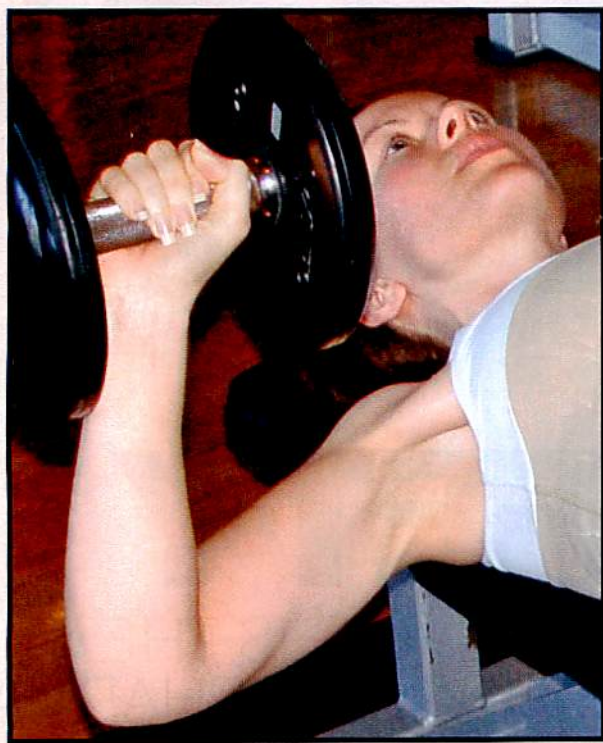


# THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY

WHY CLEAN LIVING IS THE  
REAL ENEMY OF BIG PHARMA

**BY LORRA GARRICK AND  
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**I**N 2004 *FORBES* MAGAZINE published a cover story describing how the real enemy of Big Pharma was clean living: *Millions of Americans are popping prescription pills for innocuous ills when simple lifestyle changes of diet and exercise are more effective and a lot cheaper. The results of pill dependence are insidious and devastating: billions of dollars in ever-higher drug costs; millions of people enduring sometimes highly toxic side effects; and close to two million cases each year of drug complications that result in one hundred eighty thousand deaths or life threatening illnesses.*



## HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Every single minute of every single day, a highly evolved, rigorously trained and unflinchingly brutal force is unleashed in your body, patrolling around every organ, tissue, nook and cranny and coursing through the blood and lymph.

Any particle, organism, bacteria, virus or cell that is not recognized by this force is immediately engulfed, destroyed or marked for destruction. There is no compromising with this force. It is your immune system, and it is one of the most complex and elegant systems in all of nature.

### IMMUNE SYSTEM BASICS

The immune system is a broad term for a set of cells, their signaling molecules and compounds, the antibodies they produce, and the organs and tissues associated with them. Its job is to protect you from bacteria, viruses and parasites; to help you heal in case of injury; and to help remove from the body old cells or cells that are not behaving appropriately (like cells prone to becoming cancerous).

The immune system works in both a generic and specific way. It has the ability to quickly deal with foreign invaders in a general way – this is called innate immunity. It also has the ability to create antibodies against specific pathogens that you are exposed to over time – this is called acquired immunity and is the basis for vaccination.

Broadly speaking, the main players of your immune system are the white blood cells, of which there are several different types and subclasses. These cells are made in the bone marrow and then undergo a very specific education.

The *Forbes* article summarized Big Pharma's attitude this way: *They want us to believe that the real problem is undermedication. They want us to believe that medicating symptoms is a good substitute for actually treating or curing the causes of illness and disease.*

Our current health system treats medical emergencies and the symptoms of illness and disease well in the short-term, thanks to remarkable technological advances in medical science.

Prescription drugs can be lifesavers for some patients suffering from life-threatening diseases. However, we are failures when it comes to prevention of illness and disease, and in understanding the role of diet and exercise to enhance the strength of our immune system.

Our immune system is nature's gift to us, a highly specialized frontline defense against illness and disease. It is our natural healing force within each of us in getting well.

Synthetic chemicals such as prescription drugs can damage our immune systems in two ways: either by suppression or over-stimulation. Suppression can create conditions like the flu or sicknesses like cancer, while over-stimulation can cause allergic reactions and autoimmune system disorders.

Geoff Kerr, of Palo Alto, CA, is a perfect example of someone who became dependent upon a variety of medications to address chronic pain and depression.

"When I was 17, my horse and I crashed through a steeplechase fence during an equestrian competition," explains Kerr. "The horse fell on me and broke my neck and shoulder. As a result I have been in chronic pain ever since. By the time I was in my 30s, I was taking painkillers, muscle relaxers, sleeping pills and antidepressants – all at the same time. I had to take that cocktail of meds just to get through the day without pain or anxiety. Then at night I was unable to sleep. I needed a sleeping pill and eventually needed more painkillers just to sleep through the night."

### WHY DOES MODERN MAN NEED SO MANY DRUGS?

If human evolution were condensed to 24 hours, our dependency on prescription drugs would have begun taking place only seconds ago. Somehow, the human race proliferated and flourished without drugs in a world void of modern-day conveniences. So how can it be that suddenly, modern man needs all these drugs to deal with the pangs of life?

"Physicians do not learn to realize that pain is an important way your body has of saying something needs attention – like the oil light on your dashboard," says Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, MD (internist), and medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers. "Instead of 'adding oil and checking for leaks' so the oil light would go out, we do the equivalent of covering the 'oil light' with a band-aid – a toxic approach."

About 106,000 U.S. people die every year from adverse reactions to drugs that are **properly prescribed and administered** – to patients **in hospitals**. The annual deaths to outpatients properly taking prescribed drugs is estimated at tens of thousands more.

Over-the-counter drugs also carry serious risks. "The most dangerous pain meds are NSAIDs like Motrin, which kill over 16,500 Americans unnecessarily via bleeding ulcers each year," says Dr. Teitelbaum.

So with all this toxicity going around, why do doctors so freely endorse drug use for the aches and pains of life? "The vast majority of chronic pain cases can now be treated effectively without narcotics," explains Dr. Teitelbaum.

"Unfortunately, most MDs are almost totally ignorant about how to do this. All most physicians know overall is to give Motrin/Celebrex/Tylenol family meds, and perhaps now, a few other expensive new meds. If these don't work, most then either leave the patient in pain, or prescribe narcotics – ignoring the possibility of natural therapies and also of treating the underlying cause of the

pain – so that pain relief could occur safely without narcotics.” A narcotic drug dulls the senses and reduces pain.

“Sadly, the medical profession, in its attempt to maintain its monopoly, has set it up so that those non-MD/DOs familiar with pain management are **not** allowed to help people — without being accused of ‘practicing medicine without a license.’ Chiropractors had to win an anti-trust lawsuit against the AMA (American Medical Association) so they could practice. Most other practitioners don’t have the financial clout to fight the AMA. This leaves the public basically with the options of being in chronic pain or taking narcotics.”

Narcotics in proper doses have their place with patients who suffer persistent pain, as may occur with injuries, surgery or advanced cancer. Dr. Teitelbaum says, “There are cases in which narcotics are necessary,” and he also adds, “I suspect that very often the toxicity of chronic pain dramatically outweighs the toxicity of these medications.”

## **THEY WANT US TO BELIEVE THAT MEDICATING SYMPTOMS IS A GOOD SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTUALLY TREATING OR CURING THE CAUSES OF ILLNESS AND DISEASE**

The “pain” often at issue may be simply that from lack of exercise, excess weight, chronic discomfort from improperly lifting heavy garbage, or a sports injury; stress headaches; emotional pain from anxiety; difficulty sleeping due to lack of exercise or stress; and trouble staying awake due to bad health habits.

Many people pop sedatives whenever they feel uptight, and may not even realize they have slurred speech from the side effects.

Many physicians will write out prescriptions without even exploring the patient’s lifestyle habits, such as diet, exercise (an incredible stress reliever and mood booster), pre-bedtime habits, etc.

In fact, a common medical disorder called sleep apnea can cause irritability, difficulty concentrating and headaches. This potentially life-threatening disorder is one of the most misdiagnosed conditions, and often, patients are simply told they’re suffering from stress or attention deficit disorder, and are prescribed ADD and narcotic pharmaceuticals.

Kerr ultimately decided he’d had it with the meds. “In 2003 I went to a chiropractor who looked at my neck and spine, and he told me to get back in shape, get stronger and stretch. After 10 years of being over-medicated, I weaned myself from the meds, radically changed my diet, while at the same time started yoga, light gym/weight work, swimming, and turned to meditation for relaxation. The transformation physically and mentally was astounding! Today, I look and feel healthier at 50 years old than when I was 40!”

Why didn’t Kerr’s medical doctors suggest these simple remedies to life’s ups and downs? “My doctors were working on the pain and depression, but none of their solutions worked. I kept up a front for years...but was a wreck inside.”

The pharmaceutical giants want doctors to believe that normal human conditions are actually medical disorders that require drug treatment. Doctors then pass this information on to their patients.

The irony is that few people would ever consider giving their moody, depressed or anxious dogs drugs to calm them. Instead, dog owners work on figuring out the source of the problem and then making adjustments.

When people, however, get stressed, depressed or develop challenges with sleep or wakefulness, it’s usually a trip to the medical clinic for a drug prescription: “*Doctor, I’m so worried my teens are going to do drugs. What can you give me to calm my nerves?*”

## WHAT'S KEEPING MEDICAL DOCTORS FROM PUSHING NATURAL TREATMENTS?

Dr. Teitelbaum says, "There are now over 1,400 physicians (board certified in holistic medicine) who are on this crusade (for natural cures) – and are under attack by state medical boards for the crime of helping their patients get well." Drug companies have a stranglehold on the medical establishment, and this begins in medical school.

Most medical schools, and the professors who teach there, are increasingly funded by drug companies. The brainwashing tactics await for impressionable young adults, imprinting upon them that the solutions to treating even minor ailments are drugs.

Explains Dr. Teitelbaum, "Doctors believe in what they do, and think that they are protecting the public from natural 'quacks,' because their medical school professors — often getting their research funding and speaker fees from drug companies — told them that holistic medicine was unscientific quackery. Medicine in this way is much more of a religion than it is science. The collusion between Big Pharma and standard medicine to create an environment of misinformation, to eliminate competition from holistic practitioners offering cheaper and safer options, is fairly pervasive."

Medical doctors really **will** get into trouble if they start practicing natural medicine. Dr. Teitelbaum explains, "Standard physicians file a complaint with the medical board (against fellow doctors who are preaching natural treatments), and then boards ignore the scientific research and sanction the doctor. Standard doctors are often happy to testify that the holistic doctor was a 'dangerous quack' no matter how reasonable the holistic treatment. You are more likely to lose your license because you cured a patient using natural remedies, than you are if you maim a patient by doing surgery when drunk!"

Medical physicians can be very loyal to drug companies because the companies pay doctors "speaker fees" and "research fees" to show up at seminars and conferences in different cities (all expenses paid) and speak in support of the drug. These sometimes-vacation-like conferences supply continuing education credits that are required for medical license renewal. "The amounts paid to the professors giving the lectures can be very high," continues Dr. Teitelbaum.

"Almost all the information physicians receive is paid for by drug companies who sponsor their conferences, journals, and the drug reps. These three areas supply the vast majority of the info physicians receive, and doctors do not know the drug company is controlling this info, and that most of their education is really simply slick drug company ads masquerading as educational activities and science."

A pharmaceutical sales rep has one goal: **Sell the drug.** They are trained at sales, not at educating the physician on what the best treatment for a particular condition is.

Doctors often do not have time to read up on research into natural medicine. In fact, they sometimes don't even have much time to read up on pharmaceutical research, and thus, their only conduit of information is the drug maker's sales rep.

*Prescription meds is big money. The average elderly person in the United States takes more than one dozen prescription medications every single day, according to Randall Fitzgerald in his book, "The Hundred Year Lie."*

*Prescription drug sales more than tripled in the United States between 1980 and 2000 to \$200 billion annually and growing, a figure representing half of all prescription drug sales in the entire world! In 2002, the combined profits of the ten largest U.S. drug companies were*

**"DOCTOR, I'M SO WORRIED MY TEENS ARE GOING TO DO DRUGS. WHAT CAN YOU GIVE ME TO CALM MY NERVES?"**

more than the combined profits of the other 490 corporations on the Fortune 500 List.

Fitzgerald further writes: Two developments in particular were instrumental in transforming the pharmaceutical industry into the money making machine it is today. In 1946 US drug makers began patenting instead of just registering individual drugs and their chemical ingredients. Patenting of individual chemical molecule combinations gave drug companies the ability to thwart competitors and to keep drug prices artificially high.

A second, equally important development came five years later when Congress passed a law requiring consumers to have prescriptions from physicians before they could purchase certain drugs. This law created a marriage of convenience between the medical industry and the drug industry. These developments in turn produced what has come to be known as *The Magic Bullet Obsession*. This is the idea that by isolating chemical compounds down to the level of single molecules, the best possible healing agents, or bullets, can be found to treat illness and disease.

**PHYSICIANS DO NOT LEARN TO REALIZE THAT PAIN IS AN IMPORTANT WAY YOUR BODY HAS OF SAYING SOMETHING NEEDS ATTENTION.**

Dr. Teitelbaum says, "The other cheap treatments have little money behind them for marketing. Natural remedies are not very profitable, and therefore, not being patentable, cannot even make it through the FDA approval process. Basically, financial motivations result in docs simply learning about pharmaceutical options." No patenting means no monopolizing the product = no profit.

"IV magnesium, a safe nutrient, is far more effective for treating migraine headaches in repeated studies than Demerol and other narcotics. Because it is only 5-10 cents a dose, doctors never see this research. Natural remedies can be more effective than prescriptions for arthritis, and much safer. Unfortunately, the NIH used the money allocated by Congress for natural CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) research on arthritis by hiring **drug company paid researchers** to study the effectiveness of glucosamine/chondroitin vs. Celebrex in arthritis. The study showed the natural treatment combo to be as or more effective than the Celebrex. Nonetheless, the study and press release implied the natural products were ineffective – use Celebrex instead – regardless of the data. This misinformation has likely contributed to tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths," and plenty of money for the makers of Celebrex.

## **POPULAR CEREAL THREATENS DRUG COMPANY PROFITS**

As powerful as the FDA is (and remember, the drug companies pay the FDA to approve drugs), it's also quite capable of feeling threatened, even by a cereal company!

"It costs hundreds of millions of dollars to get FDA approval to advertise something for medical use – so natural products to treat a disease cannot legally be advertised – the FDA even came down on Cheerios for heart disease prevention claims," says Dr. Teitelbaum.

TV commercials said that the cereal could lower cholesterol. A "warning letter" was sent to General Mills' chairman of the board and CEO, Ken Powell, on May 5, 2009, and included the following statements:

■ *FDA's review found serious violations of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act...*

■ *...we have determined that your Cheerios® Toasted Whole Grain Oat Cereal is promoted for conditions that cause it to be a drug because the product is intended for use in the prevention, mitigation, and treatment of disease.*

Dr. Teitelbaum says, "Cheerios does create some competition with expensive pharmaceuticals for cholesterol, and the FDA generally wants people (such as General Mills) to pay the cost to go through their regulatory process. As their process is too expensive for most non-patentable items to go through, however, it suggests that it is time for an important change as we proceed with healthcare reform. Otherwise, we simply have a Catch-22 that blocks the use of natural remedies in the guise of protecting the public. Here's a case where tax dollars are being used to protect the public from Cheerios so they can use dangerous cholesterol-lowering medications instead."

### THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY?

A comforting myth that the drug companies would like us to believe is that by the time the FDA approves a new drug, the product has been studied and researched exhaustively and determined to be safe.

According to Jerry Avorn in his book, "Powerful Medicines," he writes: *The FDA itself does not study any drugs prior to approval, relying on the company that makes the product to generate that information.*

*Our government depends on safety data supplied by the drug manufacturers to make its approval decisions. This makes as much sense as the fox guarding the hen house. We might hope that drug safety tests by Big Pharma are conducted without distortion and myth-truths by the highly profit motive pressures, especially since so many lives are at stake.*

Marcia Angell, the former editor-in-chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, writes in her book, "The Truth About the Drug Companies," *Widespread patterns of deception occur in these drug trials. Rigged medical studies, misrepresented research results and the propagandizing of physicians and the public by manipulative pharmaceutical companies. Is there some way companies can rig clinical studies to make their drugs look safer than they really are? The answer is yes. It happens all the time.*

Narcotics overdoses kill about 11,000 Americans every year. Dr. Teitelbaum says, "The narcotics are fairly safe when used as directed. When used in high doses to get high, and mixed with other drugs to get high, overdosing can occur – which is when and why it gets dangerous."

When used properly, narcotics stamp out quite a bit of pain.



that gentle yoga poses and meditation reduced pain associated with fibromyalgia while improving patients' ability to cope with it.

In regards to osteoarthritic conditions, yoga helps prevent or minimize the breaking down of cartilage that causes the joint pain of osteoarthritis. It also helps expand the range of motion while decreasing pain within joints that have already undergone damage. Because misalignment is a major cause of arthritic conditions, yoga poses that focus on proper alignment are of great benefit.

“Data suggests that longer-acting narcotics are less likely to cause addictive behavior than short-acting narcotics. In addition, for severe chronic pain, giving the medication on a regular basis (e.g., 2-3 times a day) to prevent pain is more effective than waiting for the pain to occur before taking the medication — with the result that less medication is needed.”

*Whether or not pain can be eradicated naturally should always be explored.* Kerr, a VP of a global technology company, says, “I do yoga 3-4 times a week. The rest of the week I work out with light weights at the gym, run and swim at least 5-6 miles a week. It takes time every day, but the benefits far outweigh the alternative. I am totally medication-free (since 2004), happy and healthier than ever!”

Dr. Teitelbaum adds, “I would note that there is also a small subset (approximately 2-5 percent) of fibromyalgia patients who experience dramatic clearing of exhaustion and fatigue, associated with their pain, with narcotic pain medications. They state that — and I’ve heard this statement many times — they ‘feel like healthy normal human beings’ when they are taking the narcotic medication. Although I have not yet figured out the biochemistry of this effect, in the future I hope to have non-narcotic alternatives that will give the same benefit.”

**Side effects for narcotics (opioids) include:** constipation, difficulty urinating, nausea and vomiting, itching, weakness, drowsiness and confusion. “Another important side effect of using opioids in men is that the narcotics will routinely drop the patient’s testosterone levels, resulting in loss of libido and sometimes difficulty with erections.”

**Side effects for anti-anxiety drugs include:** depression, memory impairment, confusion, dizziness, agitation, severe skin rash, clumsiness and blurred/double vision.

**Side effects for antidepressant drugs include:** constipation, increased appetite and weight gain, erectile dysfunction, insomnia, dizziness, fatigue, drowsiness and blurred vision.

Drugs should be used only as a last resort for non-life-threatening conditions, in proper form and dosage, when all else has failed. “Healing is both an art and science,” says Dr. Teitelbaum. “In our current system the art is being lost and the science is being hijacked by financial incentives — so we have neither. We can have both, however, and with healthcare reform occurring, we now have the opportunity as well.”