

The Practice of Medicine

~ Joanna M. Carmichael, PhD, RN, DD

As the former President and CEO of a company that assists physicians and pharmaceutical companies to conduct research studies on investigational drugs, one can imagine the paradox seemingly created when studying metaphysics became not only a favorite pass time, but resulted in two Doctorates and the birth of another company that provides alternative medicine services. In almost 20 years as a research consultant, I have had the opportunity to interact and develop a comfortable rapport with physicians, health care professionals, pharmaceutical company personnel, and most importantly, patients. After observing many patients come and go in offices and hospitals, I began to notice that physicians were taking medical histories, listening to complaints (symptoms), doing a physical exam and prescribing that drug or surgical procedure which would alleviate those symptoms. What I have yet to observe is that no one ever bothered to spend the time to inquire as to *why* that patient had hypertension, diabetes, coronary artery disease, or arthritis to begin with so that the *cause* may be alleviated thereby automatically providing the desired symptomatic relief. The suppressive nature of conventional medicine today continually feeds into this practice of treating the symptom and not the cause. It should be understood that there clearly is a time and a place for treatment of a symptomatic nature where medications and surgery must be utilized to alleviate the immediate risk of further damage or death. Unfortunately, many patients will remain on these toxic medications forever because of their unwillingness to relinquish their current thinking to gain a sense of responsibility for their own quality of life and health. Understandably however, we live in a society where placing blame instead of looking inside and listening to the Self seems to be the rule rather than the exception.

A recognition that science does not have all the answers is necessary. Humility has, in fact been medicine's millenium's-old approach to the cycles of disease that have afflicted humans throughout history. The secret of the healer's art, while greatly enhanced by the advances of modern medicine, is simultaneously challenged by many of its aspects: a dehumanizing supertechnology, the ethical dilemmas resulting from biomedicine's enhanced ability to prolong life, and managed care that diminishes the doctor-patient relationship. There is great promise that even more inconceivable advances are yet to come. But it would be arrogant to believe that any amount of biomedical miracle-making will ever surpass the ancient art of healing (to restore integrity and balance) which comes from within. Doctors and patients alike are slowly turning to unorthodox treatments in search of simplicity and the human touch.

Unfortunately, however, we live in a society which demands quick fixes to fit the way in which people live their lives. There is no time to be sick. The use and misuse of antibiotics for example, coupled with numerous other social and environmental factors have lead to the emergence of drug-resistant pathogens and it appears the microbes are gaining the upper hand. Has anyone noticed that the 24-hour flu now lasts for two weeks? The options available for treatment, *including no treatment* in some cases, are not thoroughly evaluated and once again a contribution is made to resistance. We are researching "bigger and badder" antibiotics because even the newly approved medicines are already resistant to certain types of pathogens. In spite of all of this, the American public is still demanding that physicians prescribe antibiotics for their runny noses and physicians give in. It seems to take a catastrophe for one to sit up and take notice that something in their physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual lives is out of balance. Instead of illness being viewed as an imbalance occurring to reveal a higher purpose, we cover over illness with medicines and surgical procedures so the person can continue their harmful patterns and "get on with their life" with the message still unheard.

It is the rare clinician who honors the admonitions of Hippocrates: “First, Do No Harm”. We use expensive, unnecessary, and sometimes invasive diagnostic tests as a CYA strategy instead of to augment the truly dying art of the physical exam, taking a thorough medical history (including a social history) and really listening to the patient. However, in 7-15 minutes it’s easier to evaluate a complaint list and prescribe a test, drug or surgical procedure rather than listen, look and intuit about a whole patient - body, mind and spirit, to find out what is *really* going on..... but that takes time. And second, “To Honor the Healing Power of Nature”. Although information is easier to obtain now more than ever, I am continually intrigued with how little information is actually used when it comes to healing ourselves. At every level of biological organization, from DNA up, mechanisms for self-diagnosis, self-repair, and regeneration exist within us, always ready to become active when the need arises. Medicine that takes advantage of these innate mechanisms of healing is more effective than medicine that simply suppresses symptoms. Unfortunately, these suppressive treatments are not only toxic as our studies which have contributed to drug package labeling have shown, but they may also strengthen the disease processes over time instead of resolving them. Additionally, neglecting the mental, emotional and spiritual components of disease does little to contribute to healing. Frequently, these metaphysical things are physically expressed as ulcers, heart disease, tension, accidents, and anxiety yet are not even equally evaluated. Since everything in the universe is energy, the energies of such imbalances, when suppressed, must go somewhere.

As allopathic medicine becomes better at what it can do well, its limitations become more prominent. Although it is clearly superb in dealing with trauma and bacterial infections, it is far less successful with asthma, chronic pain, and auto-immune diseases. Patients are just beginning to grow weary of hasty processing by conventional doctors, and although doctors see this occurring, they feel there is little they can do as the demands on their time are increasing while the rewards both financially and altruistically are decreasing. The unreasonable, rising cost of

malpractice insurance in Philadelphia alone attests to this issue. Physicians as well as nurses, technicians, and other health care professionals are being pressured like everyone else to do more in less time and with less resources for less money and sometimes in objectionable conditions. In this age of falling reimbursement payments, insurance fraud, managed care, insurance companies being allowed to practice medicine without a license in that they can determine that an 80 year-old must be discharged from the hospital 3 days after a joint replacement, and physicians being told how to practice medicine, it is a system in which the negativity seems to continually feed on itself.

Education, beginning very early in life, needs to be concerned with teaching individuals how to question and think for themselves; not to simply accept knowledge and dogma as truth without their own experiences and wisdom to substantiate it. It is not only up to the doctors, but it is up to patients as consumers utilizing a service, to question, research and demand better and more comprehensive care, be it traditional or alternative. We consult Consumer Reports, the Internet, relatives, friends, and sales people when we want to buy a computer, insurance, or an automobile – why wouldn't we do the same especially when shopping for our health? The fact is, medicine is a business, whether we like it or not. A service is provided by a trained professional to satisfy a need (bypass surgery to save a life), or a want (lipo-suction to alter a cosmetic feature) and has a cost; just like computer experts are called when computers at a bank crash (a need) or to write programs and games to keep children in front of computers longer than they already are (a want). Patients need to seek out medical care, whether traditional or alternative, with a sense of responsibility which can only result in the best care (service) while working harmoniously with health care providers to insure their needs/wants are met in the most safe, efficient, and complete manner possible. Changing our thinking and elevating our consciousness is like starting a business. Most of the time and energy is required at the beginning to get the concept off the ground. Once that is accomplished, the rest falls into place and energy can flow in a positive direction, but we must begin with the highest ideals of who we can be. Science and metaphysics

are both needed and destined to work in harmony with one another so that the healing of humanity, beginning with individuals may evolve. I used to think that drug/medical research was on the opposite side of the spectrum from metaphysics, but in fact I know now that when in balance and utilized appropriately, they truly are *One* and the same.

Dr. Carmichael was the former President & CEO of CliniCoor, Inc. and the Founder of Heart 2 Heart Creative Healing Services, Inc. in Newtown Square, PA where she practices as a medical research consultant and Integrative Lifestyle Consultant respectively. In addition to her BSN, she holds doctorates in Metaphysics and Divinity and was ordained an Interfaith Minister in December 2002. She is dedicated to elevating consciousness and bringing education to patients and healthcare professionals alike about the need for conventional and complementary medicine to work together rather than against each other, the nature of healing, and its intimate relationship to spirituality. She may be contacted at (610) 993-3357 or at drjmcarmichael@msn.com and has office hours in Newtown Square, PA.