



An Urge to Heal



By Eleanor Rodgerson, MD

HEALTH IS THE INTEREST OF THE DAY. No matter what the event, where the conversation, why the need, one's health becomes the primary topic of conversation. It is a natural concern. Without good health, living is limited. With such a broad desire for perfection, this practice of discussion is universal. Everyone wants to do something about it.

In the early days, say 2900 BC, Mesopotamian healers recorded their treatments repairing war wounds so the fight could continue. The Romans touched up the gladiators to get them back in the ring. According to Egyptian hieroglyphics, the practice of medicine was a healing art.* Skills improved through the centuries and, with successes, doctors achieved an honorable, respected position in society.

Today, humans talk over their disabilities continually and compare discoveries and their resolutions. What is the latest? What should be done? Shouldn't that new formula be tried? Does the doctor know? Newspapers, magazines, and books offer answers to all questions. One only has to read and then practice. With all the available information, why not?

Technology has moved medical disabilities and their treatment to universities and special centers and, along with the magnitude of information available, the private practitioner has lost the respect and honor that used to be prevalent.

The next door neighbor will offer a diagnosis and sympathy and treatment. The local police departments will rule on medication for the down-and-outers. Congressmen will lecture their TV audiences with descriptive blackboards expounding their recommendations. They all feel the need to heal.

There seems to be an inherent urge to heal, to make perfect, even among lower mammals. Life must be prolonged. As medical costs have risen and insurance has taken over, doctors have slipped into obscurity. Nurses sling stethoscopes around their necks and take over. Lesser hospital personnel become the nurses. Everyone practices medicine.

Perhaps developing this healing trait is good, spreading care. Perhaps the good health of all will continue to improve life expectancies. Or, perhaps the whole institution of treating the sick will deteriorate, from lack of basic knowledge. There is no doubt the desire to doctor one's fellows will continue. Even the chimpanzees treat each other's injuries!

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*THE HELPING HAND. Guido Majino, MD

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