

Following in the same terrain, Saputo points out that both patients and clinicians are comprised of psychological, social, cultural, biological, and transpersonal dimensions, which can come together in meaningful synergy in the context of health care and the creation of optimal healing environments.

An integral perspective is as much about healing as it is about curing, he also explains. Just as a health care practitioner might work to mobilize patients' antibodies to fight disease, integral health care involves in equal measure harnessing a patient's desire for health and the will to live. From the integral perspective, these qualitative domains are as significant as the role of scientific information and technology. Finally, in addition to the science of diagnosing, treating, or preventing disease and damage to the body or mind, this is a model that seeks to heal—even in the face of potential death and dying.

Ultimately, the integral perspective calls for a whole-system shift from a disease-centered to a healing-centered model for health care. As Dr. Saputo and his cowriter Byron Belitsos so compellingly argue in this inspiring book, it is now time for such a return to healing in America's health care regime.



Preface

Over the 40 years that I have been in medical practice, I've watched with increasing dismay as commercial values have overtaken mainstream medicine, almost obliterating the central mission of our profession. I have grieved as I have witnessed how the quality of health care in the United States has plunged so far as to be rated among the lowest levels in the developed world.

I entered the profession aspiring to be a healer, as did most of my colleagues. We wanted to attend to the health and medical needs of *whole persons*; we were inspired to serve our patients through our aspiration to provide genuine healing and to promote healthy living based on science and common sense. Sadly, this ideal has been replaced by the corporate bottom line, resulting in a dysfunctional system focused almost entirely on what I prefer to call *disease care*. The physician's natural focus on the health needs of a unique, living person embedded in his family and society has today been largely replaced by a model that reduces each person to his body, his body to a machine, and his health needs to a set of symptoms to be treated mainly with drugs—too often ignoring the patient's mind, emotions, spirit, environment, and lifestyle.

Underlying this shift, and at the heart of the problem, is a culture that accepts—and in fact generates—this reductionistic and mechanistic model of health, along with the costly health care system that has grown up around it. Especially with

the rise of for-profit *managed care* in the last three decades and the increasing predominance of a pharmaceutical industry and large hospital chains ever in search of profit, our often counterproductive health care system has become entrenched, even as ordinary Americans have become sicker. The ultimate result is that the heart and soul of true medicine is being lost, left behind in a crazy-quilt system that largely treats symptoms for profit. Meanwhile, Americans are apparently paying more money—much more money—to become less healthy.

But fortunately for you and me, it doesn't have to be this way.

It is heartbreaking to be a practicing physician at a time when the medical system itself has become a leading cause of death and when far too many people are sick in all age groups. It distresses me to watch as “Big Pharma” corporations, impersonal insurance companies, and overpaid HMO (health maintenance organization) bureaucrats have created a Frankenstein system that is no longer affordable for ordinary Americans. It pains me to observe how their allies in government can't or won't regulate them properly, and how they have so far failed to come up with a national health insurance model that works for all Americans. It is heartrending to see so many millions of Americans going without any medical care coverage at all. More of concern to me is the realization that single-payer national insurance—even a system as progressive as those in Canada, the UK, or France—is a necessity but is still not a sufficient solution. National health care reform that is built around the old disease care model of medicine may reduce some costs but will not in the end create much better health for Americans.

But again, it doesn't have to be this way.

We're all in this boat together—all of us are more or less complicit in a system that simply does not work. This is true even of the patients themselves, too many of whom suffer quiescently as they

pay the price both in their pocketbooks and in their deteriorating health. At the other end of the scale, our top medical and science professionals are also becoming part of the problem: Serious conflict of interest is rife in research medicine, a fact well documented to exist even at its highest levels—in universities, regulatory agencies, and prestigious medical journals.

Indeed, even today's average doctor can be part of the problem: For although physicians can and do celebrate the fact that the medical technology and basic research they use daily have advanced greatly, any doctor who has practiced over the last several decades will have witnessed a steady deterioration of the general state of medical practice, both in the quality of care that doctors are able to provide to patients and in the satisfactions levels they experience in practicing medicine. Nevertheless, doctors are not yet sufficiently organized to speak out for substantive change.

However, once again, it doesn't have to be this way.

So with all these issues at hand, what's the core problem? Along with many other observers, I believe the central flaw is that business and economics now dominate the industry; what was once the practice of healing based on the precepts of Hippocrates has turned into a business commodity that doles out standardized “treatments” dictated by the requirements of profit. This dominion of business values over our health care, combined with medicine's obsessive attention to treating symptoms rather than to prevention and genuine healing, has led to a general crisis in the health status of Americans—indeed, an epidemic of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. It has also produced an unaffordable health care delivery system that is threatening the very solvency of the American government. And underlying it all are cultural values that seem to anchor us in alienation, the profit motive, competition, and mechanistic thinking that puts us at war with nature herself.

Also reaching a high point of crisis is the *allopathic* medical paradigm itself, which in this book I usually call the “reductionist,” “fundamentalist,” “mainstream,” or “disease care” model. This approach is at its best in treating acute conditions, and at its worst when promoting health and prevention. But even where it was once strongest, allopathic medicine is now in decline because of its compromised science and its flawed systems of delivery. Knowing this to be true by their own experience, tens of millions of patients are voting against mainstream medicine with their feet, many abandoning it almost entirely.

The old reductionistic model is losing ground to natural medicine and *holistic* or *integrative* methods of healing or treating disease. It is giving way to preventive medicine, new patient-centered models of practice, and the abiding quest for peak lifetime health by millions of thoughtful Americans. The new medicine promotes mind-body-spirit wellness in a way that shifts our focus from *disease* care to genuine *health* care. It recognizes that at the deepest level, physical disease is usually the somatic expression of psychospiritual dysfunction—and that our psychospiritual problems are, in turn, deeply rooted in a society and culture that are themselves generating a systemic, global crisis of survival.

When the many limitations resulting from medicine’s mechanistic worldview are combined with the phenomenon of the over-commercialization of the medical industry—its domination by the bottom line and corporations that sometimes literally get away with murder—the result is often outrage, especially from patients and doctors. This book reflects that outrage and then harnesses it toward the mission of a return to healing, including a revival of the desire of physicians, nurses, and health practitioners of every kind to provide high-quality and affordable service.

Carrying out this mission requires a futuristic model of medicine, as proposed in this book—one that is based on my own 40 years of experience plus that of hundreds of colleagues with whom I have been working for over 15 years in my Health Medicine

Forums. This new approach begins with the increasing acceptance of alternative healing methods, leads gradually toward the model of integrative medicine—or what I call *Health Medicine*—and culminates in genuinely *integral medicine*, or the more descriptive phrase I prefer: *integral-health medicine*. Getting there will require the grassroots-driven resolve of the American people for structural change—indeed, the radical reform of health care at every level, including single-payer national insurance for all Americans. It will also require a new understanding of the role of consciousness in healing and a massive public education program that will lead all of us to take full responsibility for our health—to take the lead in medicine away from business and even from well-meaning physicians who are stuck in the system, and put it in the hands of the patients themselves.

After all, it is *your* life that is at stake!

In this book, you will discover how we have come to this great impasse. You will learn how we can turn the medical industry around with a genuine return to healing, led by the desire to serve the true needs of the patient as well as through the readiness of each of us to pursue peak health throughout our own lives. In the end, a return to healing can result only from the rise of a life-affirming global culture that is based on the thrill of serving others—one that sustains and celebrates vibrant health and actively promotes the quest for spiritual progress.

— Len Saputo
with Byron Belitsos
Orinda, California
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