

## Environmental Medicine

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The doctor of the future will give no medicine but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease."

- Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931)

With the environment at the forefront of everyone's mind, it is no surprise that medicine is following suit. As new strains of bacteria and viruses are making their way into the human population, physicians are finding it difficult to offer cures. Personally, I have questioned how best to serve the public – to continue to help treat people or to continue to work on environmental causes. It's sort of like the old downstream thinking analogy: we can keep drinking the polluted water near the chemical factory or we can take action and stop the factory from polluting the water. Ultimately, we want to address the cause, and the environment is a good place to start. We can work on cleaning up the environment and cleaning up ourselves for optimal health.

Renowned author and lecturer Dr. Doris Rapp (who has worked a lot in the school system helping kids) states, "We now have epidemics of ADHD, cancer, fatigue, headaches, obesity, early puberty, sterility, brain defects, muscle and visual problems to name only a few. We must stop and figure out why. Eliminate the cause and there's nothing to treat. Chemicals are major causes of today's health challenges";

Environmental Medicine deals with chronic health problems linked with various environmental factors in our air, food and water. These factors can be associated in some people with multiple complaints involving several different organ systems. Symptoms vary in number and severity depending on the frequency and amount of exposure to the problem factors. Individuals who chronically note multi-organ symptoms when exposed to low levels of multiple chemically-unrelated substances and whose symptoms improve or resolve when the triggers are removed, are said to have environmental sensitivities, environmental hypersensitivity disorder or multiple chemical sensitivity (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity: A 1999 Consensus, Archives of Environmental Health, May/June 1999 [Vol.54 (No.3), 147-149].

One optimal strategy for successful interventions in affected individuals will be individualized detoxification. Diagnosis must effectively appreciate the diversity of conditions that can result from these toxicants and must assess individual body burdens and susceptibilities to specific exposures. Treatment must focus on effective removal of toxicant burdens, optimizing the individual's state of nutrition, and accommodating individually specific detoxification genes of biotransformation. Prevention must focus on cleaning up the environment. This cause oriented and preventive strategy is the approach of Environmental Medicine. It offers one of the most effective and cost effective approaches to restoring and maintaining the long-term health of those patients affected by environmentally triggered illnesses. Together we must work on the environment, and like our native elders think seven generations into the future leaving a healthy planet for our great-great grandchildren.