

SOLVED:
THE RIDDLE OF YOUR ILLNESS AND PAVING THE PATH TOWARDS OPTIMAL
WELLNESS

Most people are born healthy. However, somewhere along the line they become sick. As time passes, just like anything else, health tends to decline. Why? To rephrase Mark Twain, "Inside every sick person is a healthier person-what the hell happened." Actually what he said was, "Inside every older person is a younger person-what the hell happened."

Either way, the question is the same, "What happened?"

It raises many questions like, "Why me?", and, "No one else in my family is sick," "Why do we all have the same problems," or "Why is our family not healthy? Why do we have so many different problems in our family -- someone has arthritis, someone has colitis and someone has migraine headaches while others have Chronic Fatigue, hypertension and diabetes? It looks like all these problems are unrelated." Are they really all unrelated? And, how are these problems handled? Usually not very well! Typically, these are treated by going to different specialists specializing in different parts of the body. This is the doctor-of-the-organ approach. Does it have to be that way? Is there any relationship between all these problems? Can these problems be taken care of under one roof? Is there some commonality?

These are important questions. Let us examine, because the answers you discover may surprise you and determine what the future holds for you or your loved ones.

On a journey from wellness to sickness there are six important phenomena observed in medicine. A thorough understanding of them is essential for comprehending your illness and the root causes of the problems that you may be having in your family. The most crucial thing to understand is that the overwhelming majority of common health problems are not at all obscure in origin. A pivotal discovery made in Environmental Medicine is that most chronic illnesses often result from environmental, nutritional, dietary and hormonal factors. Albert Einstein said, "Most fundamental ideas of science are essentially very simple and may be expressed in language comprehensible to everyone". In the case of human illness, it can't get simpler than that. However, this is the best-kept secret in medicine. The exciting part of this discovery is that we can do something definite about all these causes, get you well and get you off symptom-relieving drugs. Why fix symptoms with drugs when you can fix the cause?

Here are those six phenomena observed in medicine that will help you understand your illness:

1. INDIVIDUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY: We all have individual proneness to illness and are not equally vulnerable to any or all of the environmental factors. By living in the same environment, breathing more or less the same air, and eating more or less the same foods, we all do not become sick. While some get sick, others remain quite well. It has to do with your

genetic predisposition. Why? It is because of having various inherited tendencies and strengths that determines Individual Susceptibility or proneness to illness.

2. BIOCHEMICAL INDIVIDUALITY: What this means is that not only do we look different from each other externally, we are quite different internally as well – bio-chemically speaking. This is why people living in the same home or work environment when they become sick may not show identical symptoms. Some may have headaches as their chief complaint while others may suffer from asthma or sinus problems. Yet others may develop chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, upset stomach, hypertension, diabetes, weight gain, and even develop depression and anxiety. Children may have frequent coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections, or exhibit hyperactivity and learning problems, etc. The old model of allergy consisting of only sneezing, itching, coughing and wheezing is out and the Environmental model is in: Environmental factors can affect any organ from head to toe and can produce virtually any kind of symptom or problem, [click here for a visual](#). See how many problems you can recognize in your family in the link provided.

To a person unaware of this phenomenon, these seemingly unrelated problems appear to bear absolutely no relationship to each other. Normally, these problems are handled by running to different specialists for different family members, not recognizing common relationships. This division of labor, while financially rewarding for the medical profession, does nothing to isolate the problem. Nor does it recognize the real causes. Remember one principle: if one person has an allergy related problem, you have to look vertically and horizontally for problems in other family members and explore the potential environmental connections if you want to make an early diagnosis, intervene early and prevent decades of misery.

3. SPREADING PHENOMENON: What this means is that once a disease starts in one part of the body, it does not remain confined to that organ system. Instead, over a period of time, more and more organ systems get involved and new symptoms emerge. For example, starting with runny nose or a headache you may develop other symptoms over the years such as coughing, wheezing, fatigue, muscle aches and pain, joint pains, constipation, diarrhea, indigestion, stomach aches, anxiety, depression, weight gain, high blood pressure, menstrual problems, sexual difficulties, diabetes, heart disease, etc. Count how many problems you can recognize on this [picture](#).

Soon you realize it seems like you have joined the “Disease-of-the-Month Club”. This happens if you ignore your symptoms or, worse yet, cover them up with drugs as is done traditionally. This is how the sick get sicker and the rich get richer. This is the basis for the mushrooming of modern medicine in the last 60 years. This is also the basis for an astronomical increase in medical care costs. Once this is understood and all efforts are directed towards treating the underlying causes, we will be rescuing a lot of people from their misery and saving tons of money - perhaps as much as 90%.

Thomas Edison said, “The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.” These are some of the most important goals of Environmental Medicine. What is required to get people well? In most instances it is very simple, straightforward and common sense. For example, if you provide three things, most people will get well: 1) Relatively clean air 2) Relatively clean food, and 3) Relatively clean water.

Most people demand a “Quick Fix”. Instantaneous fixes are good and essential and appropriate when needed -- like drugs. However in our experience these quick fixes don’t last long and are expensive for sure! If you want to uproot the problem, you have to get to the root cause and that is the crux. This is what Environmental Medicine is all about -- finding the cause and treating the cause. With the spreading phenomenon as more and more organs are involved, more and more specialists are called in. Since no one is exploring the real causes, the only thing left for physicians is to prescribe more drugs. More drugs is the last thing a patient who is getting sicker needs. It takes a physician well versed in Environmental Medicine to look globally to be able to see the relationships between these seemingly unrelated multiple problems. According to the U.S. government's DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES agency, environmental illnesses present as common medical problems or have non-specific symptoms. Therefore, it is really almost malpractice not to do an environmental evaluation on a patient -- regardless of symptoms. What this means is that environmental as well as non-environmental illnesses present with similar symptoms like headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pains, hypertension, digestive upsets, palpitations, etc. And just based upon symptoms you cannot tell if it is environmental or not. What differentiates between the two is demonstrating specific environmental triggers and excluding non-environmental causes through appropriate investigations. In medicine what usually happens is that after looking for non-environmental causes and finding nothing, the case is put to rest and patients may be told one of three things:

1. “You look beautiful on paper.”
2. “We cannot find any reason for your problems. It must be in your head or psychological.”
3. “You have to learn to live with your problems.”

Why it is important to move one step forward? Because if you can demonstrate triggers for your illness, you know the cause and now you can do something definite about it and treat it to bring necessary relief. That should be the essence of any medical treatment. However, it isn’t practiced often enough. If it was, why would you be still sick?

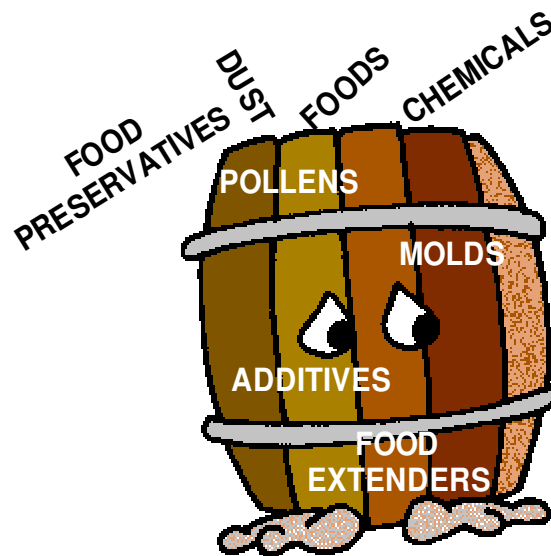
ADAPTATION: Exposure to a substance is essential for sensitization. When we become sensitized to a substance we do not get sick right away because of the body’s ability to adapt. It is like a cushioning effect, which tends to minimize the immediate impact of an allergen. This ensures that the person remains relatively symptom-free as long as the body’s adaptive mechanisms would allow. Eventually adaptive mechanisms are exhausted and the patient starts experiencing symptoms. A classic example is a person who gets caffeine withdrawal headaches. He knows to drink coffee often enough to stay out of withdrawal phase, and remain free of headaches or so to speak “symptoms-free.” This may continue on, for say 40 years, until the body can no longer adapt to it. Now the person starts having headaches and at this stage no amount of caffeine will keep him out of the withdrawal phase. He may now complain that he is having severe headaches for the last five years but in reality the problem started 45 years ago. Addiction is a part of this phenomenon. That is why adaptation leads to cravings for alcohol, sugar, chocolate, breads, carbohydrates and other foods. Terms like alcoholics, sugar-holics and chocoholics describe addictive aspects of the adaptation phenomenon. The food cravings or over-consumption of certain foods can be important clues to allergy. Similarly smoking, or excessive use of narcotics and mind-affecting drugs like anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medicines etc lead to dependence. Nicotine dependence is one of the worst addictions. We have seen patients who have developed laryngeal cancer as a result

of smoking and still wouldn't quit smoking. They will still continue to smoke through their tracheotomy tube.

5. SWITCHING PHENOMENON: This is the most intriguing phenomenon. As you age, your old problems leave and new problems crop up in a different part of the body. It appears as if problems are jumping from one organ to another to another. For example an allergic baby may show first evidence of allergy as colic in early infancy from sensitivity to milk formula. Whether the mother does something about it or not, colic will go away by the age of 3-4 months and then the baby may start having frequent coughs and colds and ear infections. By age 4-5 frequent respiratory infections improve and asthma sets in. Eventually asthma leaves, let's say by teen years, and systemic problems like headaches or stomachaches start in. When a child has "outgrown" two or three problems it becomes very difficult to convince the mother that her child will not outgrow the current problems. All along the child is being treated symptomatically. It is not over yet. Yes, these problems also leave and now the person may develop arthritis, colitis, depression, etc.

This forces the patient to hop from one specialist to another to another. Since physicians traditionally treat symptoms, such an approach guarantees the sick will get sicker. This is the stage when an environmental physician may be called in if you are well versed to think about environmental illness. If you are lucky enough you will find one. The combination of spreading phenomenon and switching phenomenon results in more sickness.

6. TOTAL BODY LOAD: Everything we eat, breathe, and touch and every change in the environment such as humidity, temperature, mold or pollen count, chemical exposures and psychological stress add a load onto our body. Whether we recognize it or not, the total load is constantly changing. If the total load becomes above the tolerance level, you get symptoms and when the load is below the tolerance level your symptoms diminish. This produces fluctuations in your symptoms. It is like a rain barrel effect.



As long as rain does not fill the barrel, it does not overflow. This is how your symptoms may wax and wane. When your barrel is relatively empty you may be able to tolerate certain exposures such as fragrances or be able to eat certain foods that you are allergic to. On the other hand, if the barrel is full to the brim, a small amount of exposure to offending substances can cause symptoms. It is very important to understand this concept. Some people, if not better after taking care of one or two problems, feel that the treatment is not working. So they quit too soon. The key is that you have to reduce enough of the total load to in order to be able to feel better. Remember the three words of wisdom that will solve any problem, "Stay with it." You have to work more to empty the barrel. Once it has been emptied enough, you will feel better.

So here you have it, six phenomena observed in medicine: 1) INDIVIDUAL SUSCEPTIBILITY 2) BIOCHEMICAL INDIVIDUALITY 3) SPREADING PHENOMENON 4) ADAPTATION, 5) SWITCHING PHENOMENON 6) AND TOTAL BODY LOAD responsible for varying manifestations of chronic illness. Look at your history from birth till now to see how you may have traveled through wellness to sickness. Now reflect on your family's health and see how many phenomena you can recognize. Some probing questions are:

1. **Is everyone in perfectly good health?** If so give yourself a pat on the back. You're very lucky so far -- remain vigilant.
2. **Are some healthy while others are not?** This signifies Individuality Susceptibility.
3. **What are their problems? Are the problems minor or significantly bothersome?** If these are minor, they are adapting well. If these are bothersome, adaptation is running out.
4. **Are they ignoring them or taking drugs to cover up symptoms?** It means they are setting the stage for spreading and switching phenomena.
5. **When were they in perfectly good health?**
6. **When did the problems start?**
7. **Are the symptoms getting worse?**
8. **Have they developed more problems over the years?** This signifies Spreading Phenomenon.
9. **Do they have the same problems recurring?** For example do the headaches keep recurring or sinuses keep flaring up or wheezing attacks keep happening. The recurrences mean changes in Total Body Load from time to time.
10. **Have some problems left only to be traded in by new problems, which are probably more severe?** For example if you used to have a cough, colds and wheezing, those symptoms may be totally gone, but you are not well. Instead, now you have migraine headaches, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel, or muscle or joint pains etc. Your current problems may be more bothersome than the problems you had before. This is Switching Phenomenon.

As we intervene by addressing the underlying causes you will see reversal and improvement in your condition. However this will not happen spontaneously. It requires that you take positive steps consistently and persistently to find the cause and treat the cause to empty the rain barrel and keep it empty.

WHAT DO I DO TO GET WELL AND KEEP MY FAMILY WELL

Remember, life is cumulative. Whatever level of health you are at, it is a result of cumulative decisions you have made in your lifetime- right or wrong regarding your health. Whatever decisions you make now will determine where you will be in the next several decades.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Whenever you are sick or are stuck, always think of the cause and not of pills. How can you do that? When in trouble, always think of the [Sickness Iceberg](#). The top of it represents symptoms and the bottom represents the common causes. Always think of the Sickness Iceberg and it is very critical that you visualize the Iceberg and then ask what may be causing the problem. If you can't figure it out, ask someone who can!
2. Do you know what it means when a physician tells you, "You have to live with this condition," or "There is no cure," or "You have six months to live"? He is telling you, "With your kind of ailment and my kind of treatment no one has been able to get better or lived longer than six months!" What do you do then? Hurry UP! Find an alternative that works. That is how, for example, many patients even with incurable cancer have been able to overcome it when they were told they had a short time to live. In view of this, if you don't have cancer, then managing everything else can be a breeze. Again, all you have to do is remember these three words -- "STAY WITH IT" -- stay with the paradigm of finding the cause and treating the cause.
3. Do not get pacified with drugs. No disease is caused by a drug deficiency; rather, a lot of diseases are caused by deficiencies of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids and enzymes. Why not learn about nutrition. A golden rule to remember is: Medicine should come from farm not pharmacy.
4. Consider expertise of Environmental Medicine Physician when stuck with something serious or challenging. Feel free to ask us if some problems are bothering you or your family members. Even if you think it is not our field and we can't help you, still ask us because you may be surprised how often it turns out to be within the scope of our practice. This includes even certain surgical problems. You might say "It sounds strange." A few examples will make it clear. Here are three common problems that may be treated surgically-gall bladder disease, carpal-tunnel syndrome and fibrocystic breast. What do these conditions have to with Environmental medicine? Gall-bladder disease is linked to food allergies and taking care of it may resolve gall-bladder attacks. Carpal-tunnel syndrome is a classical example where a surgical disease may be treated effectively with vitamin B-6 and magnesium. Fibrocystic breast may be effectively treated nutritionally including iodine and eliminating caffeine. However if it is truly out of our field we might just happen to know someone who can help.
5. Our practice is beyond allergy. Some people think we take care of only the sick and the very sick ones. That is not the case. We provide family care and preventive care for the entire family. If you like our philosophy and how we handle problems, please feel free to contact us. If something is beyond our expertise we will refer you to an appropriate specialist. Consider our practice as "one stop" for most of your family's primary care.

Tipu Sultan MD
& Staff

