

The Adventist “Drug Problem”, Part 1.

John B. Hoehn, M.D.¹ Email: drhoehn@msn.com

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Seventh-day Adventists join their church assenting to certain “Fundamental Beliefs,” including this statement: *“Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well.”*²

So drunkenness, tobacco use, marijuana smoking, or cocaine sniffing are rather uncommon among members in good and regular standing. Yet Seventh-day Adventists do have a “drug problem,” but you don’t know just what I am going to write next, do you?

- a.) I might write that some of us use caffeinated beverages or are addicted to chocolate and *that is the Adventist drug problem?*
- b.) I might write that many of us treat our illnesses with the wrong kind of medicines and *that is the Adventist drug problem?*
- c.) Or I could just cut to the quick and write that many of us no longer read and trust the Spirit of Prophecy health counsels, and *that is the Adventist drug problem?*

Some of these statements may be partly true, but none of them describes what I see as the real Adventist “drug problem” from the viewpoint of a physician who sees many SDA patients.

The real Adventist “drug problem” is that many Adventists are confused about drugs.

Or if not confused we are inconsistent (isn’t that what the Bible calls a “hypocrite”?) claiming we believe one thing and yet as soon as we get sick we do another. Even worse we may be mistaken in our beliefs, stubbornly holding to a past understanding when God offers something new and better for our future.

Jesus Updated People’s Understanding

Jesus updated people’s understanding of truth when he asked the church of his day to become flexible to new ideas. *“Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”*³

Jesus’ most famous sermon (on the mount) began with a long list of things his church thought they knew from the Prophets, that he then proceeded to modify, change, or update: *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ... (Do not murder, commit adultery, break your oath. Do take a tooth for tooth and do hate your enemies)... but I tell you, ... (Don’t get angry... Love your enemies... etc.)... ”*⁴

Now in every case Jesus was not disrespecting the Prophets nor was he destroying old truths⁵, he was rescuing them. The sayings and writings had become stuck in time, they were “word bound”, so that **many people remembered what the sacred writings said, but few people remembered what they meant.**

Our Adventist confusion about the proper use of medicines and drugs may have the same cause. Is it possible that we remember what Ellen White said about “drugs,” but that we no longer understand why she said it?

If You Have Studied the Spirit of Prophecy

If you have studied the Spirit of Prophecy, you may have found words like these written by Ellen White after the June 6, 1863 Health Reform Vision in Otsego, Michigan⁶:

- *“I was shown that more deaths have been caused by drug taking than from all other causes combined.”*
- *“I tell you this because I dare not withhold it. Christ paid too much for man’s redemption to have his body so ruthlessly treated as it has been by drug medication.”*

- *“Drugs never cure disease. They only change the form and location. Nature alone is the effectual restorer, and how much better could she perform her task if left to herself.”*

As a physician I have read words written to doctors like these:

- *“Drug medication is to be discarded. On this point the conscience of the physician must ever be kept tender and true and clean.”⁷*
- *“Drug medication should be worked away from as fast as possible, until entirely discarded.”⁸*
- *“The physician who depends upon drug medication in his practice shows that he does not understand the delicate machinery of the human organism...”⁹*

My Personal Experience

As a medical student determined to keep my conscience *“tender, and true, and clean,”* I adopted the 1863 SDA bias toward treatments that were: *“Natural, Simple, Plant Based, Wholesome, and Drug Free”*. I also adopted the 1863 SDA distrust of things that were: *“Chemical, Synthetic, Manufactured, and Sold in Drug Stores.”*

However as I studied and became more experienced I found that as a doctor I now had a different “drug problem.” My problem was that this “drug free” approach to medicine would put me in jail if I applied it to your care!

- Because in 2003 those 1863 statement, as they read, are no longer *“true”*;
- The so called herbal and alternative treatments aren’t *“clean”*, and
- The state Medical Boards established to protect patients from unqualified practitioners, wouldn’t be *“tender”* towards me if I ignored the proven benefit of drugs like Penicillin, Insulin, Lidocaine, Digitalis, and Coumadin in your treatment.

So was this going to be another battle between Faith and Reason—*“God inspired it, Ellen White wrote it, and I believe it?”*

Should I pull my beloved old Adventist robes around me and say, *“Oh God, I thank you that I am not like other Physicians, using drugs and technology and science, but instead I choose complex herbs whose actions I don’t understand, and harmless placebos of minor benefit, while I struggle to ignore the facts?”*

How About You?

How about you as a patient?

- If you have appendicitis will you have surgery without anesthetic chemicals or narcotics for pain control after your operation?
- When you have prostate or breast cancer will you treat it with hot fomentations and herbal teas?
- If your child is wasting away with Diabetes will you avoid the synthetic insulins in favor of less pure but more “natural” beef or pork insulins?
- Or will you just hope and pray over your child’s condition?

If you do you will join me in the same prison cell reserved for quack practitioners, as unfit parents!

More and more some Adventists solve this dilemma by ignoring the Prophecies. We become embarrassed when Ellen White’s words don’t seem to fit reality.

In my practice some Adventist patients use drugs poorly, taking them for too short a time, for insufficient doses, and some show great anxiety about possible side effects. Could this be because we feel vaguely guilty about using “drugs” at all, so we always try to minimize our exposure to them?

Herbs and Alternative Therapies

On the other hand some SDA’s maximize their exposure to so called “alternative therapies”. We may take handfuls of herbs or chemicals or hormones (like SAM-e, Glucosamine, Chondroitin, MSM) as long as they are sold by a health food store (and therefore deemed “natural”) and not by prescription.

Some cheerfully submit to unproved “chelating” therapies, consult naturopaths, reflexologists, acupuncturists, and herbalists. Others consume quantities of vitamins in unphysiologic doses, not realizing that the definition of *drug* is “*any substance that affects the physical or mental functioning of a living organism*” and covers all substances in the health food store as well as the drug store.

Opium, heroin, marijuana, tobacco, coffee, and beer are all “natural,” “herbal,” “plant based” substances no Adventist should be consuming. Thousands of plants are natural poisons, so that the idea that “it’s herbal so it can’t hurt me” is just plain false¹⁰.

To be a faithful, prophecy-respecting Adventist do you have to put your reason on hold and deny the validity of science, statistics, and experimentation, and trust in the mysterious, untested, and testimonial based therapies?

I see the Adventist Drug Problem as follows:

- **we know *what* Ellen White said, but**
- **we don’t fully understand *why* she wrote it, and**
- **we may not understand what it *means* now.**

If you are willing to explore this topic a little further, come back next week and we’ll look at it another way.

[This is part 1 of a 3 part series by Dr. Hoehn]

¹ Dr. John B. Hoehn is a Family Physician in medical practice in Walla Walla, Washington with the Blue Mountain Medical Group. He was born into an Adventist family and baptized into the SDA church at age 13. He attended SDA church schools for all of his formal education. He earned a BA at Pacific Union College with his major in Religion under teachers like Leslie Hardinge, William Hyde, Leo Van Dolson and Robert Olson. His medical education was at Loma Linda University. He specialized in Family Practice at the University of Calgary, Foothills Hospital, Alberta, Canada. He and his wife Deanne next served the church as full time medical missionaries in Lesotho and Zambia for 12 years. In Zambia he was the Medical Director of *Mwami Adventist Hospital*. He is the past Chief of Staff for the Adventist *Walla Walla General Hospital*. He is an elder in the Walla Walla College SDA Church. These articles are partly based on a 1999 Upper Columbia Conference Camp Meeting presentation he gave with the title: “*Ellen White Didn’t Use Prozac, Should You?*”

² SDA Fundamental Beliefs No. 21, “Christian Behavior”. You can read all 27 on line at: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/index.html>

³ Matthew 9:17.

⁴ Matthew 5:21-44

⁵ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew 5:17

⁶ Ellen G. White’s Health Reform Message was first published by the “Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Mich.: 1864” as Volume 4 of a series called Spiritual Gifts, the following 3 quotations are all taken from the chapter called “Laws of Health” from pages 133 and on.

⁷ EGW, Medical Ministry, p. 227.

⁸ EGW, Medical Ministry, p. 227-8.

⁹ EGW, Selected Messages, Book 2, p. 283-4.

¹⁰ – Varro E. Tyler, Ph.D., former Dean of the Purdue University School of Pharmacy (author of *The Honest Herbal* and *Herbs of Choice*) writes: “Particularly insidious is the myth that there is something almost magical about herbal drugs that prevents them, in their natural state, from harming people.”

The Adventist “Drug Problem”, Part 2.

John B. Hoehn, M.D.

[This article is the second in a three part series. We realize that because of the prophetic health messages first given by Ellen White in 1864, Adventists have had some difficulty accepting that “miracle drugs” are true miracles.]

Here is a Biblical example of remembering what a Prophet said, but not understanding what those words meant. During Jesus’ earthly life his church was remembering and misapplying some of the inspired words of Moses. For example church members in Jesus day knew Moses had given regulations about divorce, so they generally felt this gave them legitimacy to “split.” Their conclusion was, “Divorce is OK,” and they had Moses’ words to prove it, “*write her a certificate of divorce...*”¹

But Jesus updated his church’s understanding of Moses while assuring them that he was not destroying the Law or the authority of the Prophets, but that he was fulfilling (“filling-them-full”) or restoring their original meaning, applying the principles behind the words.² He was refreshing the prophetic words that the people remembered but did not fully understand.

In essence Jesus was telling his church, “*Wait a minute, that may be what Moses said, but that’s not what it means!*” What Moses said about divorce was for a circumstance that they had forgotten. The underlying principle was not, “*Divorce is OK*”, but “*God opposes divorce and wants to restrict it to only the most hopeless circumstance.*”

I think it is possible that some of us remember what Ellen White said about drugs, but that we may not understand why she was told to say it, nor what it means for us today?

Ellen White’s World

Adventists need to know **what** Ellen White wrote about Health Care in the 1860’s, but we also need to know **why** she wrote it to understand the Divine Wisdom (principles) behind it, before we can apply those words correctly.

The world in which Ellen White and our church was living in the 1860’s was the world of the American Civil War. If you want to remember what that world looked like, think of pictures of the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln that you may have seen.

Although the SDA church’s roots go back to 1844, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was not organized until May 21, 1863. Just 16 days later God gave Ellen White a vision of “Health” on June 6, 1863, in Otswego, Michigan. The message of “Health and Healing” seems a top priority in God’s agenda for the newly organized Seventh-day Adventist church, and we have been known as a people with a “Health Message” ever since.

The first publication of this vision-inspired “Health Message” was in 1864 in the book *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 4*.³ There is a long chapter called “*Health*” followed by a shorter chapter titled “*Experience*” where Sister White adds her own family’s experience with health reform during the preceding 8 months.

The “*Health*” chapter includes:

- ✓ importance of a non-flesh diet,
- ✓ obedience to “natural law” (physiology),
- ✓ avoidance of intoxicating beverages, tobacco, snuff, tea, and coffee
- ✓ two-meals-a-day for most sedentary workers,
- ✓ fresh air and sunlight in the home.
- ✓ houses built on high ground away from the swamps to avoid “*fever and auge*”⁴ (cardinal symptoms of *malaria*--a common disease in the USA at that time of then unknown cause).

Poisonous Drugs?

Part of this first SDA “*Health*” chapter are the strong warnings against “*poisonous preparations in the vegetable and mineral kingdom*”⁵ used by “*physicians administering drugs for unknown diseases*”⁶ leading to the amazing statement that “*more deaths have been caused by drug-taking than from all other causes combined.*”

And in case you missed the point she adds, “*If there was in the land one physician in the place of thousands, a vast amount of premature mortality would be prevented. Multitudes of physicians, and multitudes of drugs, have cursed the inhabitants of the earth, and have carried thousands and tens of thousands to untimely graves.*”⁷

Why did she write that? Was it really true then? What does it mean for medical treatment now?

Medical Diagnosis and Treatment in the 1860’s

In the 1860’s the existence of bacteria (the “germ theory”) was just beginning to be discovered. In far off Europe Louis Pasteur wrote his “Germ Theory of Fermentation” in 1861, the same year that Anton Semmelweis published his observations on “Childbed Fever” suggesting it was caused by physicians who did not wash their hands between obstetrical examinations. It wasn’t till 1865 that these new-fangled European ideas were first applied to surgery by Joseph Lister⁸ in Scotland using carbolic acid to kill “germs” before an operation.

So although American physicians in 1864 knew what malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia, diabetes, boils, rheumatic fever, tonsillitis, and insanity looked like, they has no clue as to the cause of these illnesses, many of them infections, and others from failure of body organs.

Their treatments were therefore entirely “*empiric*”—that means trial and error. And at that time there were no reliable studies as to the safety or the effectiveness of the chemicals and herbs they threw at disease.

The only “*evidence*” they had was their own experience with patients (trial and error) or testimonials about the drugs from the manufacturer or other physicians (also based on “*trial and error*”). Without the careful application of scientific methods **all such anecdotal testimonies are potentially misleading** If a certain patient with a certain illness was given a certain chemical they might seem to get better, or they might seem to get worse. But they never really knew if it was because of the drug or in spite of it! As Ellen White wrote, “*When drugs are introduced into the system, for a time they may seem to have a beneficial effect.*”⁹ Neither the actual long term outcome of such treatments, nor the reasons why they were helpful or harmful were known.

What “Drugs” Were Used in the 1860’s?

In general drug therapies at that time were based on the idea that “*purging the system*” was a good thing, so most of the drugs used were felt to be helpful if they caused diarrhea or vomiting. For example the herbal “*Nux vomica*”¹⁰ was widely used for many conditions, because it caused the patient to vomit. This supposedly “*cleanse the system*”. We know this drug today by the name *strychnine*.

I own a copy of a standard American medical textbook called *The Science and Practice of Medicine*,¹¹ published in 1868. In this book are listed descriptions of diseases I recognize today. Also listed are the treatments then recommended for those illnesses. The following chart extracts some of the diseases and treatments advised:

"The Science and Practice of Medicine," 1868 American edition.

Disease	Treatments Advised 1868	= Notes of Explanation
GOUT Page 81. (Elevated uric acid causing painful inflamed joints.)	"Sulphates of magnesia... Tincture of hyoscamus, Syrup of poppies... Colchicum or Meadow-saffron Mercury in the form of "blue pill" or in the form of "compound calomel pill"	=MgSO ₄ , Epsom salts, a laxative. =Atropine-like herb. =Opium solution. =A root containing colchicines still used in a purified form. =A toxic heavy metal.
R H E U M A T I C F E V E R, Page 53. (Inflammation of heart after streptococcal infection.)	"Venisection, calomel combined with purgatives and opium are the three remedies which have been most generally made use of."	= bleeding, blood letting. = mercurous chloride (HgCl) a toxic heavy metal. = Illegal narcotic from poppies.
BERRI BERRI, Page 123-4. (Riboflavin deficiency, a vitamin shortage)	"Bleeding... squill and Digitalis... spirits of nitre, Antimonial wine... and a nourishing diet."	= blood letting, bleeding. =white arsenic a poison. = cardiac stimulant used for other diseases today. =nitrate in alcohol. = a poisonous heavy metal. = at last something that would help if B vitamins were in the diet!
DIABETES Page 175. (High blood sugar, treated by insulin injections or diet and oral medications.)	"Bleeding... Mercury, Alike with lead Antimony, Zinc, Silver, And Copper... Opium... Iron... Diets..."	= blood letting. = toxic heavy metal. = toxic heavy metal = toxic heavy metal = small amounts necessary, large amounts toxic. = non-toxic metal. = small amounts necessary, large amounts toxic. = illegal narcotic from poppies. = small amounts necessary, large amounts toxic.
MELANCHOLIA Page 408. (Depression, here PMS)	"Leeches to the vulva and thighs...are beneficial in cases of ...melancholia concurrent with the menstrual periods."	= leeches are parasites that suck blood out of the body, used for bleeding or blood letting. (This treatment for PMS is no longer in common use!)
COMMON COLD Page 699.	"The symptoms of a 'common cold'... may be at once subdued in a healthy person by...one grain of opium or a fourth of a grain of morphia at bedtime."	= opium or morphine for a common cold! No wonder God had Ellen White give the alarm.

In almost every case the drugs advised are either narcotics or toxic chemicals now banned or restricted from human exposure by the EPA!

God Uses a Prophet

The anti-poisonous drug message given through Ellen White was a great blessing for Seventh-day Adventists. The average life expectancy in the 1860s was about 40 years. Adventists who stopped the use of tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, strychnine, opium, mercury, arsenic, the irrational use of digitalis or quinine and in their place used a vegetarian diet, limited sugar intake, rest, sunlight, water treatments, and a few simple, harmless, safe herbs were surely blessed by this advice.

But this Adventist health message was part of a worldwide, non-sectarian reform movement slowly starting that would end up with worldwide benefits. It hadn't happened before Ellen White died in 1915, but the seeds of health care reform had been planted and both the medical profession and governmental regulation of drugs made slow and steady changes for the better.

God Uses Governmental Regulations

As early as 1880 a Food and Drug law was proposed in the US Senate, but powerful industrial lobbies prevented it from being passed till **1906** (46 years after Ellen White gave her first Health Reform message) when the first **Food and Drug Act** was passed.¹² This law required **purity** in drugs. It prohibited adulterated or misbranded drugs from being used in interstate commerce. (It did **not** address the issues of "safety" or for "efficacy".)

It took till **1938** (74 years after the Health Reform message) when the next **Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act** required that before a drug could be sold, it first had to be tested for **safety**. That is it had to be shown that the drug did not kill people or shorten their lives before it was brought onto the market. (This still did not require testing that a drug worked as claimed.)

Finally in **1962** the **Kefauver-Harris Amendment** required proof of **efficacy** before a drug could be sold. And this standard (that a drug was *pure, safe, and it worked as claimed*) was not applied to over-the-counter drugs like Aspirin and Tylenol until 1972, a project that was not completed till **1981**, 117 years after Ellen White proclaimed the drugs of her day poisons to be avoided.

Since 1962 any drug brought to the US market has had to be exhaustively tested to show that it is **pure, safe, and effective** before it can be sold in the USA. This is an expensive process and is done under scientific scrutiny. Even so some drugs have side effects not know before they are marketed, so how can we be protected against that? Each drug has post-marketing-surveillance where side effects and complications are recorded and studied, and drugs with unacceptable side effects, even those that work, are removed from the market when serious side effects are found.

Are Some Still Unhappy With This Article?

I realize that by now, I may have lost credibility with some good Adventist people who have read this far. I realize that they have invested a lot of faith in the Spirit of Prophecy and by personal experience have proved that a Bible diet, combined with exercise and good habits, has given them improved health. Especially if they are generally healthy, they may not be ready to believe that when Ellen White said, "Don't use drugs, they are poisons," she wasn't talking about the prescription drugs now available for medical treatment.

Isn't it too much to ask for someone to give up deeply held convictions of a lifetime, and to accept that what Ellen White had to say about medical drugs in 1864, is what she might now say about herbal concoctions sold in health food stores?

Yes, I think it is, so I won't ask that.

Let's just agree on these two conclusions:

- **That when Ellen White condemned "drugs" she was at that time speaking of poisons no longer medically used or narcotics now used only for severe pain control.**
- **That it is not enough to remember the words a Prophet uses, we have an obligation to understand the meaning of the words, the Divine Wisdom behind the words.**

If this is fair enough we can visit once more and talk about rediscovering the Divine Wisdom in the Health writings of Ellen White with our third and final installment.

[This was part 2 of a 3 part series.]

¹ See Matthew 19:7-9, based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4 acknowledging the existence of divorce in that culture. The Mosaic statute seems to have been an attempt to prevent casual divorce or wife swapping by men of that day. It was in fact a restriction on the custom of divorce, not an approval of it.

² “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew 5:17.

³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 4, pages 120-154.

⁴ Auge=chills or shakes, a symptom of malaria.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* Volume 4, page 140.

⁶ *ibid*, page 135.

⁷ *ibid*, page 133.

⁸ The common mouthwash *Listerene* is named in his honor!

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* Volume 2, page 451.

¹⁰ “Nux Vomica = the strychnine containing seed, used in medicine, of the orangelike fruit born by an East Indian tree *Strychnos nuxvomica*, in the family *Loganiaceae*.” *New Webster’s Dictionary*.

¹¹ *The Science and Practice of Medicine*, by William Aitken, M.D. Edin., Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston. 1868. The title page reads: “Second American Edition from the Fifth, Enlarged and Carefully Revised, London Edition, Adopting the New Nomenclature of the Royal College of Physicians of London. With Large Additions, by Meredith Clymer, M.D., Ex-professor of the Institutes and Practice of Medicine in the University of New York; Formerly Physician to the Philadelphia Hospital. Etc. Etc.”

¹² The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a good public Web site with information on the history of FDA legislation, <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/7history.html>.

The Adventist “Drug Problem”, Part 3.

John B. Hoehn, M.D.

[This article is the last of a three part series. We have seen that Adventists can be confused about what pure, safe, and effective medicines are. We have seen how the Prophetic Health Reform messages were a great blessing to believers. It took secular society 117 years to reform prescription drugs, after Ellen White raised the alarm.]

Some Seventh-day Adventists consider the question of the use of medical drugs like they consider the question of the Seventh-day Sabbath-- *that most of the world is wrong and only we, a small remnant, are right.* We may also hold on to a 19th century bias against prescription drugs and favor non-prescription drugs we consider “natural,” even in this 21st century, because we want to be true to the Spirit of Prophecy.

For example we realize that the common mental illness called “depression” is often a genetic condition with a chemical basis. We still worry about taking pharmaceutical grade treatment (Prozac, Zoloft, Effexor, Paxil, Celexa). If we or a loved one suffer from depression, we would prefer a herbal antidepressant, especially when it has a nice Biblical sounding name like “St. John’s Wort.”

If we have chronic allergies and get an infection such as sinusitis, tonsillitis, or bronchitis, some of us really would prefer to treat it with some sort of “natural,” “herbal” drug like Echinacea or Tea Tree Oil instead of a prescription antibiotic.

When we finally feel we just have to get a prescription like Amoxicillin, Tetracycline, Cephalexin, or Levofloxin because our sinusitis has turned into a pneumonia, we may do so with a sense of failure. We blame ourselves (“I got a chill.” “I ate too much sugar.”) instead of blaming the germs Satan has put into the biosphere.

Sometimes when we face cancer, we feel this may be the result of being “slack about Health Reform” and we decide to fight cancer with a more strict vegetarian diet or we choose to use herbal drugs like Essiac Tea, or take mega-vitamin supplements. Some “alternative” practitioners will suggest you drink more than physiologic amounts of water (more than 8 glasses a day) in an attempt to drown cancer. Some would encourage you to reject studied, evidence-based chemotherapy, radiation, or surgical treatments, hoping that God will bless this rejection of science and reward your sincerity and simplicity with healing.

Alternative Medicine is Big Business

Our bias against prescription drugs is reinforced when we read infomercials by marketers or manufacturers of “herbal” or “nutritional” substances. They repeat stories of medical side effects from prescription medications proposing that they offer you a “more wholesome, natural, safer” way of treatment. They use testimonials to support their claims. Or they report that they too have “clinical studies” (although the “studies” rarely meet scientific validity.) The common denominator is that all offer to sell you some product, often at considerable cost to justify extravagant claims.

Many good Adventists feel more comfortable with belief than evidence, with hope than data, and therefore with herbal drugs than with prescription drugs.

Health practitioners whose professions who have not followed Osteopathic and Medical professions in submitting their practice to scientific scrutiny, often suggest that their methods, while not as scientific, are more natural, more spiritual, more holistic? Although the Spirit of Prophecy directed the church to train qualified Medical Doctors² instead of Osteopaths, Chiropractors, or Homeopaths³, some feel that even non-Adventist Naturopaths or Herbalists are closer to the writings of Ellen White than our own SDA, Loma Linda University-trained, physicians and our church-related hospitals.

Let’s Go Back to Inspired Sources

We can’t argue against all alternative health ideas just because they are “big business,” because orthodox health care is big business too, and prescription drugs are sometimes very expensive. Instead, as fellow believers in the Scriptures and in the ministry of Ellen White, let’s review the Prophetic counsel. We won’t

look for “words” alone but look for the Divine principles behind those words. This way we can know not only what we should have done in 1864, but also what we should do today to make prudent, God-fearing health care decisions.

Health Principles Given by Moses:

I find four of the 10 Commandments speak directly to the issue of what medicines Adventists should choose.

Commandment	Principle	Possible Medical Application?
<i>Thou shalt not kill.</i>	Love Life--don't shorten it.	Use medicines that are proven to prolong life, that are efficacious, that work.
<i>Thou shalt not commit adultery.</i>	Love Purity--don't mix things that don't belong together.	Use medicines that are pure, purified. Try to avoid complex, irrational combinations whenever possible.
<i>Thou shalt not steal.</i>	Love Rights--respect personal property, pay a fair price for what you take.	Use medicines that are cost effective, and price them fairly. A cheap medicine that doesn't work is robbery. An expensive medicine that does its job may be a true bargain.
<i>Thou shalt not bear false witness.</i>	Love Truth.	Don't make extravagant, untested claims or pseudo-scientific presentations for medicines. Use truthful scientific methods such as the "double blind, placebo controlled" study to find out if a substance really works. Don't rely on testimonials for evidence.

Health Principles given by Ellen White:

<p>The Lord has provided antidotes for diseases... and these can be used by faith, with no denial of faith; for by using the blessing provided by God for our benefit we are cooperating with Him. We can use water and sunshine and the herbs which He has caused to grow in healing maladies brought on by indiscretion or accident. We do not manifest a lack of faith when we ask God to bless His remedies. True faith will thank God for the knowledge of how to use these precious blessings in a way which will restore mental and physical vigor. --Selected Messages Book 2, page 289.</p>	<p>When these words were written in the 19th century, the only safe drugs were "simple herbs." The Divine principle is that God in love will give humankind "precious blessings", "antidotes for diseases", "remedies" for both physical and "mental" problems. And that we are to accept these blessings with thankfulness. What happens if we apply this Divine principle to "antidotes for diseases" discovered after Ellen White's death like: Penicillin, Insulin, Thyroid, Lidocaine, Tylenol, and Prozac?</p>
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<p>The kingly power of reason, sanctified by Divine grace, is to bear sway in the life. Intellectual power, physical stamina, and the length of life depends upon immutable laws." --Prophets and Kings, Page 488. The Lord has given us reason and intelligence, and he expects us to use them in the right direction. --The Youth's Instructor, September 13, 1894</p>	<p>We are here encouraged to use reason, not feelings, in making decisions. Ask questions, study the evidence, make evidence-based decisions, and if there isn't enough evidence, ask God to graciously give you the right answer.</p>
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<p>The endless variety of medicines in the market, the numerous advertisements of new drugs and mixtures, all of which, as they say, do wonderful cures, kill hundreds where they benefit one. Those who are sick are not patient. They will take the various medicines, some of which are very powerful, although they know nothing of the nature of the mixtures.</p> <p align="center">– How to Live, No.3, pages 49-6</p>	<p>This warning concerned addicting and poisonous drugs available over the counter in 1864. It does not apply to prescription drugs today. These words could however apply to the large numbers of unregulated, “nutritional” and “herbal” drugs that are exempted from the FDA “purity, safety, and efficacy” laws that control prescription drugs.</p>
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<p>Christ is the true head of the medical profession. The Chief Physician, He is at the side of every God-fearing practitioner who works to relieve human suffering. While the physician uses nature’s remedies for physical disease, he should point his patient to Him who can relieve the maladies of both the soul and the body.</p> <p align="center">--Ministry of Healing, page 111.</p>	<p>God’s truth is not anti-physician, nor anti-medication. He is not the Chief Naturopath, the Chief Homeopath, the Chief Chiropractor... He is the Chief Physician.</p>
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<p>God is the author of science. Scientific research opens to the mind vast fields of thought and information, enabling us to see God in His created works.</p> <p align="center">--Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, page 426.</p>	<p>God’s truth is not anti-scientific, nor anti-research.</p>
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<p>Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error...I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity...</p> <p align="center">--Selected Messaged, Book 2, page 56.</p>	<p>If you sincerely believe that herbal, non-scientific treatments are God’s will, won’t God honor your belief and the sincerity of you faith?</p> <p>Not unless what you believe is in fact True.</p>
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<p>The truth of God is progressive; it is always onward, going from strength to a greater strength, from light to a greater light...In our knowledge of truth, there is first a beginning in our understanding of it, then a progression, then completion; first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. Much has been lost because our ministers and people have concluded that we have had all the truth essential for us as a people; but such a conclusion is erroneous and in harmony with the deceptions of Satan; for truth will be constantly unfolding.</p> <p align="center">--Signs of the Times, May 26, 1890.</p>	<p>Why would God condemn common drugs in 1864 and then want me to use prescription drugs in 2003? Isn’t this confusing?</p> <p>No it’s not confusing, It’s gracious. God graciously applies the Truth to conditions in 1864, but He expects us to move on to apply the Truth to new conditions in 2003.</p>
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<p>The Word of God presents special truths for every age. The dealings of God with His people in the past should receive our careful attention. We should learn the lessons which they are designed to teach us. But we are not to rest content with them. God is leading out His people step by step. Truth is progressive. The earnest seeker will be constantly receiving light from heaven. What is truth? Should ever be our inquiry. --Signs of the Times, May 26, 1881.</p>	<p>Should we just ignore what Ellen White wrote in the 19th century? No not at all. We need to study that advice, apply that which still is applicable, and learn the principles of that application that will help us make decisions today.</p>
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Aren't There Side Effect with Prescription Drugs?

Yes, of course there are legitimate concerns about prescription drugs, and about non-prescription drugs, and about herbal drugs, and about spices and flavoring agents, and some foods. Some people have multiple-chemical sensitivity⁴ and can get sick from medicines that the rest of us have no trouble with.

With prescription drugs the common side effects are usually known and you can read what percent of people taking a drug will have as side effects such as “nausea”, “headache”, “vertigo”, or break out with “rashes.” The percentages of side effects varies from less than 1% to as high as 15% or more for some side effects such as drowsiness. What this means is that for every 100 people taking this medicine, 1 or 15 respectively will have a symptom. **This also means that 85 to 99 of them will not have that symptom, but feel quite fine.** So most of the time you have an excellent chance of not having any side effects.

Some powerful drugs necessary for severe illnesses such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, or cancers, require frequent blood testing to prevent serious side effects. But even these drugs used under direction of a competent physician, may save your life (*Thou Shalt not Kill*), or prevent crippling misery when used appropriately.

Over-usage of antibiotics is presently a hot topic in the media, and there may be validity in not using antibiotics for purely viral illness⁵. If your infection gets better or improves on its own within 5-7 days, you possibly don't need an antibiotic to help you. But herbal “antibiotics” and “immune system stimulators” rarely are helpful. Most of them are just placebos, and a few of them have as many side effects as prescription medications, contrary to the claims of their promoters.⁶

How Can We Know What is Good?

There are many unbiased sources for information on good medicines. Your primary care physician is an excellent source of information. She/he deals with many patients every day and has hands on experience with medicines. And although she/he may not be a member of our church, they are committed to most of the ten commandments by their profession—they don't bear false witness, they don't kill, they believe in purity in their treatment, etc.

Many internet web sites are available, but again I'd advise an ethical one such as <http://www.drkoop.com/> or <http://familydoctor.org/>. *Consumer Reports*⁷ often gives unbiased evaluations for consumers of medicines. The *Nutrition Action Health Newsletter*⁸ is a diet advice journal free of advertising that supports scientifically almost all of Ellen White's nutritional advice, simply based on scientific data. They have no religious connection to our church that I know of, but the God who sends His rain on the just and the unjust alike, wants His truth widely available. And wants all His creation to have pure, safe, and effective remedies available to them.

So, What do You Think?

- **Would Ellen White still recommend the health habits, diet, exercise, and sanitation that worked in the 19th century for today? --**
- **Might Ellen White still recommend simple, safe, scientifically-tested herbs for simple problems today? –**

- If Ellen White were alive today would she recommend the highly promoted, slickly advertised, non-prescription, complex-mixtures of herbs of unknown actions, sold in health food stores or over the Internet and exempted from the scrutiny of a watchdog organization like the FDA? –
- Would Ellen White condemn the use of modern, “miracle,” FDA-supervised, prescription drugs that have been proven to be pure, safe, effective, and life-prolonging?

Here’s a Hint:

*“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.
Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,
who does not change
like shifting shadows.”⁹*

¹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration Web site with information on the history of FDA, <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/7history.html>.

² Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, May 19, 1910.

³ Richard Schaefer, LLU Alumni Journal, October-December, 2000, page 7.

⁴ Some of these unfortunate “chemically sensitive” people turn out to have a genetic defect called porphuria, so common chemicals benign to the rest of us, make them very ill.

⁵ Although many illnesses are symbiotic with the viral illness paving the way for bacteria to act up too, so you begin with a simple viral cold but end up with a bacterial sinusitis! In which case antibiotics may be necessary for what began as a “simple cold”.

⁶ “Quack-watch” is an internet site dedicated to exposing health care fraud and shams. <http://www.quackwatch.com/> It reviews such topics as: *Acupuncture. Aromatherapy. Cellulite Removers. Chelation Therapy. Colloidal Silver. DHEA. Ear Candling. Herbal Practices and Products. Homeopathy. Juicing. Magnet Therapy. Naturopathy. Therapeutic Touch. Wild Yam Cream*, and many more.

⁷ Subscription Director, *Consumer Reports*, P.O. Box 53029, Boulder, Colorado 80322-3029, or www.ConsumerReports.org .

⁸ *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, CSPI, 1875 Conn. Ave., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009, or www.cspinet.org .

⁹ James 1:16,17.

HERE IS A SIDE BAR:

Rx:

The Doctor Prescribes:

- 1) Follow the Biblical health habits and vegetarian diet emphasized by the Spirit of Prophecy. (The “Ministry of Healing” is her most timeless health advice and a wonderful spiritual guide.)
- 2) If you are sick, Use FDA tested OTC remedies for mild problems, or SIMPLE herbal remedies that have proven to be safe and effective.
- 3) Avoid herbals that claim to have magical powers, or are complex mixtures of different substances.
 - a) Advice from the people selling a product is not unbiased or reliable, even when well-meaning or sincere.
 - b) Don’t buy anything medical promoted by advertising received on line or in the mail, especially if it is “secret,” “ancient,” or from a hard to get foreign source!
 - c) “Natural” is not always a synonym for good.
- 4) Use Physical Therapy and Massage Therapy for muscular problems. Some Chiropractors use these rational modalities as well. Acupuncture may help symptoms but is based on false theories of healing of pagan origin.
- 5) Consult a well trained Physician (MD or Osteopathic) for serious medical problems.
 - a) If prescription drugs are advised, find out if this is highly effective or just optional, and what would happen if you didn’t take them?
 - b) When you use prescription medicines, use them exactly as directed, and for as long as directed.
 - c) Generics when available are usually safe and effective.
 - d) Side effects if mild may be better than the disease, or perhaps could be lessened by changing medicine or the dose, so ask your doctor at the next visit.
 - e) Don’t complain about medicines, thank God for them every day.