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Editorial

Alternative Medicine versus “Smoke and Mirror”

One of the greatest obstacles to health care is the lack of knowledge by the general public as to medical approaches and traditional options. Both Western and alternative treatments have their medical impersonators. Traditional Chinese Medicine and other historical medical practices have value. Unfortunately, often there is a tendency to mismatch illnesses with treatments Western medicine has similar issues. Recently, I had the opportunity to review a Traditional Chinese diagnostic device, which raised my concerns. The device was a “Quantum Resonance Magnetic Analyzer,” which takes the weight, height, age and general information about the individual, and then estimates possible medical conditions. To use the device the patient simply holds a handle, which has two electrical pads that give a mild electrical “buzz”. Via software the device calculated results in record time and presented the potential diagnoses on a visual display. In looking at the schematics of the device, there did not appear to be sufficient mechanisms for the device to do what it purported to do. Further, I noted that complicating factors such as the electrical fields in the room, temperature in the room, and protocol for the patient to follow (sit comfortably, or relax, or clear the mind) were not taken into consideration. The use of the device reminded me of Jørgen A. Jacobsen, who produced a video which showed that via a diagnostic testing process, a wet paper towel was identified as having diabetes. My only conclusion, after reviewing available research online, was that the device that I reviewed simply provides a patient with an estimate of problems commonly found in individuals of a specified age, weight and height. In brief, the device raised for me significant questions as to the claims being made. The inclusion of unproven diagnostic and treatment methods undermines the credibility of the science of medicine and healthcare. I encourage suppliers, and providers diagnostic test devices and treatment procedures to avoid making claims without credible supporting evidence. We are all aware that there are several alternative medical approaches which work, in spite of the fact that the mechanisms of their operation are currently outside our range of understanding. To complicate this picture, the mind has an extraordinary ability to alter our physical well-being. Simply the belief that something will work can create the conditions for our bodies to respond and heal. Additionally, we are continuously plagued by the limitations of our ability to measure some things, and the difficulty in eliminating all the extraneous factors which qualify and limit our research findings. It is a miracle that we can be even somewhat assured of the information that we currently hold to be true. With that said, it is understandable why individuals without technical training are drawn to devices that purport to measure complex issues quickly and inexpensively. Unfortunately, some of these devices must be characterized as “smoke and mirrors”. It is my hope that via credible research we will continue to search for new ways of measuring, and testing things that are, at this point, not measurable. The simple fact is that we cannot always prove what is real and what is not real. In my opinion and practice acceptance of that factor is the place to start when attempting to overcome the obstacles invariably encountered in the research process.

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