has been proven that vaccination either renders one immune from smallpox or greatly lightens its effects if one does come down with it.

She also recognized the danger of their exposing others if they failed to take this precaution....

An uncle of mine, Elder D. A. Robinson, who labored as a missionary in India, was conscientiously opposed to vaccination and refused to take it. He died an awful death with smallpox, and before he died he stated that he had made a mistake which was costing him his life. The rest of the family were vaccinated, and suffered no ill effects from smallpox.

(Signed) D. E. ROBINSON

Elmshaven
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According to the report in *The Review and Herald* of August 9, 1881, Mrs. White admitted the use of "powerful stimulants" at the hands of the medical superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium in the case of James White in an effort to carry him through a crisis that it seemed most certainly would, and did, take his life. It also allowed Ellen White on certain rare occasions in an emergency, and for the lack of the availability of anything better, to use a little tea "in cases of severe vomiting when," as she wrote, "I take it as a medicine, but not as a beverage" (CDF 490). At the same time she noted that "as a beverage," "knowing its influence, I would not dare to use it."

A careful study of the full body of the Spirit
of prophecy counsels given through the years relating to medical practice and the use of medications, reveals certain outstanding principles and common-sense attitudes that have served to inspire, guide, and guard our medical practitioners in their work. And these counsels today continue to exert their molding influence as we seek out and apply the basic principles enunciated, in the approach to the rapid and commendable advance that has been made in medical science since the messenger of the Lord laid down her pen in 1915. We should move forward, and we have moved forward safely in an application of appropriate procedures in our medical ministry, ever mindful of the inestimable value of these guiding principles as noted briefly above, and presented abundantly and clearly in the E. G. White writings as a whole. In so doing we find many diseases that fifty years ago, or even twenty years ago, were snuffing out thousands of lives but that have now been stripped of their terror. In countries of temperate or cold climate we can think of pneumonia as a revealing illustration. Twenty years ago pneumonia was still a dread cause of death. With the use of hydrotherapy, skillfully administered, the generally much higher death rate could be brought down to less than 10 per cent. Hydrotherapy is one of nature’s remedial agencies. It operates by increasing the circulation of blood in the involved part, thus increasing the number of phagocytes (white blood cells, which eat up the germs) engaged in battle against the pneumococcus germs.

Even with the best hydrotherapy the period of
illness was long; many still died; some developed empyema (pus in the chest cavity), making necessary rib resection and chest drainage.

We now bring into the picture another remedy, a remedy which "wisely administered" assists nature "in her effort to expel impurities" by destroying or weakening the pneumococcus organisms sufficiently to permit the phagocytes (white blood cells) to carry away the wounded or dead germs with much less effort, and the mortality from pneumonia drops to less than 4 per cent. This remedy, which has saved many lives from pneumonia and other diseases, is the group referred to as the sulfonamides. There are some dangers in the use of sulfa, but in the hands of a skilled physician, "wisely administered," it is a useful weapon against certain diseases.

In certain countries there has been the dread bubonic plague, the Black Death, which from time to time through history has swept across Europe, claiming at one time more than a third of the population in its tragic harvest. Twenty years ago such plagues were still causing great havoc in India, China, and Southeast Asia, and occasionally in the Middle East. One who has seen a large city in the grip of a plague epidemic is not likely soon to forget the experience. Whole sections of the city are silent and without inhabitant. For miles around the city, people are living in flimsy shelters in the open fields. They know from experience that in this way there is a lessened danger of death.

It has now been several years since the newspapers have made mention of plague epidemics.
A rational remedy that assists nature—one that destroys most of the plague germs, allowing the white blood corpuscles to carry away the dead and few surviving plague germs, thus removing the deadly infection—has been thus effectively employed. This again is the work of a sulfonamide that, along with a very effective inoculation against the plague germ, has nearly eliminated this once-dreaded disease.

More recently there has been developed another rational remedy, this time a material of simple natural origin that, in the case of pneumonia, stops the growth of the pneumonia germs. In this instance the increased numbers of white blood cells carry off the few surviving pneumonia germs, and in a matter of hours all there is left for the body to do is to clean up the debris left by the attack of the pneumonia germs; and the patient, quite out of danger and feeling fit for work again, is scarcely aware of the danger that had threatened his life. This rational remedy, which has "assisted" nature "in her effort to expel impurities," and much more quickly than if the body had to first build up its own defenses aided by hydrotherapy, is referred to as an antibiotic, a substance extracted from certain plants. Through this rational remedy, death from pneumonia is reduced to less than one per cent. Mortality is thus again reduced by a new and effective weapon.

Rational Remedy for Malaria

Fifty and more years ago one of the world's worst killers, malaria, was claiming some mil-
lions of lives each year. Governments of the world set about cooperatively to reduce this terrible death toll. An excellent rational remedy, taken from the bark of a South American tree, was known to control and to cure this disease. Those who availed themselves of this remedy survived to live a normal life span. Of those who—either from choice or for lack of availability—did not, many died. This remedy we call quinine.

Because the Spirit of prophecy had spoken against quinine as a drug prescribed freely by physicians of earlier years, some of our conscientious missionaries in Africa refused to take the quinine available to them, which might have saved their lives. At the time these young missionaries laid down their lives in adherence to a misguided understanding and application of our Spirit of prophecy counsel, one of their number—W. H. Anderson—took the quinine and saved his life to become for fifty years one of the great witnesses to the Advent message in Africa.

When the counsel against quinine was written, this material was an important ingredient of every popular nostrum given to stimulate appetite and better digestion. It was supposed that when used as a "bitter" it stimulated the digestive processes to greater activity. In fact, the effect was one of irritation, thus only adding to the problem rather than serving as a tonic as popularly supposed. Such use of quinine was quite different from its specific rational use, "wisely administered," as an antimalarial.

Because of public health measures and the improvement of the antimalarial remedies (some
chemically related to quinine), malaria is another enemy of mankind well on its way, in many parts of the world, to joining other disease entities no longer a terror to man.

Winning Fight Against Leprosy and Tuberculosis

We might mention leprosy, the disease dreaded throughout history, and a close relative of tuberculosis. Leprosy, under the impact of a rational remedy, is well on its way to being controlled. Through thousands of years man has sought relief from the loathsome disease. In modern times scientists have learned that this disease is caused by a germ almost indistinguishable from the germ of tuberculosis. The germs of leprosy and tuberculosis are covered by a waxlike covering that protects the organism from the defense forces of the body, making the destruction of the germ exceedingly difficult. Medical research has developed materials that are increasingly more effective in combating the leprosy germs.

For seventy-five years thousands of lepers had been brought into hospitals and given excellent care and treatment with the best methods known, but with little evidence of improvement. The disease continued to disfigure, to cripple, and to destroy fingers, hands, feet, and of course life itself. Now, with the new remedies of the sulfa family (the sulfones), which when wisely administered attack the germs without harming the patient, these lepers are being restored to their families as useful citizens. In the operation of
these medications nature is "assisted in her effort to expel impurities and to re-establish right conditions in the system," as we have been counseled in the Spirit of prophecy writings. They first strip from the germ its protective waxy armor, and then with the help of the body's natural defenses, destroy the germ itself. The body is then free to proceed with the repair of damaged tissue and the restoration of normal health. This process still requires from one to three years. With the improvement of these remedies it is confidently expected that an effectiveness of treatment may be developed that will make possible the release of many thousands of pathetic sufferers from the bondage of this dread disease.

Likewise the treatment of tuberculosis patients with isoniazid (isonicotinic acid hydrazide) and the appropriate antibiotics, coupled with skillful surgery, has resulted in great strides in the control of this disease once known as the white plague. Under the old plan of treatment, tuberculous patients, if taken in time when the disease was not too far advanced, might hope to be permitted to return to their homes after a year or two of treatment. It then might be necessary to convalesce under most favorable conditions for another year or more before being permitted to return to work. Today, with the use of the appropriate medication and surgery, restoration is accomplished in a fraction of the time formerly required, and many of the advanced cases, which a few years ago would have been hopeless, are now materially improved in health in a matter of months. Hospitals built for the care of tuber-
culus patients are closing because the shorter period of treatment with modern techniques has substantially reduced the average period of hospitalization.

Control of Epidemic Diseases

Space permits us to review but a fraction of the many marvelous advances made in the control of disease. Because of the development of another form of rational remedy by which protective forces in the body are built up (inoculation and vaccination), scurges that took thousands a few years ago are now almost unknown. In Western lands typhoid fever, smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, tetanus, anthrax, and cholera are now interesting largely as medical history.

The process by which inoculation protects is as natural as nature herself. When, for example, smallpox organisms invade the body and the victim undergoes a siege of the disease, a remarkable process is initiated within the body. Certain cells of the body begin to produce a defensive substance that fights against the smallpox. If this substance is produced fast enough, or if the body produces sufficient of the material to inactivate the smallpox before the smallpox kills its victim, the person lives. If, however, this defensive material does not come to the rescue in time, and the smallpox organisms produce more of their killing toxins than the body can tolerate, the person dies. (Of unprotected and untreated patients about 40 per cent die.) These patients who recover from the disease thereafter carry in their
bodies this defensive material, thus protecting them from further attacks by this same disease.

Artificial Development of These Natural Defenses

If, now, it is possible to induce in the body the production of this defensive material by some means much less dangerous than having the disease, we would have indeed achieved much in our search for natural prevention of disease. Thanks to men such as Jenner in England and Pasteur in France, techniques were developed by which a weaker or attenuated form of the disease—but yet using live germs—could produce the real disease in miniature, and thus cause the body to develop the defenses against the disease itself. Or in another process cultures of the germs are grown and killed by heat or chemical action; and these dead germs in appropriate form and under carefully controlled conditions are injected into the body, causing the development of this defensive material.

By this means—a simple, successfully demonstrated process—millions of people have been given a natural defense against smallpox, rabies, cholera, typhoid, anthrax, tetanus, typhus, diphtheria, and the dreaded bubonic plague. The success of present widespread inoculation programs indicates that polio may soon join these now well-controlled diseases.
Adventist Health Principles Scientifically Sound

Ninety years ago we, as Adventists, under the counsel of the Spirit of prophecy, accepted the most advanced and most effective therapeutics known for the saving of life at that time and moved forward progressively in utilizing such therapeutic agencies. The physical therapy, hydrotherapy, massage, and electrotherapy, of which we had become the chief exponents throughout our history, are no less effective today. In some disease conditions, however, other techniques accomplishing the same objectives more quickly or efficiently have improved or superseded these procedures. The virtue of any particular method lies in its rational or effectiveness, not in its traditions. As scientific progress through research made hydrotherapy available to the world three quarters of a century and more ago, so research continues to expand the frontiers of knowledge of human illness and is providing man with increasingly effective weapons against disease. Seventh-day Adventists, encouraged and guided by the basic principles found in the counsels of earlier years and guarded by Spirit of prophecy cautions, wisely keep abreast of well-accepted procedures in the healing arts.

While noting the harmony between the Spirit of prophecy counsel and good therapeutics, it is pertinent to note in these writings the emphasis on preventive medicine, proper habits of living, diet in its many phases, and what is loosely referred to as psychosomatic medicine.
In all of these areas the Spirit of prophecy writings anticipated by many decades the excellent modern outlook on these phases of health. The "bran eaters" and "grass eaters" of yesterday are the smart diet-conscious moderns of today. The ultramodern concept of medicine that recognizes that man is not only a physical but also an intellectual and spiritual entity, and that all three natures must be healthy and in balance, was anticipated in our literature in the past century and found its finest expression in the volume, *The Ministry of Healing*, fifty years ago. There appears to be no conflict between the careful practice of scientific medicine and the counsel given to us through the Spirit of prophecy.

Since medicine, like every other science, has made remarkable progress in the past half century, would we not reasonably expect that there would be brought forward many worth-while practices and procedures for better health and better therapy? Let us note some of them.

**New Weapons Against Disease**

In comparatively recent years, very largely since the messenger of the Lord laid aside her pen, there have been brought into the battle against disease many weapons of great value. The X-ray has opened up the secrets of many of the organs and functions of the body. The presence of disease in the lungs—tuberculosis, pneumonia, and cancer—is made clear by the X-ray. Disturbances of the digestive system are analyzed and accurately diagnosed. Obscure conditions of
the kidneys are often clarified by skillful use of the X-ray. The laboratory has revealed the secrets of cells of the body. So, also, has it unlocked the secrets of the chemistry of the blood, and the marvelous structure of the elements of the blood. A study of metabolism reveals significant knowledge of many disease conditions. The action of the heart and blood vessels has been studied, and miraculous results achieved in the treatment of diseases of circulation.

In physical therapy, electrotherapy, corrective therapeutics, and related areas, great advance has been made. Surgery has been developed to the extent that veritable miracles are being accomplished. Even the heart and the brain are being skillfully operated and restored to normal function. Countless instrumentalities from the laboratory, the operating room, and from the pharmacy have been made available for the diagnosis and the treatment of disease. Have we any reason to suppose that, were the servant of the Lord with us today to again counsel us on matters of health, these valued instrumentalities of the X-ray, the laboratory, the surgery, and the nutrition laboratory would be other than highly approved as desirable agencies for the restoration and maintenance of health?

Indeed we observe her moving forward in recognition of the advance in medical science, endorsing and employing new and rational medical procedures not out of harmony with the light given, and now universally adopted. In 1901 we find her writing to a physician working overseas who was dying of pernicious anemia. She
suggests, in addition to adjustments in his diet, a blood transfusion:

"There is one thing that has saved life,—an infusion of blood from one person to another," and then she comments: "but this would be difficult and perhaps impossible for you to do. I merely suggest it" (MM 286, 287).

And ten years later, in 1911, on the advice of our physicians in Loma Linda, Mrs. White underwent a series of twenty-three X-ray treatments to check what appeared to be a developing skin cancer of the forehead. Of this experience she later wrote:

For several weeks I took treatment with the X-ray for the black spot that was on my forehead. In all I took twenty-three treatments, and these succeeded in entirely removing the mark. For this I am very grateful.—Letter 30, 1911.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that many of the specific newly developed procedures and medications of abundantly proven worth in the saving of life, which assist nature and do not "leave a baleful influence behind," would also meet with approval? Tacit approval of the general plan of modern medical practice is certainly evident in the very firm counsel given this denomination that a medical school be established—not just any sort of school, but one that would meet the standards of modern medicine, one that would prepare young men and women to practice scientific medicine according to the highest standards and under the approval of the medical authorities. (See Medical Ministry, Sec. 1, and Our Health Message, p. 386.) This would certainly
include the conservative practices and use of the accepted, effective, and rational procedures and medications.

By way of further examination of this question, let us notice facts bearing upon any other viewpoint.

The Situation We Face

Let us examine for a moment a partial list of some of the medications regarded as rational and essential in the practice of medicine today.

*Insulin* in treatment of diabetes; a natural aid to natural body function.

*Liver extract* for pernicious anemia; a natural nonpoisonous aid to natural body processes.

*Digitalis* for certain forms of heart disease; a poisonous herb stimulant wisely administered as an emergency means to sustain life.

*Aluminum* compounds in treatment of ulcers; nonpoisonous materials having soothing and healing effect on active ulcers.

*Estrogens* for menopausal conditions; a natural supplement to aid normal function.

*Sulfa* for certain critical infections, pneumonia, also certain serious epidemic diseases such as bubonic plague, cholera; a mildly poisonous drug with lifesaving qualities in certain emergencies.

*Quinine and synthetic antimalarial* in malaria; a mildly poisonous medication, our only defense in certain dangerous diseases.

*Rauwolfia* products in hypertension and cer-
tain mental diseases; a natural herb medication of proven value when "wisely administered."

Bromides or barbiturates in epilepsy; poisonous drugs, thus far our only effective control of epilepsy "wisely administered."

Vaccines and antigenic inoculation against a wide range of epidemic diseases; operating in a natural manner, these medications build up body defenses against dangerous diseases.

Morphine for surgery and the terminal illnesses accompanied by suffering; a poisonous drug "wisely administered" to relieve pain not responsive to any other methods.

The reasoning person in attempting to evaluate right and wrong in the matter of employment of medications is inevitably faced with a perplexing situation. There are certain disease conditions in which, from the human standpoint, we either accept the help of these medications and save our lives and return to health or face inevitable death. The serious diabetic either receives the help of the insulin or becomes ill and ultimately dies. We cannot be sure but that at some time in the future there may be discovered some place a diet or a program that will relieve the diabetic of the need for insulin, but at present the severe diabetic needs insulin. The pernicious anemia patient must have that which his body cannot provide, and this is available to him in certain extractives by which he is able to live a comfortable, normal life.

Digitalis, admittedly a deadly poison, is yet the only agency available to us for the control of
certain otherwise fatal heart disorders. Until medici-

cal science discovers a nonpoisonous medication

that can take its place, its use to sustain life

appears to the rational physician to be in harmony

with the counsels that all should employ methods

that assist nature. Quinine and certain other re-

lated drugs are the only sure agencies we yet

have to meet the deadly malaria. Shall we with-

hold this remedy and allow the malignant tertian

malaria to take the life?

There are those who suggest that perhaps in
defense of a principle, in standing by right, it

would be better to rely entirely upon the so-
called natural remedies and ask God to do the

rest. It appears to be a well-established and
demonstrated principle that the Lord does not

choose to do for us that which we can do for our-

selves. Some of the most saintly men of all time

have gone down into untimely graves for lack of

a specific medication against cholera, malaria, or

acute infections. This course has usually not

been by choice, but for lack of availability of the

medicine.

To advocate that we should deliberately, by
choice, refuse recognized specific medications

that would have the effect of saving from

death and restoring to health, would indeed be to

place one’s religious faith in this matter in the

category of the cults and fads. The reasoning

would be on the same level as that of the Chris-
tian Scientist, who refuses to accept the reality of
disease and thereby reasonably refuses rational

medication. Such a concept has no place in the

Adventist code of health.
Shall We Follow Sentiment or Mature Reason?

Let us notice briefly the question of vaccines and antitoxins, simple preparations of dead germs or greatly weakened strains of live germs. To some it seems objectionable to think of injecting these products into our body, perhaps to flow through our blood stream. What dramatic portrayals of this procedure are heard from those with little understanding of the life and death questions involved. But there are certain facts that must be faced. Shall I as a parent give my child diphtheria inoculations, or shall I take upon my broad but ignorant shoulders the responsibility for the possibility of his tragic death months later? Shall we teach the national people of various foreign countries not to be vaccinated, not to be inoculated against bubonic plague, laying them open to this very real danger? The vaccination at worst is uncomfortable, the inoculation against plague scarcely that, and neither has any serious or permanent ill effects. The diseases that they ward off are often fatal: Some will say, Why not try natural remedies? If, by this, hydrotherapy is meant, there is no hydrotherapy or other physical therapy that can stop the plague in its swift, deathly stroke, which may be over in a few hours.

The inoculations against hydrophobia are not pleasant, and may even be dangerous, but what shall we say of the revolting, agonizing death from the disease that these inoculations prevent?

And what shall we say of our missionaries who
in preparation for their service in certain unsani-
tary environments are required to be injected, in-
oculated, and vaccinated with many kinds of
vaccines and suspensions of dead or attenuated
germ? Certain countries or areas, formerly for
good reason labeled "the white man's grave,"
have, because of these protective inoculations,
been rendered relatively safe, not only for the
Occidental, but also for the local people. Would
we withhold from these dedicated Christian mis-
ionaries this protection that enables them to go
into dangerous, disease-ridden areas, accomplish
their mission, and return again? As such protec-
tion is required by law, these missionaries obvi-
ously could not even proceed to these foreign
shores without such protection, were they so ill-
advised as not to accept it.

And what shall we say of the generally ac-
cepted use of morphine in the relief of pain in
emergency situations? "But," says one, "it may
lead to addiction," or, "The use of morphine
destroys or damages the nerve structures and
function of the body." Used under the usual
well-controlled conditions of the hospital and
medical supervision, it does neither. Until a
better product is available, the careful physician
will use morphine, with anesthetic agents, to
diminish the pain and agony that would be
inevitable in surgery. Morphine diminishes the
suffering of the patient who has been operated,
and thereby hastens healing and normal recovery.

Victims of cancer and other terminal diseases
may pass through suffering that can be under-
stood only in part, even by those who daily
minister to these tragic sufferers. Some have suggested that there are "natural" treatments and mental attitudes that readily control such pain. Unfortunately these procedures are not effective in the pain-racked bodies of the dying cancer victims. What possible purpose is served by withholding from those who will pass to their rest in a few days or weeks the drug that would afford a little relief and peace?

For thousands of years leprosy has been a much-dreaded, cruel, and disfiguring disease. There has been no treatment, "natural" or otherwise, that brought relief to the leper. Now science has brought to light drugs that, "wisely administered," weaken the defense of the leprosy organism and permit the body to overcome the disease. Will we better glorify God in a disfigured, leprous body or in one restored to health and vigor by a drug related to the sulfonamides? While holding the means of healing in our hands, shall we send the leper away to suffer and die in his wretchedness? How glad we are that Christian missionaries in less fortunate lands are heeding the counsel of the Master to "cleanse the leper" even though it be by means of a synthetic drug, carefully employed, until something better can be found.

Much the same can be said of tuberculosis. Combining skillful surgery with certain medications, physicians are today saving tuberculars who a few years ago would have been hopeless, and most cases are being restored in but a fraction of the time required previously. Shall we callously deny these patients the healing agencies in our
hands? Cholera, plague, and other often fatal diseases are now brought under control by the sulfonamides and related drugs. Some complain that the sulfonamides sometimes seriously affect the blood or the kidneys and, in fact, in very occasional cases may be fatal. Shall we compare these admitted dangers of the sulfas, in which one in hundreds may have complications and one in thousands may lose his life, with the danger of the deadly disease with which the victim has less than a fifty per cent chance of survival?

For hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, Indian physicians have used an herb, the root of a native plant, in the treatment of hypertension and certain of the nervous diseases. Only recently have Western physicians come to appreciate the great value of this material in these difficult nervous diseases. Research has developed refinements of this medicine, which are now for the first time bringing hope to certain types of mentally disturbed people. Who will claim to have in his soul the faintest spark of Christian charity and yet suggest that these pitiful sufferers from mental disease should be denied this one present hope of restoration?

The administration of anesthesia, either by injection or by inhalation, is in fact the administration of a dangerous drug, a drug that deadens all body senses. It must be given in exact amounts and with skillful technique or the result may be serious. Yet only under proper anesthesia are the lifesaving procedures of surgery possible. The conscientious physician in his effort to aid nature in its work of restoration must choose the
lesser of two evils—anesthesia with its attendant but unlikely peril or extreme pain with shock resulting in possible death.

It is a matter of record that Ellen White recognized surgery with its attendant anesthesia an integral part of our medical program, and she wrote reassuringly: "The Saviour is present . . . in the operating room" (Manuscript 159, 1899).

Not once did Ellen White raise her voice or pen a word against the use of the anesthetic, but rather she wrote:

If there is need of a surgical operation, and the physician is willing to undertake the case, it is not a denial of faith to have the operation performed. After the patient has committed his will to the will of God, let him trust, drawing nigh to the Great Physician, the Mighty Healer, and giving himself up in perfect trust (Manuscript 67, 1899).

And of the attending physicians, as they administered the anesthetic and then proceeded to their critical work, she wrote:

He [Christ] stands beside them as they perform their difficult surgical operations. We know that this is so (Manuscript 28, 1901).

These statements are significant in the light of known use of anesthesia, administered to relieve the patient of shock and pain.

The Choice That Must Be Made

While there are many conditions that are treated without the use of drugs, it should be well noted that in each of these conditions referred to above we must choose between the use of the indicated medication—and at times even
poisonous drugs—resulting in probable recovery or refusal of the only help yet known, with resultant persistence of the disease, suffering, and possibly death. We can refuse to use insulin or digitalis or sulfa or Rauwolfia or even the anesthetics. We can let nature take its course in the diabetic, the cardiac, the plague victim, or the tumor or other surgical case, but who will share the responsibility for the avoidable early death? This is a responsibility that no reasoning person will desire to assume, and that—in the light of the basic principles set before us—no physician can assume. And the alternative? To the present there is but one. The choice of our dedicated Christian physicians is to step in with the aid of these rational remedial agencies and save life. We believe God in His mercy has not only permitted us a knowledge of the so-called natural remedies, such as hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, diet therapy, and advanced rational habits of living, but also has placed in our hands specific weapons to be used against those diseases over which the so-called natural remedies have little sure effect.

In fact, far from reflecting any disfavor upon these physical therapeutic procedures, we find that some of these more recent remedies, as in the case of the antibiotics, are definitely complementary to the physical therapy. In acute upper respiratory infections such as pneumonia, the antibiotic weakens or kills the germs responsible for the disease. The fomentations and associated hydrotherapy stimulate more vigorous circulation, encouraging the more speedy removal of the
germs and the debris. Recovery is miraculously speeded and much more sure when these methods are used together.

It has been made plain from the foregoing that the Spirit of prophecy counsels recognize the rightful use of remedies. Scant mention is made of "roots and herbs" of which a skillful and right use may be made. (See MM 230.) Some suggest that our physicians should find from this source the remedial agencies they prescribe. The counsel is indeed significant. What is it in the simple herbs—used in contrast with poisonous drugs—that makes them effective and acceptable remedies? Is it not certain medicinal properties they contain? Inquiry will reveal that a very large proportion of the "drugs" prescribed by the careful physician of today stem directly from certain plants. With a clear understanding of "the nature of these roots and herbs" (MM 230) now available to the physician in refined and measurable form, he employs them skillfully to accomplish known results.

The foxglove of the figwort plant family, for instance, is an herb used for many decades when there seemed to be a need for control of the heart's action. In its crude form there was not infrequently too much or too little given, with serious result. The refined digitalis—the medicinal element taken from the foxglove leaf—is a product of known strength and qualities which the doctor uses in an emergency, in measurable form.

The unrefined product, whether poisonous or nonpoisonous, is known as an "herb." The refined product is called a "drug."
We recognize that none of the drugs today employed are entirely ideal. Inoculations may not be one hundred per cent sure, but how wonderful that they are almost sure in protecting against serious or fatal disease. Sulfa drugs may not be well tolerated by some people. Penicillin may very occasionally cause inconvenient to serious reactions. Insulin, if not given in the right amounts for the anticipated food consumption, may cause trouble. Quinine may cause disturbance in the hearing. Rauwolfia may make the patient so dizzy as to be intolerable. But so it is with everything man makes. It is imperfect.

The automobile may refuse to start on a cold morning. The motor may stall on a busy downtown street. A tire may blow out far from home on a cold, rainy night, or worse yet, the tire may blow out on the cliffside of a precipitous mountain road, with deadly results. Yet we still use autos. No workmanship of man is quite perfect. When our railways seem to have made travel more safe than staying at home, a serious wreck takes many lives; but we continue to ride on trains. Our medications, our surgery, our application of electronics to healing, are not perfect. Occasionally a medication reacts unfavorably, an inoculation may cause excessive discomfort, a patient may not tolerate an anesthetic, or may even die during surgery.

Nevertheless, imperfect though our materials and techniques may be, their application has gone far in the conquest of disease and has doubled the life expectancy in America during the past hundred years. These techniques have
removed the fear of many formerly tragic diseases. Our children are shielded from epidemic diseases that formerly were serious dangers. Our elders are permitted a measure of health and comfort that makes their declining years more rewarding.

The intelligent practice of medicines by today's better standards calls for careful diagnosis, the acquiring of a complete picture of the patient's problems. Treatment will emphasize attack on the cause of the disease, not on the symptoms; the treatment of the patient, not just the most evident disease. The "pill doctor" or "injection doctor" often concentrates on the symptoms, often forgetting that behind those symptoms there is a person, an individual.

The first step in treatment of ulcers is to study the patient's stresses, worries, failures, and tensions; then his unwholesome diet habits, his irregular program must be evaluated; he must be shown a new way of life. The treatment of the hypertensive will possibly include medication, but of basic importance will be the heart-to-heart discussion of the problem with the patient. He will be shown the relationship between his work habits, his lack of rest, his neglect of recreation, his smoking or drinking, or his intemperate eating habits and the disease now threatening his life. On the basis of such discussion the physician will help the patient to revise his whole plan of life to correct the causes thus brought to light.
Need for Higher Standards in Christian Medical Practice

Not all physicians are intelligently using this wealth of scientific knowledge and technique in their practice of medicine. As in every area of human endeavor it is inevitable that there will be those in the practice of medicine who will be less skillful, less effective, and less conscientious in the practice of their profession. In medicine many of such professional ineffectives will tend to cover their superficiality by unduly leaning on quick and easy prescription writing. Even more skillful physicians are at times tempted to lean upon some easy-to-prescribe medication as a crutch, when crowded for time. It is a matter of concern that many physicians, to satisfy more troublesome patients, are leaning too heavily upon sedation.

Sedatives

This question of sedation leads us to a most important consideration, namely, that of sleeping pills and self-medication. This practice cannot be too severely condemned. Many work beyond their strength and then attempt to compensate for such abuse by this unnatural technique for acquiring an unnatural rest. Few realize how many are thereby led into serious barbiturate addiction. It is a dangerous practice for doctors, nurses, or anyone to take sedatives—sleeping pills—to enable them to settle jangled nerves into needed sleep. Before this habit is recognized in its true nature, its serpentine coils have the
ill-advised victim in an iron grip, which often is released only in an untimely death. Only under the direction of a skilled physician should one use sedation or sleeping pills. Sedation is permissible in the treatment of epilepsy, peptic ulcers, certain nerve conditions, heart damage, and terminal illness.

If nervous tension is the reason for the need for help in getting to sleep, possibly the program needs to be changed. Students in school, professional or business men and women working beyond their strength, are frequently the victims of this habit. For the occasional experience of sleeplessness, more regular exercise, a warm bath, a hot drink, a fomentation to the spine, or gentle massage will often accomplish a much more wholesome result. Where these simple home remedies fail, a reliable physician should be consulted. Only at his direction (in the face of an emergency) should use be made of sedatives.

**Emphasis on Rational Techniques**

It is frequently called to our attention that in some of our medical institutions there is an excessive use of drugs. We would have no inclination to condone such practice wherever this situation may prevail. Ellen White in her counsels has again and again warned against such tendencies, and our leading medical authorities have frequently raised their voices in warning against the abuse or excessive use of medications, however good of themselves and in their rightful place.

The emphasis in good medicine is on more
accurate early diagnosis; on a more careful search for underlying causes of disease; on a more intelligent appraisal of the needs of the whole man; on a more sympathetic understanding of the patient's emotional problems, his stresses, worries and strains; and on the paramount need for adequate and balanced nutrition. The institution or physician practicing the healing arts with this scientific approach will experience a diminishing need for reliance upon routine prescription writing.

If There Be Any Virtue

Recognizing and regretting some misuse of medications, we believe the fact still remains that during the past fifty years, in place of the old and now thoroughly repudiated "poisonous drugs" condemned by the Spirit of prophecy, there have been developed a considerable number of rational remedies whose lifesaving qualities are well established. Let us not condemn as useless "poisonous drugs" every medical product that comes from the drugstore. Many of these are nonpoisonous, well-proven, and acceptable therapeutic agents, and let us be tolerant of the conservative physicians who in an emergency, for the lack of something better, employ a product of poisonous quality but administer it wisely. And let us ever bear in mind the words confidently penned by Ellen White concerning the work of our Physician:

The great Physician in Chief is at the side of every true, earnest, God-fearing practitioner who works with his acquired knowledge to relieve the sufferings of the human body (CH 536).

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Until that time when in a better land we are permitted to enjoy the healing virtues of the leaves of the tree of life, let us thank God for the effective healing agencies He has entrusted to our use and for careful, attentive, God-fearing physicians.

KEY TO REFERENCES

MM—Medical Ministry
MH—Ministry of Healing
9T—Testimonies, volume 9
GW—Gospel Workers
GCB—General Conference Bulletin
CDF—Counsels on Diet and Foods
CH—Counsels on Health
Te—Temperance
1 SG—Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1
RH—The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald