

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES & THE DRUG INDUSTRY

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If an alternative therapy isn't scientifically proven to work, at least according to the massed ranks of self-styled sceptics, is that the same thing as saying it doesn't work?

According to the sceptics, it is the same because, in their eyes, science is truth, and they've built a graveyard of 'unproven' alternative therapies on their happy hunting ground, Wikipedia.

On a page titled 'List of topics characterized as pseudoscience', (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_topics_characterized_as_pseudoscience), alternative therapies are described as 'quackery'. By contrast, conventional medicine is 'evidence-based' and, by implication, if not explicitly stated, it works. If a conventional therapy, procedure or drug didn't work according to science, it wouldn't be used.

By comparison, not a single alternative therapy passes muster. The so-called quack therapies include acupuncture, adrenal fatigue, Alexander Technique, any and every alternative cancer treatment (214 at the last count), anthroposophical medicine, applied kinesiology, aromatherapy, ayurvedic medicine. . . and that's just the A's.

Others that get a punishment beating include homeopathy (natch), chiropractic, detoxing, faith healing, Bach flower remedies, iridology, macrobiotic diets, naturopathy, osteopathy, reiki, Traditional Chinese Medicine, reflexology and functional medicine.

But that's not a true picture of real life. We all know people who've been helped by an alternative therapy, and you may be among them—so how could you be helped by something that isn't scientific and, by definition, can't work?

Let's start with scepticism: sceptics aren't actually sceptics. A true sceptic doesn't believe anything unless he or she sees it or experiences something directly. I can be told that Britain is an island, and even see it for myself on a map, but unless I walk the entire coastline for myself, I can't state categorically that I live on an island.

By the same measure, the fact that a medical study tells me a drug works doesn't mean it does. The study could be false, or the data manipulated—and that's exactly what happens in more than 70 percent of medical studies, according to The Lancet journal.

Take away the fraud and data manipulation, and very few drugs have been proven to be effective, and, because of ethical reasons, no surgery has been tested under the rigorous gaze of the double-blind placebo study.

No, sceptics are in fact zealots: they have a view of the world, and anything that doesn't fit that—such as alternative medicine or 'woo-woo' stuff—is not true and needs to be crushed.

They are guided by the scientific method, but they don't see its limitations. Science has brought us many comforts and conveniences, but it works because it measures things. To achieve a

meaningful measurement, we need mass (of space, objects and people), and one person isn't a scientifically valid sample.

With mass, and a statistically significant sample, we can mass produce stuff, such as cars, clothes, furniture and, yes, drugs. That was the starting point of modern medicine: the ability to mass produce petroleum biproducts into pharmaceuticals that could be effective for some people some of the time. With that ability came the need to prove the drugs were effective, and so was born the large drug trial, and, as the approach became more sophisticated, the chemical compound was tested against a sugar pill, or placebo, to demonstrate that any benefits weren't all 'in the heads' of the participants.

But because there was little, if any, difference between the drug and placebo, fraud and manipulation became common as the research team, funded by the drug company whose drug was being tested, wanted to deliver the result they were paid to achieve.

In any event, you're not everybody, you're you. A meaningful outcome for you is one where a therapy achieves a result, and one that's true for you. And that's exactly what happens with alternative medicine, and it's happened billions of times down the years.

Alternative medicine may not pass the scientific test—it recognises the unique characteristics of every individual and so cannot always play the scientific game of mass outcomes—but it does pass the test of practicality. Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese medicines are still practised today, thousands of years since their creation, because they work for individuals. The same goes for all the other therapies the sceptics have trashed.

'Unscientific' alternative medicine thrives because it works. And that's better than science.

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