



Roots & Wings: The Enduring Legacy of Wellness

Breakout Discussion Forum

Moderator:

Anne Bramham, Owner & Founder, American Spa Therapy Education Certification Council, U.S

Participants:

Dr. Regina Webersberger, Medical Doctor, Kneipp Kurhaus der Marienschwestern vom Karmel, Austria

Prof. Hildegard Wittlinger, Director, Dr. Vodder Academy International, Austria

In keeping with the spirit of GWS's 'Back to the Future' theme this 50 minute session examined the significant contributions of two Europeans - Father Sebastian Kneipp, (Nature Cure) and Dr. Emil Vodder (manual lymphatic drainage) - and the role their pioneering work is poised to play in today's evolving Wellness industry.

Both disciplines effectively address the Autonomic Nervous System: Anti-inflammatory, de-congestive, pain reducing and deeply relaxing they serve as 'all natural' antidotes for a wide range of common disorders.

In the session's opening comments the speakers (Dr Weibersberger and Professor Wittlinger) discussed how, in face of widespread resistance, these two individuals persisted and ultimately gained acceptance with mainstream medical and healing professions. Today their teachings are practiced around the world in medical, spa and clinical wellness environments.

By all measures these two men were visionaries and their inspired work serves as a reminder of the healing power of touch and natural elements.

Kneipp Therapy

Austrian born Dr. Regina Webersberger, MD presented a summary of the life of Father Sebastian Kneipp. Specializing in stress related health issues, Dr Webersberger uses Kneipp therapy to retrain relaxation responses via non-invasive methods. Below is an overview of her talk.

Born the son of a weaver, Father Kneipp worked in the family business until he entered the seminary. In poor health and concerned he may not survive long enough to graduate, Kneipp began searching for a cure and in the process discovered a book about water therapies by Johan Hahn (1696-1773). Kneipp began treating himself and over time experienced a full recovery.

Over the years Father Kneipp successfully treated countless individuals while developing over a 100 different water therapy treatments.

Kneipp's Therapy rests on 5 Pillars:

- Water/ Hydrotherapy
- Herbs / Phytotherapy
- Exercise/ Kinesiotherapy
- Nutrition / Dietetics
- Lifestyle modification / Ordnungstherapie

Not unlike the programs offered in today's health/retreats centers, we are still walking the path first laid down by Kneipp's "Nature Cure".

Kneipp's treatments consists of:

- Washing
- Affusions
- Wraps
- Baths
- Water Treading
- Dew Walking

One of the most important aspects of Kneipp's approach is the individual's adjustment to the therapy and the constitution of the patient. Kneipp therapy gently stimulates responses in the body which lead to an enhanced tolerance to stress and a greater 'relaxation response.'

Other physiological effects include a stimulation of the cardiovascular system thus enhancing circulation, regulation of blood pressure, strengthening of the immune response, stimulation of metabolism and an overall sense of calm and wellbeing.

Father Kneipp believed in the positive effects of simple food, exercise and balanced emotions.

Dr. Vodder's Manual Lymphatic Drainage

Prof. Hildegard Wittlinger, Co -Founder, Wittlinger Therapie Zentrum, worked side by side with Vodder and is a legend in her own right. Instrumental in introducing MLD to North America and other parts of the world, at age 88 she is still teaching - still globe trotting. She just completed a ten day program at Fairmont's Forbes 5 Star property in San Diego, California.

Hildegard's extensive knowledge and understanding of Vodder is difficult to summarize in a few words.

In general, Hildegard's comments covered the theories of those scientists who had inspired Vodder including Claude Bernard, Alexis Carrel (who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for maintaining living cells in vitro thereby doubling the cells'

life expectancy) and Cecil Drinker who wrote on the importance of the lymph system.

Prior to Vodder, virtually nothing was known about the lymph system and the scientific world was quick to reject his hypothesis and empirical evidence. At the time, the lymph system was an unknown factor in the field of physical therapy...an unexplored and dangerous no-man's land.

Vodder was convinced that the human being is a biological unit. He realized that lymph is an omnipresent living environment. He wrote,

“In my mind I saw the nodes as a natural draining system for the skin, mucosa and meninges. Could the obstruction in the lymph nodes be the underlying cause of these different ailments? Would it be possible to unblock the drainage system by a treatment with appropriate massage techniques? ”

If the source of lymph is the connective tissue matrix, this would substantiate the claim that this method could decongest the connective tissue, remove micro-edemas in the connective tissue of the skin and eradicate the source of many evils.

According to Hildegard “We had to work hard and tried to convince physicians that this massage method is **completely different** from all the other massages referring to the indications and the application.”

Over time scientists and the medical community became interested in Vodder's MLD and began investigating its effects, proving that what Vodder had taught us about the effects of his method (calming, relaxing, decongesting, analgesic and immune-stimulating) were correct.

Research later concluded that the decongesting effect of manual lymph drainage is effective in treating lymphedemas after cancer operations.

Decongesting edemas is measurable and health insurance companies in Europe and North America reimburse patients who receive MLD treatment from license, certified practitioners.

Anne Bramham (Session Moderator) Summary

Slowly but steadily we have convinced others of the value and range and versatility of this work. The fact that both modalities (MLD & The Nature Cure) effectively quiets the Sympathetic Nervous System ensures therapeutic benefits since it is only in a state of parasympathetic that the body can rebuild, rejuvenate and heal.

All of us hear so much about how important a sense of purpose is to our own well-being and fulfillment. For Hildegard who openly states “Vodder gave her ‘her path’ and Regina, who feels she has achieved a greater sense of purpose since turning away from the traditional medical path, one can gain insight and perspective. Their stories inspire.

They speak to our potential as an industry.

For myself, as a disciple of Natural Healing, I cannot help but observe that so much of today's new information is simply an uncovering of past teachings. As an industry I believe our future success will be largely determined by our willingness to learn embrace our past as we move forward.

We stand on the shoulders of the generations that have come before us.

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