



# Urine Therapy

My previous column was about reflexology, the technique of eliminating pain and other symptoms of illness by applying pressure to various spots on the foot. This column concerns an equally crazy therapy that also is currently bamboozling gullible persons captivated by alternative medicines.

From ancient times, folk superstitions have involved the fancied healing properties of three bodily secretions: saliva, excrement, and urine.

These reputed healing properties are detailed ad nauseam in Lynn Thorndike's monumental *History of Magic and Experimental Science*. Here I shall be concerned only with urine, either swallowed, injected, or applied externally to the skin. What follows are a few highlights from Thorndike.

Pliny the Elder, in *Natural History*, extols the healing powers of urine obtained from a virgin boy. Arnald of Villanova, a thirteenth-century Spanish astrologer, alchemist, and physician, claimed that warts would vanish if a dog's urine is applied to them. He also said vision would be greatly improved by washing one's eyes every morning with one's urine. Thorndike further cites an ancient Arabic treatise discussing the healing power of a white elephant's urine.

Urine was a popular folk medicine

throughout the seventeenth century. Thorndike gives many references. Emmanuel König, of Basel, in his book *The Animal Kingdom* (1683) recommended drinking one's urine to heal heartburn, depression, gout, toothaches, colic, jaundice, and high fevers. Daniel Bockher, a German physician, in 1622 published a popular work titled *Medicus Microcosmos*. It praises the healing properties of urine, excrement, lice, sperm, tapeworms, and ear wax.

Pierre Fauchard, a Parisian dentist, is considered the founder of modern dentistry. In 1728 he published *Le Chirurgien Dentiste* (*The Surgeon Dentist*), a classic text translated into English in the 1940s. In this work he pokes fun at several ridiculous remedies for toothache, then proceeds to describe a novel remedy of his own. I quote from James J. Walsh's entertaining *Cures: The Story of the Cures that Fail* (1923):

I have brought a great deal of relief to a number of patients who had nearly all their teeth carious and who as a consequence were often tormented by pains and aches . . . by means of the following remedy. It consists of rinsing out the mouth every morning and also evening . . . with some spoonfuls of their own urine, just after it has been passed . . . it is true that it is not very agreeable, except inasmuch as it brings distinct relief.

Fouchard goes on to say that some of his patients who used this remedy told him that the urine also provided relief

from other health problems. Indeed, "experience has shown that urine of healthy persons is very good for relieving the pains of gout and getting rid of obstructions of various kinds throughout the body."

Robert Boyle (1627–1691) was a great British scientist best known to physicists today for "Boyle's law," which states that the volume of a gas varies inversely with its pressure. Thorndike quotes the following passages from Boyle's *Works* (Vol. 2, page 130):

The medical virtues of man's urine, both inwardly given, and outwardly applied, would require rather a whole book, than a part of an essay, to enumerate and insist on . . . I shall now only add, that I knew an ancient gentlewoman, who being almost hopeless to recover of divers chronical distempers . . . was at length advised, instead of more costly physick, to make her morning draughts of her own water; by the use of which she strangely recovered, and is, for aught I know, still well. And the same remedy is not disdained by a person of great quality and beauty, that you know; and that too after she had travelled as far as the *Spaw* for her health's sake.

Urine therapy is most widely used today in Hindu folk medicine. William Jarvis, writing in the newsletter of the National Council Against Health Fraud (NCAHF) (March/April 1995), reported that India's former Prime Minister (1977–1979) Morarji Desai on his ninety-ninth birthday, in February

Martin Gardner's latest book is *Visitors from Oz*.

1995, attributed his longevity to a constant drinking of his own urine. In 1978 Dan Rather, on CBS's *60 Minutes*, interviewed Desai, who spoke at length about the great value of drinking urine. *Newsweek* reported (August 21, 1995) that Mohandas Gandhi was a urine drinker, but this was later denied by India's Gandhi Institute.

In the July/August 1991 issue of the *NCAHF Newsletter*, Jarvis cites numerous urine-based remedies that are promoted by ayurvedic medicine. Alcoholism, anorexia, nausea, poor digestion, edema, and other ills respond to "goat feces prepared by washing in urine." For constipation, drink a mixture of milk and urine. Epilepsy and other seizures yield to donkey urine. Urine is called the "water of life" in ayurvedic medicine. G. K. Thakker, director of the Water of Life foundation in Bombay, believes that urine drinking can cure every illness from the common cold to cancer.

Helen Kruger, in her excellent book *Other Healers, Other Cures: A Guide to Alternative Medicine* (1974) has this to say about urine therapy:

The Chinese used to drink the urine of a young boy as a curative. In some parts of the South, a baby's face is washed with urine to protect the skin. Elsewhere, it's used as a gargle for sore throat and for acne, cuts, and wounds. (Don't scoff. Doctors sometimes prescribe an ointment containing urea, the chief component of urine, for skin problems). A Brooklyn woman now in her sixties recalls having had to gargle with her own urine when she had diphtheria as a child. The French had a custom of soaking a stocking in urine and wrapping it around the neck to cure a strep throat. And in the Sierra Madre, the Mexican peasants prepare a poultice for broken bones by having a child urinate into a bowl of powdered charred corn. The mixture is made into a paste and applied to the skin. People have put urine into the eyes to "cure" cataracts, a habit that gives my eye doctor the shudders. It could cause the cataract to grow denser, he says. And only recently, I heard about a new reducing treatment given by some doctor in Florida. The urine of a pregnant woman is injected into the obese patient to "break down the fat cells."

(At the same time, however, the patient is put on a near-starvation diet.) Finally, I was told by a healer in Texas (who heard it from "a reliable source" who *knows*) that certain Hollywood beauties of mature years keep their youthful appearance by, as she put it, "drinking their own output."

It is true that urea, which constitutes 2 to 5 percent of human urine, has value as an antiseptic, diuretic, and other medical applications. For example, urine from pregnant mares is the urea source for Premarin, made by Ayerst Laboratories. It is used to replace estrogen in women who have passed menopause. No doctor, I hasten to add, recommends that women obtain urea by drinking horse urine.

Among a spate of recent books on urine therapy, one of the most impressive is Martha M. Christy's oversize paperback, *Your Own Perfect Medicine: The Incredible Proven Natural Miracle Cure that Medical Science Has Never Revealed!* This book was published in 1994 by Wishland, Inc. My copy is a 1998 fifth printing! You can obtain it from Wishland, P.O. Box 13927, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 (toll free 1-800-554-CURE) for \$19.95 plus \$5 for shipping and handling. The company also sells Christy's *Healing Yourself With Homeopathy, Scientific Validation of Urine Therapy*, and her audiotope on *The Scientific Validation of Urine Therapy*.

Among blurbs on the back cover of *Your Own Perfect Medicine* are the following remarks by David G. Williams, M.D., of the *Alternative Health Newsletter*: "If you buy only one health book this year, this is the book you should get. It outlines a therapy that can be used by anyone, anywhere, for practically any complaint known." Another comment, "This agent was found to be definitely life saving," is attributed to Dr. Manucher J. Javid, identified as a neurosurgeon at the University of Wisconsin's Medical School, in Madison.

I wrote to Dr. Javid, now retired, to ask what he thought of Christy's book. As I suspected, he was appalled by how she had quoted him out of context. His research, he pointed out in a letter, was on the use of urea to reduce intracranial

pressure. Urea, he explained, is not obtained from urine. Calcium cyanamide is dissolved in water, then heated under high pressure to produce urea and calcium hydroxide. Dr. Javid added that he has contacted an attorney to consider legal action for using his name without his knowledge or permission. "I can unequivocally state," he writes, "that the use of urea in medicine should not be extended to endorse any claim for drinking or injecting human urine."

In the first chapter of her book Christy says that between the ages of eighteen and thirty she was diagnosed with pelvic inflammatory disease, ulcerative colitis, ileitis, chronic fatigue syndrome, Hashimoto's disease, and mononucleosis. In addition to these ills, "I had severe chronic kidney infections, two miscarriages, chronic cystitis, severe candida and external yeast infections along with marked adrenal insufficiency and serious chronic ear and sinus infections. . . . And even though I ate almost nothing because of my extreme food allergies, I actually kept gaining weight. . . . I had become nothing more than a walking encyclopedia of disease."

I was reminded of Henny Youngman's joke about the man who, after his doctor examined him, asked "How do I stand?" "That," said the doctor, "is what puzzles me."

Christy first tried to heal herself using various methods including a nutrition regime promoted by Adelle Davis, mega-vitamin therapy, acupuncture, chiropractic, "and every herbal preparation and drug-free natural health therapy" she could find. She says her health started to improve, but, after a difficult childbirth, all her old ailments returned. Doctors told her the symptoms were psychosomatic. She says she alienated every doctor in town by insisting otherwise. She came down with endometriosis—bleeding tumors that result when uterine tissue detaches from the uterus and attaches itself elsewhere. After five operations, she refused to have a sixth. Instead, she checked into an alternative cancer clinic in Mexico. The treatments there failed as well. "My usual herbs and homeopathic remedies, although they gave temporary relief,

seemed almost useless." For a year she remained in bed. Even though she had health insurance, she and her husband spent more than \$100,000 of their own money on alternative therapies. After another tumor was removed, the endometrial symptoms returned, complicated by a yeast infection and menopausal symptoms.

Desperately ill and severely depressed, even contemplating suicide, Christy came across a book that recommended drinking one's urine. She gave it a try. The result was "almost instantaneous relief" from her symptoms. Her hair, which had fallen out, grew back again "thick and lustrous." She gained weight and her energy returned. She says she now swims, hikes, and rides horseback. "Much to my own and my family's amazement, I am back to work and after thirty years of almost nonstop illness, I have a rich, full life again—and all because of an unbelievably simple and effective natural medicine."

The rest of Christy's book reveals in vast detail how drinking one's urine will cure cancer, multiple sclerosis, malaria, arthritis, AIDS, gonorrhea, jaundice, ringworm, tuberculosis, migraine, hepatitis, whooping cough, hay fever, depression, prostate trouble, diabetes—you name it, urine will cure it. The main component in urine that does all these medical wonders is urea.

Christy correctly calls attention to many drugs now on the market that are based on urea, but she insists that these drugs cause unpleasant side effects that are avoided if you obtain the urea by drinking your own urine. She highly recommends a 1971 book, *The Water of Life*, by John W. Armstrong, available from Home Cure for \$11.95 plus \$5 for shipping and handling. She says it lists hundreds of ailments, including cancer, cured by urine drinking.

Urine therapy, Christy explains, begins by swallowing only one or two drops a day. Even these few drops, she writes, are very effective. "If you prefer, you can make an extremely diluted form of urine called a homeopathic urine preparation, which gives excellent results and contains no taste nor color." Of course it is tasteless and col-

orless! All the urine has vanished into the water!

Surgery and mainstream drugs simply don't work, Christy assures her readers. Herbal medicines, homeopathic

## **Christy's book reveals in vast detail how drinking one's urine will cure cancer, arthritis, tuberculosis, AIDS, and migraine. You name it, urine will cure it.**

drugs, and acupuncture do work, but none of these therapies, she says, hold a candle to the powerful curative properties of urine. It is "the most powerful, most individualized natural medicine we could ever hope for." Although pure urea has proved to be a wonderful drug, "I want to stress that it cannot and should not be used to replace or supersede natural urine as a healing agent." Why? Because "whole urine contains hundreds of known and unknown medically important elements . . . not found in urea alone."

After a period of swallowing a few drops of urine daily, Christy recommends slowly increasing the number of drops until you finally are drinking several ounces each day. In addition to the value of urine taken internally, Christy also sings its praises when applied externally to the skin, and used in foot baths, fully body baths, ear, nose, and eye drops and enemas. In cases of extreme illness, Christy writes, injection of urine can be called for. She recommends a Dr. William Hitt who runs two urine therapy clinics in Mexico where "he has administered hundreds of thousands of injections to severely ill patients with remarkable success."

Homeopathic urine, Christy says, is extremely potent. The recipe is simple. To one-sixth of an ounce of distilled water, in a sterile bottle, add one drop of urine. Cap the bottle and vigorously shake it fifty times. A drop of this mix is then added to another sixth-ounce of distilled water. Again, shake fifty times. The third dilution is a drop of the mix into a sixth-ounce of 80 to 90 proof vodka. The vodka, she says, "acts as a preservative." Three drops are placed hourly on the tongue until the symptoms of an illness disappear. Christy is

also enthusiastic about combining urine drinking with standard homeopathic drugs.

I know of no books defending urine therapy that are not written by persons

who also defend other forms of alternative medicine. Beatrice Barnett, co-author with Margie Adleman of an addle-pated book titled *The Miracles of Urine Therapy* (1987), is a chiropractor and naturopath. According to Jack Raso, in *Alternative Healthcare: A Comprehensive Guide* (Prometheus 1994), Barnett and Adleman list the following side effects of urine drinking: nausea, vomiting, migraine, boils, pimples, rashes, palpitations, diarrhea, uneasiness, and fever, but add that these are "normal" symptoms that one should not worry about!

I would have thought that Andrew Weil, the latest guru to be much admired by those who are down on mainstream medicine, might endorse urine drinking. I was pleased to learn that he does not. In his recent book *Ask Dr. Weil* (1998) he says that although urine may have some value when applied to the skin, drinking it has no value whatever. He cites Christy's book *Your Own Perfect Medicine* as an example of a work not to be trusted.

I do not know whether drinking urine is harmless or not, and would welcome hearing from any knowledgeable physician on this point. You can be sure, however, that there are no toxic effects from drinking homeopathic urine. The reason is simple: You are drinking nothing but distilled water.

I also do not know if Christy's book, and others like it, are cruel hoaxes written and published to make money, or whether the authors believe what they claim. In either case, I shudder at the thought of readers who are seriously ill, and who may be so persuaded that drinking urine will cure whatever ails them that they will not seek medical help that could save their lives. □