

Less is More

By Darren Starwynn, O.M.D.

We clearly live in a time on Earth when fresh solutions are needed for a myriad of pressing issues. One of the biggest ones is the need for more efficient utilization of natural resources. With human population now at 6.8 billion people and expected to reach 9 billion by 2040, resources are being increasingly stretched. Areas of scarcity include food, fresh water, habitable land and health care. The trend toward increasing consumption in the US and other affluent countries, where the wealthiest 20% of the world have used 76.6% of total private consumption, exacerbates the problem.¹

Without solutions based on new paradigms of thought these issues of scarcity for most of the human population are likely to keep worsening. Yet viable solutions do exist, and we can find them by observing the ecology of nature. There is incredible efficiency in the natural order, that is, where man has not interfered.

One aspect of the natural order we can learn a lot from is often called “Less is More”. This is the principle of producing maximum positive results through minimal application of resources and energy. Successful Olympic athletes need to master this principle to perfect their performance. Many martial arts such as Aikido use minimal application of force to defeat an opponent.

Nature is full of dramatic examples of Less is More. As an example moths and other insects release tiny amounts of chemical pheromones into the air to attract mates, who feel the pull over long distances. Based on simple calculations of amount of pheromones secreted and their dispersion, it seems that no actual molecules of the chemicals remain after traveling long distances from the producer female. Yet male moths have no problem picking up on it over those distances. Similar feats are done by bats and marine mammals that can respond to remarkably tiny sonar signals at long distances.²

Homeopathy is a medical system that proves the power of Less is More. Homeopathy, which originated in Germany in the 1700's, offers profound healing by treating patients with remedies produced from highly diluted solutions of drugs and herbs. Many homeopathic remedies are so diluted that there are few, if any molecules left of the original substance. This system is very popular in India where it is used to bring healthcare to millions of people who could not otherwise afford it. This makes sense when you consider that a few grams of a healing substance could potentially produce many thousands of doses of homeopathic medicine!

Now that debate about reforming our health care system is on the front burner in government we badly need to understand how Less is More can point the way to viable solutions in our society.

Not only does the US consume a disproportionate % of world resources, but what we do consume is often used very inefficiently. This is particularly evident in our health care economics. The USA spends more on healthcare per capita than any other country in the world, yet our quality of care was only rated 37th by a 2000 World Health Organization ranking.³

¹ The poorest fifth of human population consumed just 1.5% of world resources. Source – World Bank Development Indicators 2008

² As referenced in Chasing the Dragon's Tail by Manaka, Itaya and Birch, Paradigm Publications 1995, Chapter Two

³ The USA ranked 37th out of 191 member nations

In a 2006 forum sponsored by the National Institute for Health Care Management and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation a panel of doctors and insurers revealed some alarming statistics. By studying Medicare payments throughout the United States they saw that in some areas of the country costs are much higher than others for the same medical procedures. They also studied patient mortality rates and quality of care outcome studies. Guess what? The areas of higher spending often had higher mortality and worse patient outcomes! In plain English, higher spending often equaled worse results. One conclusion was that in the higher expenditure regions there were simply too many doctors or hospitals competing for patients, and the system was paying for more, and often unnecessary, medical tests and procedures as a result. The Dartmouth University Atlas program doing some of these studies suggested that doctor and hospitals be paid based on actual performance in helping patients rather than by amount of procedures performed.

So spending more money on health care is not always the most fruitful solution, and in the study just quoted the Less is More principle prevailed - less spending often equaled better results.

This principle has been applied to architecture and interior design. Designer Buckminster Fuller, for example, adopted the engineer's goal of "Doing more with less".⁴

There are also parallels in micro-economics. Micro-loans made directly to poor people engaged in cottage industries have improved standards of living for millions in 3rd world countries. These loans have ranged from 65 to a few thousand dollars. Micro-loan lenders report 97% loan repayments on average, an important indicator of the success of the programs.

The Less is More principle certainly holds true for acupuncture techniques and energy medicine applications.⁵ I have often heard that the most masterful senior acupuncturists from China are those that can heal difficult conditions with one or two needles. Beginning acupuncturists often try to cover all their bases by needling a multitude of points.

Although acupuncture is much less invasive than many Western medical procedures there is still much room for application of Less is More to improve our outcomes. I have extensively studied and applied the pioneering work of Yoshio Manaka, M.D. He spent decades experimenting with ways to produce maximum therapeutic results through minimal needling and applications of energy to the body.

After decades of research and careful observation Manaka determined that acupuncture affects the body on two main levels:

- 1) **Anatomic-physiologic responses** - These are measurable body functions that can be provoked by gross needling of acu-points. These include neurologic, hormonal, bio-chemical and muscle twitches responses
- 2) **Subtle energy effects** that underlie and are often masked by the anatomic-physiologic effects of acupuncture.

Manaka's research indicated that the subtle, usually immeasurable effects of acupuncture produce the most profound effects. He named this immeasurable subtle energy network the "X-Signal" system because of its hidden nature. Although the X-Signal energies cannot be directly measured with modern equipment, its effects can be clearly seen in patients through changes in abdominal and pulse indicators, kinesiology and symptomatic improvements.⁶

⁴ As quoted in book: Brand, Stewart (1999). The Clock of the Long Now. New York: Basic.

⁵ The term energy medicine refers to healing interventions using direct applications of energy to the body. Energies applied include microcurrent, light, sound and subtle energies such as scalar waves, homeopathy, prayer and the power of intention

⁶ For a thorough treatment of Manaka's research and techniques see his book Chasing the Dragon's Tail. By Manaka, Itaya and Birch, Paradigm Publications 1995

Manaka used or developed several clinical tools to balance the X-Signal system that do not trigger the anatomic-physiologic effects of acupuncture. These include ion-pumping cords, magnets, color therapy and an ion beam device. Manaka also realized the great power of polarity in correcting structural imbalances in the body and helping heal diseases. Most of his methods just mentioned are based on placing positive and negative polarity agents on sets of master acu-points.

I have extensively used Manaka's principles with subtle energy applications and have also witnessed remarkable effects. These include rapid pain reduction, improvements in structural imbalances and facial rejuvenation. The most valuable such techniques I use are microcurrent and color light meridian-based therapies. In many cases the effects of these techniques exceed the effects of needle acupuncture in rapidity of response and overall healing rate. Needle therapies will continue to have their importance however, as combinations of subtle energy therapies and acupuncture have proven very effective for many resistant conditions such as peripheral neuropathy, chronic migraines and difficult pain conditions.

Very positive therapeutic results have also been reported for stimulation of acu-points using tuning forks and Cymatics sound therapies.⁷

Conclusions

When human population levels were much lower than they are now we could use resources in inefficient and often wasteful ways and "get away with it" since the Earth's bounty is so great. That will not continue to be possible, and our race will face catastrophic consequences by not changing our ways. There are many promising solutions to the pressing issues facing us, and the Less is More principle underlies many of these.

Meaningful health care reform in our country will have to use resources more wisely with less emphasis on short-term physician and corporate profits. We will also need to utilize more preventive, lifestyle improvement and alternative therapies as has been the case in India and many European nations.

Acupuncturists can also do well to explore methods that take advantage of Less is More. We can do that by integrating subtle energy and polarity-based methods into our armamentarium of techniques. Acu-points stimulation using microcurrent, light and sound offer great benefits for improving outcomes, shortening treatment times and preventing aggravations.

The crises on our planet largely result from lack of respect for the natural order, which is based on efficient, ecologic use of energy and resources. We can help solve our worlds problems and our own by careful study of how this can be applied to our healing arts and personal lives.

⁷ Cymatics is a healing system based on projecting sound waves into living tissues. See www.cymatics.org