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Holistic health: Disillusioned by traditional medicine, natural remedies gain momentum

—By Kenya McCullum

It's no secret that the American health care system is in grave trouble. Rising costs and lengthy red tape make it next to impossible to deal with insurance companies — that is, for those who are lucky enough to have coverage in the first place. According to the National Coalition on Health Care, there are 47 million Americans that do not even have coverage at all—many of whom forced to rely on emergency rooms for the primary care they cannot afford.

Pharmaceutical companies have a huge influence on doctors today — in fact, a recent UCSF study revealed that physicians who were wined and dined by a pharmaceutical sales rep were more likely to prescribe that company's drugs to their patients. In many cases, the drugs being prescribed have crippling side effects that are nearly as bad, if not worse, than the condition they are meant to treat. And, as if this weren't bad enough, some women feel that they have routinely been treated like second-class citizens by overworked health care providers who don't listen to their concerns or take their needs seriously.

Given these factors, it's no surprise that women are taking back their health care and turning to Mother Nature for their needs, which could ultimately help families in the United States stay healthy.

“Once you start educating yourself about natural products, you put yourself on a road to greater empowerment, healthier living, and that will spillover to family members,” says Meg Jordan, PhD, RN — also known as the Global Medicine Hunter® because of her life's work, which has been a quest to find the best health systems from around the globe.

And what will women find when they edify themselves as to the benefits of natural remedies? For one, natural remedies work in a subtler manner than traditional medications and, as a result, do not have the same level of toxicity or cause such a large number of side effects.

“Natural remedies work like a velvet nudge, instead of an iron hammer. A drug will give an immediate short-acting effect, and a natural remedy gives a very gentle, long-range effect,” says Jordan.

In addition, adding natural remedies to your health regimen has a way of creating what is known as a “spillover effect,” meaning it will empower you to adopt more healthy practices, like changing your diet and adding exercise to your lifestyle.

Jordan also believes that it's important for women to question the medical establishment in order to find

the best treatments for them and to take the ultimate responsibility for their own health by investigating alternatives. “There are hidden dangers when you just shut up and follow doctor’s orders, and when you lose your sense of self-empowerment and are no longer at your own helm about what’s good for you,” she says. “Generations believed for years that good health was really just a matter of shutting up and following doctor’s orders, and we’ve learned now the hard way that we can’t afford that bill — for one thing — and also that it has some devastating human effects.”

As a veteran registered nurse who once considered becoming a physician herself, Jordan has seen first hand how devastating the effects of inadequate health care can be. In addition, she worked as a health journalist and founded *American Fitness* magazine, which further gave her an abundance of knowledge about the differences between traditional medicine and natural medicine, which she now uses to educate the listeners of her radio show on healthradio.net.

As a result of her extensive knowledge on natural remedies — and the large number of inquiries she receives from her listeners about alternatives to traditional medications — Jordan began doctorspicks.com, a Web site that compiles and sells alternative remedies for everything from the common cold to cancer to anxiety. Although Jordan advises against patients simply dropping their current treatments in favor of natural remedies without discussing it with their physicians first, she does encourage people to explore all of these options with their doctors.

Patients should not be surprised however, if doctors are not educated about what herbal and botanical remedies are out there, so it may be a learning process for both doctor and patient, says Jordan.

“We’re sadly seeing a real dichotomy, a real split right now in how practitioners are trained,” Jordan says. “Those who are trained in the principles and practice of western medicine are completely supported through the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical shaping has been the major underpinning of biomedicine for 20 years now, and it is important for people to understand that their doctors don’t even have a rudimentary grasp of herbal or botanical medicine.”

What natural remedies are right for women?

We all know our special medical needs as women — and in many cases, the solutions that traditional medicine has to offer do us more harm than good, thanks to their extremely adverse effects. For instance, recent studies have shown that while Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) has been successful for treating the symptoms of menopause, studies indicate it could increase the risk of breast cancer. And with the Bay Area already showing a higher incidence of the disease than the rest of the country, that’s a risk many women cannot afford to take. In these cases — where the cure is worse than the illness — natural remedies are a sensible alternative to traditional medicine, and there are several natural options that can be taken for common health issues that women face.

Menstrual Cycle:

- Vitamin E increases the flow of blood to your muscles, which can alleviate stomach cramps and breast tenderness during your period.
- Vitamin B6 is good to help reduce the depression, mood swings, and stress that women experience during PMS.
- Calcium is useful for treating the aches and pains that occur during PMS.
- Gamma-linolenic acid is an oil supplement that relieves bloating, cramps, and tenderness of the breasts.
- St. John’s Wort is an herb that can be taken for the insomnia and mood swings associated with PMS.
- Omega 3 and Omega 6 — which are fatty acids found in fish, flaxseed, and primrose oils — reduce

inflammation that causes cramps.

- Chamomile and ginger teas are good to drink to alleviate the pain of menstrual cramps.
- Black cohosh is an herb that can reduce all of the symptoms associated with PMS.

Pregnancy:

- Folic acid is important for pregnant women because it helps to decrease birth defects. Additionally, this vitamin can decrease the risk of breast and colon cancers.
- Iron intake needs to be doubled when a woman is pregnant in order to prevent iron-deficiency anemia.

Menopause:

- Vitamin B complex can help women reduce stress associated with menopause.
- Vitamin A can help alleviate the skin and hair damage that can be caused by the fluctuations of hormones during menopause.
- Herbs like black cohosh, ginseng, wild yam, and chasteberry can help alleviate hot flashes and mood swings in menopausal women.

Osteoporosis:

- Calcium taken regularly can help strengthen bones and significantly reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Although these are natural remedies, you still should proceed with caution when using them. Of course, vitamins and minerals are best consumed in their natural state. Eating an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables is always the best way to feed your body.

Source: www.hersupplements.com

Kenya McCullum is a freelance writer whose work can be found at www.km-com.com .