

## **Integral Approaches to AIDS**

**by Dr. Christopher Thomson**

The strange mystique of AIDS was the magnet which attracted a wide variety of therapeutic opinion to a conference held recently at the Institute of Complementary Medicine in London. Although the spread of opinion was very wide indeed, some common ground did emerge. Perhaps the two most interesting themes in this common ground were, first, that AIDS need not kill, and, second that the viruses are not the real problem. The real issue is what we, as human beings, have allowed ourselves to become.

As chairman, I was able to set the scene by drawing attention to the main shortcomings in the orthodox and official attitudes to this disease:

1. Telling people that AIDS is always fatal is both untrue and misguided. This is to ignore the fact that many patients have experienced significant remissions and now live normal lives. Equally important, it is an entirely negative approach, for if the will to live is a key element in the fight for survival, then all AIDS patients ought to be allowed to live in a wholly positive atmosphere in which their self-healing capacity is encouraged and enhanced. If we fail to appreciate the significance of this, the orthodox model of this illness will remain a self-fulfilling prophecy.

2. In the public mind at least, complementary therapies have been ignored. This is rather curious, not just because orthodox medicine seems to have very little to offer to AIDS patients, but mainly because there is already a substantial and growing body of evidence that a number of integrated therapies are improving the quality of life for many AIDS patients, and indeed starting them on the road to recovery in several cases.

3. Although there has been some recent discussion of the immune system, this seems to have been restricted to the physiological level only. However, a wider perspective of AIDS suggests that the individual's self-healing capacity transcends the physical. To this extent, it implies that research should be directed away from the discovery of powerful synthetic agents, and focussed instead on ways of re-empowering people to maintain their own inner strength and health. In other words, the key to the solution of AIDS may lie in an acceptance that the individual has to undergo a self cure, and that the therapist's task is to enable each patient to find the means to do this. Since the self-healing capacity is something which exists at all levels of a person's being, the way ahead would draw upon a variety of therapeutic approaches ranging from the physical through to the spiritual. To be most effective, these approaches should not be seen in isolation, but as the necessary components of an integral approach.

Many of the speakers were not practising therapists. The fact that they were selected to speak at all is simply a reflection of the growing awareness that discussion about health problems should most certainly not be restricted to therapists, particularly if their training has concentrated on disease, rather than health, and the physical aspects of disease at that. The first guest speaker, Branko Bokun, has made a special study of the relationship between illness and negativity. He believes that in the context of AIDS and other degenerative diseases, the adoption of positive attitudes to one self and to the challenges of life could well prove to be the important turning point for many people. It could, in other words, be the necessary inner change required to reverse the direction of the vicious downward spiral of this disease.

Branko also reminded us that most of our modern illnesses have their roots in deep-seated fear and stress, and that the damaging effect of these is often exacerbated by the food we ingest and by other toxic substances around us. This was to be a point echoed by many other contributors during the day.

The next speaker was David Gilbert, a writer on medical matters, who reinforced much of what Branko said, and told the gathering that he found it very useful to think of the actual word AIDS in the following way:

**A** represents adaptability, the loss of which often results in imbalance and disease. This breakdown, especially if chronic, leads to inner weakness in our psychosomatic systems. At this point, people have become vulnerable to whatever agents, e.g. viruses, may catalyse the onset of symptoms.

**D** is for dependence. The corollary of these inner weaknesses are the various crutches to which people turn at the slightest sign of crisis. David reminded us that it is important to be aware that these crutches are not just the drugs so many people take, socially and clinically, but they also include the whole range of experts, in our society, and their associated institutions. We have become a dependent society, far too ready to abrogate responsibility to others, while what we should be doing is to learn how to maintain and strengthen our own inner sense of balance and natural power.

**S** for suppression. Rather than looking for the root causes of these imbalances and weaknesses, we have instead become accustomed to the notion of suppressing their symptoms by means of increasingly prestigious and expensive medical techniques. As the conference were well aware, iatrogenic illness is now so significant proportion of all illness that it has become a subject of study in its own right.

After this, we heard from Robert Davidson, a practising homeopath. He took a fairly radical line and advised the more scientifically inclined that the best ways of dealing with illnesses like AIDS may in fact lie well outside the accepted boundaries of orthodox medical science. Robert also reiterated the emerging view that any "cure" for AIDS is highly unlikely to come from conventional science, mainly because this addresses only the physical dimension, and also because it continues to ignore the key question of why only a small proportion of virus carriers go on to develop the symptoms of AIDS. In this important respect, the AIDS virus is merely the agent of the illness. It is most certainly not the cause. The cause is instead what people have allowed themselves to become, in terms of David's model. In this context, Robert had no hesitation in characterising AIDS as a iatrogenic disease, that is to say one which has resulted from generations of medical suppression, producing our current epidemics of degenerative disorders.

Dr Ronald Livingston continued this theme of the urgent need to enhance our immune systems, and he suggested that we begin this process by leading much healthier lives. This would, of course, include a much better diet, as well as the careful avoidance of the bewildering variety of toxic additives that find their way into our bodies by various means. Ronald also suggested that homeopathy may have a lot of very useful things to say about AIDS. In particular, he drew attention to the detailed biographical picture which homeopathic practitioners normally take from their patients. In doing this, one may be able to ascertain the possible root cause of the breakdown in these patients' self-healing systems.

At this point, Ronald intrigued us all by producing two oral homeopathic vaccines, one known as AIDS 200, the other being a high dilution of azothioprin, an immunosuppressant drug which produces symptoms remarkably similar to those of AIDS. Although not much is yet known about either of these preparations, there seems to be no reason at all why they should not be tested as soon as possible on some willing AIDS patients. As it happens, Dr Harris of St. Mary's was also present, so that he was able to agree to co-operate with Dr Livingston there and then, with a view to widening the possibilities at that hospital. Dr Harris' presence was fortuitous, since Denis Haviland of the Confederation of Healing Organisations was also able to arrange something, in the hope that more practitioners come to recognise the beneficial role of spiritual healing in helping those with AIDS.

After lunch, Dr Kai Kermani delivered a fascinating talk about the very encouraging progress he is making in his training classes for AIDS patients, HIV carriers and asymptomatics. From what he says, there seems to be little doubt at all that the way ahead in dealing with AIDS (and many other illnesses) lies in re-empowering the individual at all levels of his or her being. He described the details of autogenic training, but also emphasised the need to be flexible, to be able to incorporate a wide variety of therapies according to the needs of the individual patient.

Kai's very timely message contained two important elements: love and flexibility. He said that what the patients most needed was love, and all people concerned with them should be made fully aware of this. At the same time, there was no point in pretending that any one therapeutic approach has the answer. The answer instead lies buried inside each patient, and it is therefore incumbent upon each therapist to be sufficiently open and flexible to be able to recognise the individual needs of each patient. No therapeutic approach should be ruled out. Co-operation between therapists is the order of the day.

We then learned of the details of Kai's work, which he intends publishing quite soon, and it strongly suggests that, with the exception of one unusual case, his own patients are making excellent progress in re-empowering themselves.

The last main speaker of the day was Leo Sides, who runs a very effective information network on AIDS. He was able to tell us about the growing literature, and pointed us in the direction of some very promising approaches. Like the other speakers, he asked us to think in terms of the quality of life, rather than its quantity.

The day came to a close on a positive note, with the participants agreeing to remain in touch with each other, to share ideas, and possibly begin to integrate some therapies. These are early days yet, so that it may be quite some time before the general public is made aware of the progress being made. There seems little doubt, however, that, so far as AIDS and the other degenerative diseases are concerned, the integrated approaches of some complementary therapies are showing the way ahead.

#### RECOMMENDED READING ON AIDS

1. AIDS, Cancer and the Medical Establishment: Raymond Brown. Robt. Speller and Sons, 30 East 23rd ST, New York 10010.
2. Healing AIDS naturally: Laurence Badgley. Human Energy Press, California, ISBN 0-941523-00-4
3. Maximum Immunity: Michael Weiner. Gateway Books, Bath.

4. Christopher Spence: AIDS--- Time to Reclaim our Power. pub. Lifestory 1987.
5. AIDS: article by Leon Chaitow. Here's Health March 1986.
6. Beyond Illness: Larry Dossey Shambalah 1984.
7. AIDS: The Promise of Alternative Treatments: Carlyn Reuben, East/West September 1986.
8. Branko Bokun: Humour Therapy: Vita Books, 26 Chelsea Square London SW3
9. AIDS: article by Simon Martin in Here's Health March 1987.
10. The Emerging Field of Psychoneuroimmunology: article by Geo. Solomon in Advances Vol. 2 No. 1 1985.
11. Germanium: Potent Natural Healer: Uta Goodman, 164 Weston Park, London N8 9PN
12. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion: WHO Nov. 1986