

**Interview with Holistic Health Practitioner,  
Healer, Psychotherapist, and Yoga Teacher,  
Keyvan Golestaneh, M.A., LAc.**

Conscious Health: What is holistic natural medicine? Is it able to replace "conventional" medicine? Is it enough for our needs?

**Keyvan Golestaneh:** Natural medicine has a very long history. There are some forms, such as Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine, which go back approximately 5,000 years. Basically, we can define it as the use of natural means to treat disease and prevent illness. In modern times, it typically refers to the use of herbal remedies and specific diets, as well as homeopathic medication. I use it in a broader sense to also include exercise, lifestyle changes, energetic techniques, and even mind-and consciousness-altering practices. Disciplines like psychotherapy can be part of a larger approach that I take here.

So natural medicine becomes truly holistic when it treats the whole person; when the mind, body, emotions, and spirit are not considered separately from each other and from the non-human environment. It assumes a different view of nature

and the human body, one that has an innate intelligence functioning as a whole. Nature self-organizes itself. This has radical implications for how we look at disease and social and psychological problems. Understanding how this self-organizing intelligence works enables us to affect it in order to create health. We no longer focus on disease but on facilitating change and creating health and wellness.

Holistic natural approaches have proven themselves more effective than conventional medicine in the prevention of illness and treatment of chronic health problems.

Conventional medicine - or allopathy - separates the mind, body, and emotions. It views humans as complex material objects, isolating and reducing us to parts and physiological, genetic, and chemical processes. It doesn't include other ways of viewing the body-for example, acupuncture. It treats the symptoms of disease, not the causes. A truly holistic approach would also treat the causes of illness as well as looking at the context in which it occurs.

The strength of conventional medicine is its ability to treat emergencies: heart surgery, appendicitis, broken bones, as well as its use of technology for diagnosis. It has a great ability to understand the physio-chemical processes and working parts of the body, but not the whole in itself: its connection to the social, non-human environment and non-material realm. Holistic natural approaches have proven themselves more effective than conventional medicine in the prevention of illness and treatment of chronic health problems.

CH: You are talking about helping people learn to live a healthier life and about natural ways to heal. But there are many people that don't know any approach other than drugs.

KG: The approach to health and healing I'm talking about doesn't necessarily replace conventional medicine, but it can complement it. And in most cases, natural remedies and methods can completely replace conventional chemical- and technologically-based treatments. In most areas of the United States and Western Europe, it's now possible to find natural products through mail order.

If people lived healthily and maintained a diet appropriate for them, they wouldn't have to turn to medications and supplements in the first place.

If people lived healthily and maintained a diet appropriate for them, they wouldn't have to turn to medications and supplements in the first place. In most

cases, the health problems that are treated with drugs can be either prevented or treated naturally through dietary means, lifestyle changes, and natural-based products. It's mainly now a question of education.

Also if a person cannot make the appropriate changes to create health for themselves, then it is likely that they either do not want to do so or that there is an emotional-psychological block preventing them from doing so.

**CH:** Can you give us some suggestions for creating a healthy life?

**KG:** Well, that could take up the whole interview, but I could point to what I consider three of the most important areas: diet, stress, and spiritual and mental health.

No other activity affects people and their health as much as what they eat.

First, in order to remain healthy and prevent diseases, diet and proper nutrition are of primary importance. No other activity affects people and their health as much as what they eat. Excluding geography and socio-cultural factors, for the most part we can have control over our diet. Most health problems can be avoided and many illnesses treated through dietary means.

Most diseases develop because of the body's incapacity to function properly. The body becomes overwhelmed by over-stimulation, toxicity, and enervation and starts to break down. This can be avoided by preventing toxic buildup and over-stimulation of the nervous system. Even genetic predispositions to particular diseases can be prevented through the right diet. Diet directly affects our emotional balance - or mental health), which in turn affects how we feel about our world. So here we see that the mind, body, and psyche are intimately connected.

Stress, both mental and physical, is the other key factor that affects our

overall health. People underestimate its impact. All sorts of activities come into play here, like sleep and relationships. If stress can't be avoided, then we have to find ways to effectively deal with it.

What transcends the individual person, the non-material realm, what gives meaning to our life, is the context within which humans exist. It is our connection to each other and the greater universe. This is what "religion" was supposed to provide. People do not exist in isolation and without this connection we could not exist. So maintaining a connection to the "transpersonal" is also critical to personal health.

These are the keys to a healthy life: if they are addressed, then most health problems can be prevented or at least greatly reduced.

CH: Could you say more about diet and its effect on the body. What should we keep in mind? How do we know what are the right foods to eat?

KG: It's important to know that no single diet fits all people, even though there are many diet trends, fashions, and books available that claim otherwise. How can every diet on the market be correct? That's

There may not be one diet good for everyone, but there are basic principles we can follow that apply to everyone.

impossible. The reason I believe you find people claiming that one diet works so well for them and others do not is exactly because different people have different needs. We have different body types, genetic backgrounds, different metabolisms—all of which mean we require different diets. There may not be one diet good for everyone, but there are basic principles we can follow that apply to everyone. First, you have to have a good balance between proteins, carbohydrates, and "good" fats. The proportions will vary from one person to another depending on his or her metabolism. When this balance is maintained, our body

functions optimally. Many people in the United States overemphasize either proteins or carbohydrates and think all fats are "bad." This is an example of how society and culture influence our beliefs and behavior. We have been educated through culture, media, and the government into thinking "fat" is bad and that we need a lot of protein to be healthy. That is scientifically incorrect, and this belief is perpetuated through cultural habits.

The foods we eat also need to be easily processed and the waste eliminated so that toxic buildup doesn't occur. Remember what I said about toxicity and disease? Processed foods are very popular in highly-developed economic systems, and the rest of the world is moving in this direction. Processed foods have little nutritional value and can't be metabolized easily by the body, and this results in toxic build-up.

Another key factor in health is pH - or the balance between acid and alkaline levels in the body. Many of the foods people eat create a highly acidic internal environment. Acidic pH levels interfere with cellular function and further toxic buildup. This is especially true if one eats de-natured or processed foods. To use a mechanical analogy: just as an oil or air filter in a car or home needs to be cleaned or changed on a regular basis, so too does the body need to be cleaned on a regular basis. A cleansing process naturally occurs when the body is not interfered with. For that to happen, we need to consume bio-available whole foods, which results in easy digestion, absorption, and elimination. Water is a natural cleanser and hydrates. Unfortunately, most people don't realize the importance of drinking enough water. It's VERY important, since the body is over 70% water!

**CH:** Cooking is a very popular topic. What about how we prepare or cook? Are some ways better than others?

**KG:** People are very concerned about taste and because of their lifestyles, ease

and speed of cooking are important. What we don't realize is that taste is acquired, not pre-given. Our bodies often crave certain tastes and foods because we have adapted to them or because of internal physiological imbalances. Our body is essentially an adaptive organic life form. In fact, that's how we became what we are as a species. Just as we adapt to certain foods through culture, geography, and history, we can also un-adapt or re-adapt to other, more healthy foods.

Most people think that cooked foods are required, but that is not the case. We are the only species that cooks its own food!

Most people think that cooked foods are required, but that is not the case. We are the only species that cooks its own food! So what does that say? Certainly it doesn't mean that we are better than other species. It's an acquired habit and taste-an example of adaptation. There is a downside to cooked foods. All chemical reactions in the body depend on enzymes. Digestion, for example, cannot occur without enzymes. When foods are cooked over 104 degrees, the enzymes are destroyed. Processed and de-natured foods have little or no enzymes. We can only get enzymes for uncooked and unprocessed foods if we take a supplement, so it's better to include raw foods in our diet. Cooking foods depletes them of many essential vitamins and minerals.

There are many important benefits to eating uncooked foods, such as easier elimination, more nutritional value, increased energy, and time saved. We quickly find that we even consume less food than before.

**CH:** What about meat and animal products?

**KG:** Eating too many cooked animal products isn't healthy because it increases acidity or pH levels. Red meat in particular has a high iron content, and the iron oxidizes in the body. It's just like metal rusting. The body will end up aging faster.

One option is to eat raw animal products, but you have to know the source and quality, which is not always easy to do. Most people also think that you can only get protein from animal products, and that's really not true. You can find all your protein needs from specific vegetable products such as hemp seeds.

People should change their diets.  
This can take a lot of time,  
but ultimately it will save time and  
in the long run save money that  
people won't be spending on  
health problems!

People should change their diets. This can take a lot of time, but ultimately it will save time and in the long run save money that people won't be spending on health problems! They won't spend so much money on doctors, therapies, medications, laxatives, and stimulates for more energy. The bottom line is they will inevitably be healthier.

**CH:** What is your opinion about nutritional supplements - vitamins, minerals, enzymes, etc.?

**KG:** It is preferable to obtain one's nutrition from the foods one eats, but this isn't always possible today, especially given environmental depletion. Much of the soil in the United States and Europe has been depleted of its minerals. And fertilizers are still the norm in agriculture. Organic foods are of course preferable, but even if you can find them, nourishing supplements are sometimes necessary because of the lack of minerals in the soil or specific imbalances in the body. In some cases, we may need to supplement our diet even for everyday nutritional needs. If we do so, we can at least consult a professional on what are the supplements we actually do need. If you choose to take vitamins, you should choose those that are whole food-based and not the synthetic supplements. So-called "natural" supplements aren't necessarily absorbable by the body. The body has to be able to use them, and whole food-based supplements are more

easily absorbed. In many cases, you are literally throwing your money away by taking non food-based vitamins and mineral supplements.

You should always take the things you really need and not be misled by "hip" advertisements and health fads-including those from the so-called "Green" health industry. For that, you need the advice of professionals and specialists. The health food industry has become compromised by misleading information and economic factors.

