
Psychoimmunology

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We were taught that confidence in the treating physician makes for 50% of the treatment ... why ? Does the confidence initiate biochemical changes in the patient which makes his fight against the disease stronger ?

For many years we have been hearing about some individuals where traditional medicine fails them, but they get cured or better in a non-orthodox way at the hands of faith healers in the west, Al-Hajib, Al Zar in Arab countries, witch doctors in Black Africa, in Bangkok and among the American Indians, Acupuncture in China for many bizarre conditions.

Does helplessness, submission, optimism and self reliance matter for the outcome of the treatment ? This reminds me of the experiment where dogs were placed in a box in which they were taught to avoid electric shock by jumping over a barrier upon the dimming of light, quickly these dogs learned to avoid shock entirely. But the dogs responded differently when they were confined to a box subjected to a shock they could not avoid. These dogs learned that effort is futile, just lay down and whined.¹

As well in the past forty years, it was observed that infants develop poorly, even die, when they are provided with food and physical necessities but denied intimate contact with care givers. A number of orphans were separated into two groups, one has been assigned to foster parents and the other remained institutionalised. After one year, the group with foster parents developed physically and mentally better than those who were given care by the institution, a gain in the IQ and better accomplishment for those who received intimate care and attention. ¹

It is known that children who receive constant love and attention – who grow in environment which encourage self reliance and optimism rather than submission and helplessness are better survivors.

It has been observed over many years that some patients who receive the wrong antibiotic according to culture and sensitivity get better. As well it has been known that placebo works with some individuals and they get better, as well it was known for many decades that cancer patients will do better during treatment if they have the will to fight the

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disease, those who do not have the will to fight, usually do badly during the treatment and ultimately succumb to the disease.

What is the mechanism by which these people get better ? Is it through suggestion and through that a biochemical changes occur which enables the body to overcome the ailment? Or is it something else that we do not know but eventually makes the body overcome its ailment? Whatever the mechanism – these patients get better and we ought to investigate this phenomena.

From the previous proceedings, are we forgetting or neglecting the patient's psychoimmunology in our research, in our practice and in our traditional training ?

REFERENCE

1. Sagan L.A. Family Ties. *The Sciences* 1988; March/April: 21-29.