

Hydro-Therapy

Using Water to Cure

I believe the Lord works to bring to men information to help relieve suffering and sickness, but often, only a few people want to try things that are different from what 'everybody' thinks should be done. Here are some folk who learned from nature and tried to share what they learned.

In the late 1700s and 1800s some people, both in European countries, and in the United States were experimenting and finding out better ways of living and treating the sick. Some wise doctors were realizing that using the poisonous medicines commonly given back then was not doing good. Some other methods were being tried and some changes began in people's thinking.

If you think about it, almost anything would be better than giving people doses of poison when they were sick. More people would get well if they did nothing, than if they did that!

But one kind of treatment seemed to give amazing results. That was called Hydrotherapy or Hydropathical treatment, but most people just called it 'The Water Cure'.

In the summer of 1777 William Wright, a doctor of Jamaica, was sailing from that island in a ship bound for Liverpool. As he was caring for a man with typhus fever, who later died, he caught the sickness also and was very ill. He took all the same medicines he would have given to others, but he wasn't getting any better.

He found out though that if he went on deck he felt better, and the colder the air, the better he felt. So he decided to try a treatment on himself that he had wanted to try on fevers, but never dared to.

He asked someone to throw 3 buckets of cold sea water over his bare body and then he waited to see what would happen; would he get better or worse?

The cold buckets of water were a great shock, but he felt better right away. Several hours later the fever came back, so again he had 3 buckets of cold water thrown over his body and felt better.

The second day he did it twice again and by this time he was well. Then he did it twice for one more day to make sure it would not come back, and it didn't.

Then another passenger came down with the disease and begged the doctor to use the same treatment. He did, and the man got well quickly also.

Adapted from (James Currie, M.D., Medical Reports on the Effects of Cold and Warm, Water as a Remedy in Fever and Other Diseases, Vol. I, pp. 1-4. London: Printed for T. Cadell and Davis, 1805.)

So why did Dr. Wright feel that he wanted to try this treatment on someone? Well, he was talking one time to a surgeon on a ship that stopped at Jamaica and he had told him a strange story.

On the ship where this surgeon worked, a terrible epidemic of typhus fever had broken out. All the bunks were full of sick people and soon there was no room below and the medicine had run out.

The sickest men were chosen to lie on the decks as they were not expected to live anyway. So there they lay in the fresh air and sunshine. As their poor bodies were so hot with fever, they begged their friends to throw buckets of seawater over them. The Doctor said to go ahead as it would probably help them to die sooner and so they would be out of their misery.

The results were surprising. While the patients in their bunks, who were carefully protected from the cold air and kept warm with blankets, grew worse; and many died, most of their fellow sufferers who were lying on the hard deck, not only exposed to the heat of the sun but soaked with sea water, recovered. Adapted from (Logan Clendenning, M.D., Behind the Doctor, pp. 296, 297. New York: The Garden City Publishing Company, 1933.)

Dr. Wright, after he heard this story, remembered it and wanted to try it. He was afraid though of being charged with malpractice if he used such a method in his work.

Now that he had tried it on himself and on another patient with good results, he felt free to recommend it to others, and in the summer of 1778 he wrote for a medical journal the story of the successful treatment of fever by means of throwing cold water over the patient. His article caught the eye and thoughtful attention of Dr. James Currie, of Liverpool, England, one of the staff physicians in the large hospital in that city.

Soon after this an epidemic of typhus fever raged in Liverpool, and many cases were brought to the hospital. Dr. Currie's associates were shocked and horrified when he prescribed the cold-water treatment for several of the cases under his care. But their horror was changed to astonishment when they saw how well it worked; for all recovered, but the people treated the usual way with the poisonous drugs mostly died.

After further study of the matter and after experiments with ways of applying water to the sick, Dr. Currie brought out a book about it in 1797. Many people read the book but even though people were interested, few wanted to try it and it was soon forgotten.

Many years later, interest in water treatments started again, as news of wonderful cures done by an Austrian peasant through the use of cold water became known. Again it was an "accident" that caused the rediscovery of the curative power of water. I believe that again God was seeking to bring relief to the suffering millions through a simple use of something that all could afford.

Vincent Priessnitz (1799-1851), a boy of thirteen years living in Graefenberg, Austria, one day sprained his wrist. With his good hand he worked a pump and kept a stream of water running over the injured part. This eased the pain. When he became tired of pumping, he used wet cloths dipped into cold water.

Soon after this he crushed his thumb while working in the woods, and again found relief by the use of cold compresses.

The report of these minor injuries, and of their relief using cold water, would not have gone very far, but a far more serious accident occurred soon after.

Young Priessnitz was sixteen years old and he was driving pair of horses with a load of hay down a steep mountain road. The animals became frightened and began to run. The young man tried to stop them by holding the reins, but he was knocked down, kicked by the horse, and run over by the heavy wagon.

When he was picked up, it was found that he had lost three teeth and, in addition to many wounds and bruises, had broken ribs. A surgeon painfully probed the wounds, put bandages around his chest, and left, declaring that the wounds were incurable and he would die.

Priessnitz tore off the bandages and applied cold cloths until the swelling was gone and the pain was eased. By pressing his abdomen against the windowsills and filling his lungs, he set the broken ribs, kept using the cold treatment, and soon was completely well. From (Joel Shew, M.D., *The Water Cure Manual*, pp. 266-277. New York: Fowler and Wells, 1852.)

Instead of being carried to the fields, he lived to write his name deep in water. Uneducated, he did not know what Hippocrates had written about hydrotherapy in the years past, but gifted with wisdom and first-class organizing ability, Priessnitz started a hydropathic (water treatment) institute at Graefenberg, which was soon crowded with health seekers from all parts of the world.

In time many famous doctors came there to learn from the untutored Priessnitz such practical thermos-therapeutic procedures as the douche, the plunge, the dripping sheet, the dry blanket pack, the wet sheet pack, the foot bath, the sitz bath, the warm bath, and much else that was not written in books." Victor Robinson, M.D., *The Story of Medicine*, p. 394. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1931.

Of course many of the doctors, who were jealous of his success, tried to stop Priessnitz and he was often brought before the courts and charged with practicing medicine without qualifications or government license; but the people loved and appreciated his work, and the judges freed him upon his defense that he used no other means than pure water.

Though many bitterly opposed them, the water treatments helped many people. Soon other 'Water Cure' clinics were set up in Europe, Britain, and the United States. Books were written and journals started telling of the wonderful cures from these water treatments. In the Library of Congress at Washington, D.C. There are more than sixty books about the water treatments written between 1843-1863, by authors from many countries.

In the USA a man named James C. Jackson (1811-1895), of New York State, was among the pioneers in the United States who lost faith in drugs and stopped using them in medical practice. After practicing twenty years as a physician, he wrote:

"In my entire practice I have never given a dose of medicine... I have used in the treatment of my patients the following substances or instrumentalities: first, air; second, food; third, water; fourth, sunlight; fifth, dress; sixth, exercise; seventh, sleep; eighth, rest; ninth, social influences; tenth mental and moral forces." James C. Jackson, M.D., *How to Treat the Sick Without Medicine*, pp. 25, 26. New York Fowler and Wells, 1868.

Dr. Jackson at Dansville, New York:

In 1858 Dr. Jackson took over a water cure center in Dansville New York. This he enlarged into an institution for the rational care of the sick, where he might treat them in harmony with these principles. Because of its location, it was named "Our Home on the Hillside." Woman physician, Dr. Harriet Austin, an adopted daughter was associated with him in the institution and in the editorial work on a monthly magazine, 'The Laws of Life'. Dr. Jackson wrote a number of books, besides pamphlets and tracts, and lectured in many places. It is probable that he, more than any other single individual, exercised a widespread influence in behalf of early hygienic reform in the United States.

Dr. R. T. Trall (1812-1877) was another physician who entirely discontinued the use of drugs in his practice.

The idea of treating the sick by the use of natural methods, water treatments and living by the 'Laws of Health' gradually became accepted more and more by thinking people and it was shown that drug medicine is not the only answer, or even the best answer, for good health that is lasting.

When Ellen White was given the vision on Health Reform in 1863, God provided much knowledge for His people and it was made very clear that the only treatments that God approves for treating disease are the use of simple and natural methods and learning to obey the Laws of Health He has placed in our bodies.

It is very sad today that so many have decided that drugs were only bad back then, but now because we have so much fancier drugs, they are OK. This is not so. Our drugs are just as poisonous and some even more poisonous than anything they had back then! Everyone knows that if you eat a bottle of any kind of 'pills' that you well may die. If they were not poisonous they could not kill you, right?

Good health does not come in a bottle! It never did and it never will. Real good health only comes by learning to live according to God's laws of health and disobeying them is breaking the commandments of God!

All too many folk think you can eat whatever you 'like' and do whatever you please with the body lent to you by God, and then if you get sick you just run to the doctor and get some pills and go right back and do wrong again.

If we do not care enough to obey God and respect the body He has lent to us here, we will never be given a heavenly body to wreck.