

THE DELICATE BALANCE OF THE HUMAN ECOSYSTEM

by Glenn R. Hoey, ND, CSCS, ACSM

I wonder if many of us understand the relationship between our health and the disruption of our natural, earthly surroundings. When nature is in a perfect balance, everything is beautiful, healthy, and wonderfully efficient. All too often, we see a planet that is seriously out of balance-ravaged by the side-effects of technology. Our body is much like our planet: a complex interaction of several ecosystems, in which various types of cells and organisms struggle to survive in a delicate, yet strictly-controlled, fluid environment. The slightest disruption can bring dis-ease-or lack homeostasis (the wonderful ebb and flow of cellular activity).

As a Naturopathic Physician, I have been taught to recognize and respect this delicate balance of life. Hippocrates, long considered “the father of modern medicine” taught his students to “first do no harm.” He recognized that the physician’s role was to assist the patient to recover health by using gentle and natural treatments to restore balance, or homeostasis.

Conventional medical care today consists largely of very powerful medications or invasive surgery. Unfortunately, Hippocrates’ methods and philosophies are only given lip service. Modern doctors rarely take time to educate patients on how to stay well, and our society has long been conditioned to go to doctors only when something is wrong, and then to take a medicine only for a short period of time to improve the symptoms.

Here is a common example: A person develops an infection (“catches a bug” is the popular term). He or she goes to the doctor who diagnoses the infection and prescribes an antibiotic. The patient takes the antibiotic for a certain period of time and it doesn't seem to take care the infection.

Now let’s look at this more closely. First of all, an infection occurs when one or more of the body’s ecosystems has been disturbed due to stress, changes in PH, lack of proper nutrient intake, etc. the infection goes away, but the patient diarrhea and a skin rash from taking the antibiotic.

An opportunistic organism (a “bug”) seizes the moment and begins to multiply, which further upsets the balance. Symptoms occur as a result of the body’s defense mechanism (immune system) reaction to an “unfriendly” organism that is causing tissue damage. At this point, the doctor intervenes and prescribes the antibiotic. The antibiotic interrupts the life cycle of the “unfriendly” organism; unfortunately, “friendly” organisms with similar life cycles are destroyed as well.

Many patients receive antibiotic treatment so often that “unfriendly” organisms in their bodies can develop antibiotic resistance, making it difficult to fight certain infections. Stronger antibiotics may be prescribed when milder ones fail. The stronger the medicine, the more potential damage to the body’s ecosystem, and the more challenge to restore health to that individual in the long run.

We must continue to advocate preventive care and develop the excellent natural therapies that exist now. Modern medicines have their place, and no doubt have saved many lives over the years. But many people suffer side-effects of treatments that become as bad as the initial problems. We need to realize that this delicate human ecosystem flourishes only when it receives its proper nutrient balance. It also responds best to gentle, timely treatment for disease.