

Now I lay me down to sleep . . .

terminally ill patients should rely on healing powers of traditional medicine, not mystical power of prayer

The August 8th issue of *Woman's World* magazine reports new research showing that no matter what individuals do for, better physical health is the result. The magazine reports that spirituality and religious beliefs can protect individuals from disease.



ALISON LACKEY
columnist

"Religious people are less likely to suffer from cancer," reports Peg Verone, author of *Harness the Healing Power of Faith*. Within Verone's article, a new Hampshire Dartmouth Medical Center study reports patients who had "strong faith" were 14 times less likely to die after open heart surgery than those who did not. And each of the 37 patients in the study who claimed to be deeply religious made a full recovery.

Spiritual suggestions such as these are downplaying the significance and efficiency of modern medicine. The spiritual aspect of improving physical health should only, at most accompany modern medicine. It should not be the sole provider of health care.

Within the article, various statistics and reasons such as this explain why personal spiritual growth is cited to be a valid cure for terminal illness. However, the problem is that often times, the validity of the power of spiritual growth convinces patients to drop their modern medicinal therapies.

With the knowledge of these new studies, would religious leaders feel relieved to know they do not have a serious illness? It is absurd to think this is true.

What constitutes strong faith anyway? It seems individuals do not all have an equal value of faith. The intensity of faith is different for each person. Therefore, these studies seem to be without credibility.

Presently, our traditional concept of cancer is being challenged by researchers and doctors who use spiritual and religious methods.

However, discoveries of traditional science suggest the causes of cancer are genetic or chromosomal damage from radiation and chemicals. Modern science also suggests cancer leads to death if not treated. Therefore, it is important to find it early and treat it by killing diseased tissue with surgery, chemotherapy, etc.

With these methods, there are several questions and problems that some crusaders of spiritual and religious healing have with modern medicine. Teachers of spiritual healing seem to believe other issues prompt cancer and other terminal diseases.

Geerd Ryke Hamer, German physician, dubbed "the German faith healer," believes the causes of cancer are a "person's life situation, his or her practical, emotional and social problems."

It is a challenge to believe attending a religious service or meditating on a living room rug can significantly improve one's chances of not developing cancer. These things do not protect an individual from cancer.

Of course, it would be a spiritually uplifting experience to meditate or pray, but the link between the physical and the spiritual concerning protecting oneself from cancer and heart disease seems non-existent.

It is understandable that when individuals face intense pain accompanied by the threat of death, prayer and meditation allow the patient to cope with the disease. However, it seems a patient would be open to alternative concepts of healing.



GRAPHIC BY TIMOTHY KANG / THE BATTALION

Patients undergoing the horrific strain of terminal illness will exhaust options. His or her determination and desperation creates validity for any type of method.

However, it is important to stress that a spiritual life of prayer does not cure or protect an individual from cancer.

Furthermore, individuals should not take this specific plan of action to ensure that disease will not dominate and complicate their lives. This type of use and abuse of prayer for future physical well

being is manipulative.

It is understandable if someone already afflicted with disease would pray and seek spiritual healing to accompany his or her modern medical plan.

But, the healing power of faith should not be a patient's only plan. Patients should rely on healing powers of traditional medicine.

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MIKE LUCKOVICH
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Medical studies, science draw parallel between prayer, health

It really is not surprising to hear the claim that prayer can contribute to quicker, fuller recoveries for illness and surgery. Nor is the boast that people of faith are happier and healthier than their faithless counterparts astounding.



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

What is surprising to many people, though, is that science is the entity making these claims. Several recent medical studies have indicated something we all learned in Sunday school — prayer is good medicine for the body and soul. As these studies show, contrary to popular opinion, science and religion can make good bedfellows.

A study at New Hampshire's Dartmouth Medical Center found patients who had "strong faith" were 14 times less likely to die after open-heart surgery than those who didn't. Furthermore, each of 37 patients who described themselves as "deeply religious" made full recoveries.

Harold G. Koenig, director of the Center for the Study of Religion, Spirituality and Health at Duke University, said behavior surrounding religious beliefs can contribute to better health. "We're beginning to see that having faith in God or a higher power can be a powerful force in healing," Koenig said.

Whether these improvements in recovery were because of divine intervention or some sort of placebo effect is irrelevant. The fact is, some sort of connection exists between faith and health.

But this connection is not news. After all, the faithful al-

ways believed God can heal sickness. The real news is that science is in agreement with what faithful people already knew.

This assumption that science and religion cannot stand in agreement is a fallacy. People often make the mistake of assuming science and religion are diametrically opposed.

Too often, we are made to choose one or the other — evolution or creationism, natural phenomenon or miracles, scientific fact or religious faith.

But saying the universe is completely bound by observable scientific principle trivializes religion and exaggerates

sometimes do work in similar directions.

Actually, the Dartmouth study is not the first instance where the secular world has acknowledged faith can be a means toward recovery from sickness.

Consider Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Since 1935, AA has helped more than two million alcoholics recover from their disease. AA has garnered respect and praise around the world and has inspired the similar 12-step programs for other addictions.

Interestingly, AA's 12-step program is based around a belief that God can help an alcoholic overcome his or her addiction.

Consider step two of AA's program, where the alcoholic "comes to believe that a power greater than himself can restore his sanity."

Step 11 in the AA plan takes an even more drastic step. In it, the alcoholic "seeks through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as he understands Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Here is an extraordinarily successful program that has for the past 63 years been helping alcoholics recover by encouraging them to seek help from God. Yet, AA is widely accepted as a legitimate method of treating alcoholism despite the fact that it encourages its members to seek healing through religious faith.

If faith in God can heal people from alcoholism, surely it can heal them of other ailments. This seems to be the conclusion medical science is just discovering.

Maybe there really is something to faith healing after all.

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Media ignores consequence

The horrific murders that have taken place in the nation's Capitol would appall Americans.



JEFF DOWNING
guest columnist

Only speculation can let the investigators peer into the intentions of the deprived individual who committed the heinous crime. Perhaps the murderer's intentions are an extension of the disgust that originates in the public's perception of the U.S. government through the eyes of an inadequate media. The media, a necessary facet of American life, can sometimes disappoint the consumer of accurate, informed news.

The latest approval ratings of President Bill Clinton have reached 67 percent. However, one must ask if this rating gives the public a true measure of his performance concerning the issues facing our country, or if it is a measure of his "Hollywood" appeal. Clinton is not alone when it comes to being critiqued by the prying eyes of the media. Public figures such as Newt Gingrich or even someone much further down the totem pole of

influence, a presidential intern for example, also are victims of the dumbing down of the American people by an uncaring media.

This is not to say the media are the sole reason for the degradation of American life, although the quality of those elected to public office has declined to nothing more than mediocre, and the media are largely responsible.

The media play a large role in how information, or misinformation as the case may be, concerning the state of the nation gets circulated to citizens. Party differences are tearing apart the fabric that holds the nation together, and it seems the nightly news does nothing but display the latest sexual escapades of public officials on Capitol Hill.

This is not to say the moral constitutions of individuals in elected positions are of no importance; however, issues concerning the well being of the nation, such as tobacco legislation or health care reform, should take precedence in the news world over the party line quibblings and character debates that are commonplace in Washington, DC.

Few media representatives take the initiative to ask the question, "Should we take this as far as we can?" The media report their stories without taking into consideration the hurt it might bring to those involved.

There must be some line the press cannot cross. I am not calling for limits or restrictions on the press (for all of you who are screaming First Amendment Rights). I am calling for some self-evaluation on the part of those who bring Americans the news. And Americans, as a caring public, must demand more of the media they are subjected to.

The social fabric of this country can be torn by misinformation. It is the patriotic responsibility of those who consider themselves members of the media to bring the American public enough accurate information so the average citizen can be well informed in regard to the government under which he or she resides.

Beyond providing relevant information to the polity, media representatives must sort through the information and use their moral and civic minded judgment to decide what is newsworthy and what is rubbish.

It must also be stated the American public is not without blame. The news reported is enough to satisfy the majority of the citizens who want nothing more than tabloid stories and "Jerry Springer" excitement. The nation must demand more of its media and the media must conform the ebbing demands of the American public.

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