

Editorial



Virtuous medicine

A journalist from a German daily newspaper chose the subtitle "From the moral commandment to alternative medicine" for a summary of his impressions of last year's European Congress for Integrative Medicine [1]. The message: Let us use the innovations of conventional medicine together with the successful aspects of 'alternative' methods.

Undoubtedly, one has to agree. Scientific medicine has redefined the concept of 'personalized medicine'. It sets out to provide patients with bespoke treatments matching the personal genome. Nevertheless, two-thirds of cancer patients and even more with trivial complaints try to alleviate their ailments with 'alternative' methods. The amount spent on these methods is considerable. The use of the so-called integrative approach is expanding, among others in research. It is being supported by the NIH, as confirmed recently by the director Francis Collins, himself a geneticist, with the same intensity as research in the field of genetics.

Indeed, it is important to build bridges, bridges that are the road to knowledge on a molecular basis in all areas of medical research. All approaches "need to be subjected to the same kind of rigorous evaluation to understand what works and what does not" (Collins, www.medscape.com/viewarticle/753544). This objective is supported by the strategy of MNF, which provides an international forum to this goal. The investigation of the molecular basis for the effect of components of our diet – which through globalization is becoming more and more ethnically diverse – does have certain implications for patients. This is due to the fact that in the past, only beneficial aspects have been considered for 'alternative' methods.

Disregarding special cases, e.g. contaminations, food ingredients – if prepared and ingested in a traditional

manner – do not represent a health risk to consumers. However, it is quite a different matter with the use of higher concentrations of substances isolated from food, concentrations that are necessary to elicit pharmacological effects. Therefore, inevitably, one calls for a 'risk/benefit' strategy, which in the case of food involves extended periods of application as a default.

Objectivity and rationality, as is common with conventional medicine, also apply to the 'alternative' options. This is not a contradiction, even though it is often seen as such. This stems primarily from the terms used: 'conventional medicine', 'alternative' and 'complementary medicine', 'integrative medicine', which must be confusing. But why should medicine fare differently compared to other disciplines, where the spirit of the time, unfortunately, demands fragmentation and even more euphemisms which do not help the cause. It will take some time until people go back to the roots. And perhaps, then, 'medicine' will celebrate a unified comeback.

The attentive reader of MNF will have noticed that in the past years, medical aspects have been represented more and more and that the journal is receiving increasing attention in fields besides nutritional medicine. We hope to continue to enjoy an interdisciplinary acceptance.

Our success to date gives us a particular reason to thank everyone who has contributed to MNF, including the authors, the Senior Editors, the members of the Editorial Board, the reviewers, as well as, last but not least, the members of the editorial office, who have helped to ensure the quality that you, our readers, expect from MNF.

We wish you all a successful and healthy New Year.

Professor Peter Schreier
University of Würzburg

Professor Hans-Ulrich Humpf
University of Münster

Reference

[1] J. Müller-Jung, www.faz.net 11.10.2011.