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Sick care or healthcare? . - Book Corners - From Here to Longevity - book review

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From Here to Longevity

by Mitra Ray, PhD with Patricia Cannon Childs

Shining Star Publishing, P.O. Box 85821, Seattle, Washington 98145-0821 USA; www.fromheretolongevity.com

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Although biochemist Mitra Ray received funding from the American Cancer Society, the National Institutes of Health, and other groups to research the causes of various diseases, personal experience made her realize how little she understood about maintaining health. After gaining a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Cornell University, Mitra Ray studied cellular physiology and biochemistry at Stanford. By the time she had started postgraduate research, Dr. Ray needed physical therapy several times a week to manage neck pain, caused by the strain of looking through a microscope for hours. In addition, she had to avoid rigorous physical activity because it aggravated an old back injury and caused chronic muscle spasms.

By age 28, Dr. Ray was gaining weight, so she started to read about nutrition. Information about juicing fresh fruits and vegetables, alive with enzymes and coenzymes, fascinated her. She found that drinking freshly-juiced produce improved her energy level. Then Dr. Ray began taking a food supplement made from 17 fruits and vegetables called JuicePlus+. Six weeks later, her physical therapist noticed a loosening in the strained neck muscles. The therapist's comment caused Dr. Ray to notice other improvements in her overall health and sleep patterns. She researched scientific literature for studies on the health effects of eating fresh produce and began to consider other ways to restore and maintain health. Her book From Here to Longevity shares the results of her search.

From Here to Longevity discusses the many shortcomings of the disease-model of present healthcare and explains, in a very conversational style, the basic requirements for good health: nutrition and diet, clean air and water, stress management, breathing, and exercise. In the preface "To My Readers," Dr. Ray says, "One of the main objectives of this book is to redirect the dollars that you spend on your health. We all spend a great deal of money on items that impact our health, whether it be on junk food, pharmaceuticals and emergency care, or on organic groceries, free-range meats, food supplements and yoga classes....Since you're going to spend money on your health no matter what, the real question is whether you want to spend it on sick care or healthcare."

In the course of the book, Dr. Ray questions two currently accepted ways of preventing disease: gene therapy and the use of vitamin supplements. Considerable research has shown that environment and lifestyle factors play a bigger role in causing disease than genetics. Replacing a "bad gene" with a "good gene" to treat degenerative disease would be a temporary fix if environment and lifestyle factors were not addressed. Dr. Ray quotes geneticist James V. Noel of the University of Michigan: "We could more efficiently get rid of heart disease, cancer, arthritis, diabetes, obesity, and other chronic diseases by changing our diet to fit our genes than by using sophisticated gene therapy." Dr. Ray also cites studies that have shown that people who consume more fruits and vegetables have less risk of getting cancer, heart disease, or! and cataracts. She attributes this to the plant nutrients which protect DNA from genetic damage caused by free radicals.

Dr. Ray's respect for the complex combinations of nutrition in whole, fresh foods causes her to question the tendency to rely on vitamin supplements. She asserts that vitamin supplements cannot begin to make up for a diet that lacks fruits and vegetables: "...Mother Nature's foods contain thousands of important nutrients and as science and technology progress, we learn more and more about them, give them names, try to categorize them, and study their specific roles in our health. Still we must recognize that our knowledge is incomplete about what is truly essential and what is not." She points out that vitamin supplements contain only the nutrients that have been isolated thus far. In addition, nutrients work synergistically. For example, people who test deficient in magnesium would also need calcium, phosphorus, potassium, vitamins B6, C and D (and perhaps other, presently unknown, nutrients) for magnesium to be assimilated properly. "If there are deficiencies, then it is because entire food groups are missing from one's diet," Dr. Ray asserts. Another problem, she writes, is that "supplementation of one nutrient can set off a series of other deficiencies." Prenatal iron supplements, for example, decrease zinc absorption and plasma zinc levels -- even if the iron supplement contains zinc. Zinc supplementation,

however, competes with copper absorption and can actually interfere with the normal absorption of zinc. She urges readers to change their diets rather than rely upon isolated supplements because "...we don't have enough data to know all the ways in which such isolated supplementation may be causing harm."

Although Dr. Ray is against vitamin supplements, she advocates the use of food supplements such as JuicePlus+, (She and her husband have an independent distributorship with NSA, Inc., the marketers of JuicePlus+, which brings them "a small profit whenever the product is bought through them, but no profit whatsoever if it is bought through another distributor.") In addition to using a food-based supplement, she also recommends taking essential fatty acid supplements.

From Hereto Longevity addresses the basics of good health while challenging some of the current practices and beliefs in both conventional and alternative medicine. It is a thought provoking and very practical guide that combines common sense, science, and personal experience.

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