

# Book Reviews

**Health and Nutrition Secrets That Can Save Your Life**, by Russell L. Blaylock, M.D., 459 pp., hardcover, \$29.95, ISBN: 0-929173-42-2, Albuquerque, N.M.: Health Press, 2002.

Dr. Russell Blaylock's latest magnum opus is arranged in two major sections, either one alone more than worth the book price. It is a welcome addition to his earlier work on excitotoxins.<sup>1</sup>

Superb chapters cover essentially every aspect of health and nutrition; brain and body protection against toxins, injury, and disease; and even defense against bioterrorism. His discussion on "protecting your brain" is an outstanding read, and his chapter on "surviving a terrorist attack" is timely indeed.

He covers causes of degenerative diseases, including the bad effects of free radicals and the benefits of certain minerals, vitamins, and other more powerful antioxidants; nutrition, genes, and genetic switches; the danger of mercury from various sources; the effect of fluoride from drinking water, toothpaste, and other sources; other toxic metals to avoid; vaccination hazards; toxic food additives; pesticides and other harmful chemicals; and causes of arteriosclerosis, stroke, heart attack, and other diseases of aging and how to prevent them.

Dr. Blaylock offers one of the best discussions on the pathophysiology of free radical formation and the damage it causes various human cells and tissues, particularly in the central nervous system. His description of the mechanisms of cellular injury is clear and persuasive. So is his cited research and explanation for clinical protection provided by proper nutrition and the human antioxidant network, including vitamins, enzymes, and other antioxidants such as glutathione and alpha lipoic acid.

For all this, Dr. Blaylock has only gathered material and drawn medical conclusions that, although reflecting the most advanced state of medical knowledge, cannot be written in stone. This book, like any cutting-edge medical text, requires a caution for the uninitiated, whether health enthusiast or unwary clinician.

Remember, the absolute amount at which any substance becomes toxic is

difficult to estimate from animal studies. The effects of high pharmacological doses used in animal experiments should not be extrapolated to draw conclusions about natural, physiological amounts of these substances in humans.

Moreover, researchers James T. Bennett and Thomas J. DiLorenzo have noted that figures from the EPA, FDA and other government agencies are often politically influenced and arrived at in less than good faith.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes bureaucrats define the toxic level of a chemical in collusion with private entities that may have a vested financial interest in having certain higher or lower values placed for regulatory purposes. It becomes clear that we cannot always trust the designated "experts" to tell us the truth about toxic substances. We must be increasingly prepared to look after our own health if we are to preserve it.

First, clinicians and enthusiasts must recognize the phenomenon of hormesis, the pharmacological truism that "the dose makes the poison."<sup>3</sup> While some substances such as lead are toxic at infinitesimal doses, most other natural substances and chemicals become harmful only in higher doses.

Second, the clinician must not fall into the trap of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* ("after this, therefore because of it"). In other words, does a high level of a toxic substance cause a disease, or does it merely accumulate as the result of the disease process itself?

Thus, while Dr. Blaylock points toward a particular agent such as mercury as highly toxic and responsible for damage to many areas of the brain, he is careful to note that nutrition, state of health, genetic susceptibility, and levels of antioxidant protection, rather than a single factor, play a role in causing disease at a certain level in a specific individual. The fallacy of applying *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* reasoning may also refer to the life processes: in his excellent discussion on aging, Dr. Blaylock carefully notes that "While it is true that many people's endocrine systems begin to fail with age, it is more likely that progressive endocrine failure is a product of the aging process itself, rather than its cause."

Throughout the book Dr. Blaylock uses cogent arguments and provides scientific details emphasizing that although individ-

uals have genetic predisposition for certain diseases, there is much that healthy living and proper nutrition can do to prevent the activation of genetic switches linked to the degenerative diseases of aging. He also affirms that all degenerative diseases of the brain share a common etiological process, whether begun by trauma, exposure to toxins, or a lifetime of poor nutritional habits and/or stress. Degeneration may ultimately manifest itself in such disorders as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease, or arteriosclerosis and stroke.

It is not surprising that it has taken so many years of study by a neuroscientist of Dr. Blaylock's eminence, with his vast knowledge in so many fields—neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, pathology, embryology, biochemistry, pharmacology, nutrition—to be able to process all this potentially lifesaving information and present it to the reader in a cogent, clear, and precise fashion. This is due not only to his writing skills but his artistic ability: he even draws his own illustrations!

This book is destined to be among the most treasured books in preventive medicine, nutritional medicine, and geriatrics. It is for medical professionals as well as for lay people who want to preserve their health and prolong their lives.

Moreover, it takes moral courage to write such a powerful tome, exposing so many inimical health practices, such as the ongoing but needless addition of dangerous chemicals to foods (monosodium glutamate, aspartame, carrageenan) and water supplies (fluoride). *Health and Nutrition Secrets That Can Save Your Life* is a brilliant and compelling tour-de-force that will reverberate in the health and nutrition field for years to come.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Blaylock RL. *Excitotoxins: the Taste that Kills*. Albuquerque, N.M.: Health Press; 1994.
- 2 Faria MA Jr. Public health: from science to politics. Review of *From Pathology to Politics: Public Health in America* by JT Bennett and TJ DiLorenzo. *Medical Sentinel* 2001;6:46-48.
- 3 Faria MA Jr. *Vandals at the Gates of Medicine: Historic Perspectives on the Battle over Health Care Reform*. Macon, Ga.: Hacienda Publishing; 1995:347-340.

**The Ballad of Carl Drega: Essays on the Freedom Movement 1994 to 2001**, by Vin Suprynowicz, 696 pp., soft cover \$24.95, ISBN, 0-9670259-2-3, Reno, Nev: Mountain Media, 2002.

*The Ballad of Carl Drega* by journalist Vin Suprynowicz is an eye-opening book that libertarians and informed conservatives will cheer. His uncompromising stance and indefatigable pursuit of freedom is sure to inflame the minds of those who worship omnipotent government.

Yet despite his passion and stridency, of which he is proud, Suprynowicz wants to ignite the spark of freedom in his readers' hearts, not trap them in polemic argument.

The book's succinct introduction sets the tone for the rest, containing a brief but masterful discussion of the true meaning of political compromise, based on Ayn Rand's 1962 essay, "Doesn't Life Require Compromise?" Our 21<sup>st</sup>-century politicians who sacrifice liberty on the altars of expediency and political correctness should study this.

The powerful section, "Live Free or Die: How Many More Carl Dregas?" is a shocking revelation of how we are losing our freedom and marching in step toward a virtual police state. People who have finally stood up for their freedom and property rights have been crushed with hardly a whimper of public protest. Why? Because the lapdog mainstream media have been complicit with government in keeping the public in the dark.

Carl Drega was an older man living in rural New Hampshire. Environmental officials repeatedly harassed him for violation of an arbitrary edict, with which he could not afford to comply. One day he was stopped on the road because he had some rusty equipment in his pickup truck. Pushed over the edge by meddling officials, Drega lost control. He pulled a gun, shot the patrolman, and went on a rampage, shooting several of his former bureaucratic tormentors before being killed in a battle with police.

Suprynowicz follows up Drega's case with those of Gary Watson, Donald Scott, David Aguilar, Ralph Garrison, and others. Unlike Waco and Ruby Ridge, none of these cases is well known. In fact, as Suprynowicz writes, "The real significance, I believe, lies in the fact you've never heard of them. Or, if you have, that no magazine writer, no TV reporter, no documentary filmmaker has ever before juxtaposed all these deaths at the hands of the regulatory state."

Suprynowicz explains: "In little more than 30 years, we have gone from a nation where the quiet enjoyment of one's private property was a sacred right, to a day when the so-called property owner faces a hovering hoard of taxmen and regulators threatening to lien, foreclose, and go to

auction at the first sign of private defiance of their collective will."

He backs this up by citing cases such as that of Carol Pappas in which, to exploit a small but defiant property owner, the state acted in collusion with giant private interests, applying unjust laws and forming a corrupt "relationship between government and private property rights that my dictionary defines as fascism."

The government realizes that an armed citizenry in this country at some point will reach its limit and become an explosive obstacle to further erosion of private property rights. Suprynowicz writes, "This is why the tyrants are moving so quickly to take away our guns. Because they know in their hearts that if they continue the way they've been going—boxing Americans into smaller and smaller corners, leaving us no freedom to decide how to raise and school and discipline our kids, no freedom to purchase or do without the medical care we want on the open market, no freedom to withdraw \$2,500 from our own bank accounts, let alone move it out of the country, without federal permission, no freedom even to arrange the dirt and trees on our own property to please ourselves—if they keep going down this road, there are going to be a lot more Carl Dregas, hundreds of them, thousands of them, fed up and not taking it any more."

This is an explosive book that every American who values freedom must read and thoroughly digest if we are to use Suprynowicz's "libertarian candle" to light the path for restoration of our freedom, and to guide us back to the vision of our Founders.

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**Health Care Meltdown: Confronting the Myths and Fixing Our Failing System**, by Bob LeBow, M.D., M.P.H., 277 pp., index, \$16, ISBN 0-9710972-1-6, Boise, Id., 2002.

The prestigious purveyors are out in force, as Dr. Danehower warned in the last issue.<sup>1</sup> The most interesting part of this book is the endorsements, leading off with one by Marcia Angell, M.D., former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Other enthusiasts include Dr. Rudy Mueller whose own book was previously reviewed here,<sup>2</sup> other authors of books also advocating schemes they claim are *not* "socialized medicine," and Ralph Nader.

In fairness, Dr. Angell applauds the prescription while saying nothing about the actual book.

There is a thin veneer of scholarly pretension, with some endnotes and a "selected bibliography." The style is highly colloquial, overladen with clichés and banalities in every paragraph, many calling attention to themselves with quotation marks. The bibliography is indeed highly selected—from the left side of political commentary. The sum of "comprehensive analysis and data on the U.S. health care system" is six sources, including a book by Rudy Mueller;<sup>2</sup> one by David Himmelstein, Steffie Woolhandler, and Ida Hellander; and two references to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The book being boilerplate cant from Physicians for a National Health Program, it is not surprising that its author is a former PNHP president and is praised effusively by PNHP stalwarts Himmelstein and Woolhandler: "LeBow isn't just one of the best physicians in the U.S.—he is one of the best physicians to take on the whole health care system as his patient."

That is the fatal conceit of the whole seductive socialist program: the idea that a mild-mannered medical director of a metropolitan community health center in Idaho, together with any number of other alumni of Harvard and Johns Hopkins, can design a medical utopia. And all without higher costs, administrative hassles, or big government.

There are some stunning insights that you may not be able to find anywhere else. The birthplace of "concierge" care is—Communist Cuba!—where it benefits the poor and downtrodden. The Evil Empire is—the AMA!—for having delayed the dawn of *not*-socialized medicine.

If you ever have to debate about single payer or single risk pool or universal coverage or whatever *not*-socialized medicine is called this week, you must read this book. Take it with you the next time you have a long flight or train ride and nothing else to read, not even an HHS regulation.

I enjoyed the illustrations, especially the patent-medicine advertisements from the 19<sup>th</sup> century—in an ironic sense.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Danehower CC. Universal Coverage. *J Am Physicians Surgeons* 2003;8:5.

<sup>2</sup> Orient JM. Review of *As Sick As It Gets: A Diagnosis and Treatment Plan* by Rudolph Mueller. *Medical Sentinel* 2002;3:103-104.

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