

# TRADITIONAL THERAPIES MAKE A COMEBACK

by Bill Sardi

Just how far has modern medicine progressed? Modern medicine is navigating a giant U-turn and returning to therapies once believed to be antiquated. In case you haven't noticed, blood letting, leeches, fasting, red wine, garlic, radium and sauna bath therapy are being validated by modern research studies. The remarkable and unanticipated comeback of many ancient therapies creates a blur between modern and traditional medicine today.



**Matthew Concannon MD, University of Missouri Health Care, displays leeches used to enhance wound healing.**

For example, just recently a French company was the first to obtain approval from the US Food & Drug Administration to market leeches to US hospitals to treat wounds and skin grafts. While other companies had been supplying leeches since 1976, new

suppliers were required to obtain FDA approval under updated medical device laws. The US Food & Drug Administration had belatedly given its approval to a 2500-year old therapy!

Leeches have been used for centuries, as has bloodletting, to treat a wide variety of diseases and conditions via their ability to remove excess iron. [Medical Journal Australia 175: 665-66, 2001] Today, bloodletting is still being practiced in Ethiopia as it was practiced thousands of years ago. But it is also being practiced at Harvard Medical School and Johns Hopkins Medical Center, two of the most prestigious medical centers in the world.

Blood letting was recently shown to be effective in treating diabetes, hepatitis C, and cardiovascular disease due to iron overload. [Diabetes 51: 1000-04, 2002; Recent

Progress Medicine 89: 241-44, 1998; J Internal Medicine 237: 161-68, 1995; British Heart Journal 73: 73-75, 1995] A Norwegian medical journal calls blood letting *"one of the most effective methods of treating the increasing frequent disorders caused by iron overload."* [Tidsskr

Nor Laegeforen 119: 2487-89, 1999] Lewis R. Weintraub, MD, of Boston University, says: *"Despite its archaic origins and its general condemnation only a few decades ago, 'bleeding' remains once of medicine's most important tools."*



**Tools used over 100 years ago to perform bloodletting (AKA phlebotomy or venesection).**

## **Germs resist penicillin but not garlic**

Among other traditional remedies making a comeback are herbal and spice antibiotics. These scientific discoveries come at a time when man-made antibiotics are failing.

Oil of oregano and its active ingredient carvacrol, have been shown to be effective in killing drug-resistant staphylococcus. The Federation of European Microbiological Societies Letters journal reports that oil of oregano and its active ingredient, carvacrol, are effective against drug-resistant staph

infections. [FEMS Microbiological Letters 230: 191-95, 2004]

commonly used to treat this infection. [Indian Journal Experimental Biology 15: 466-68, 1977]

Garlic has traditionally been hailed as a “*poor man’s penicillin*.” A growing body of evidence now reveals that allicin, the primary active agent in garlic, is effective against all manner of bacteria, viruses (including pox viruses), amoeba and fungi (yeast, *Candida albicans*). As early as 1984 researchers found that garlic was more effective than penicillin, ampicillin, doxycycline, streptomycin and cephalexin against nine strains of resistant *Staphylococcus*, *Pseudomonas*, *Proteus*, *Escherichia coli*. [Fitoterapia 60: 313-15, 1984]

Researchers in the Netherlands report that allicin, equivalent to one clove of fresh crushed garlic, effectively kills vancomycin-resistant enterococci. Vancomycin is considered the antibiotic of last resort when all others fail. [Antimicrobial Agents Chemotherapy 43: 3045, 1999] In a laboratory dish study, fresh crude garlic extract has even been shown to be more bioactive against anthrax than tetracycline and doxycycline, antibiotic drugs

*Will herbal extracts replace penicillin? Alexander Fleming (right) discovers penicillin in 1928. But soon thereafter, germs were reported to develop resistance against this drug. Sixty years earlier Louis Pasteur reported that garlic inhibited the growth of bacteria in a laboratory dish, a discovery that was overlooked by pharmacologists. Garlic extracts do not produce germ resistance.*



Louis Pasteur



Alexander Fleming

The Archives of Diseases of Children reports that allicin, the active antibiotic component in garlic, is effective against drug-resistant infectious diarrhea (*Campylobacter*) in young children. [Archives Diseases Children 81: 278, 1999] Researchers indicate childhood middle ear infection caused by *Streptococcus* and other bacteria, is increasingly becoming

resistant to antibiotic therapy. While a vaccine is under development, researchers concede that garlic extract (allicin) “*may be of value for some infectious diseases*” including acute middle ear infection. [Int J Pediat Otorhinol 49: 15-17S, 1999] In Israel, a garlic/herbal ear solution has already been tested and found to be effective for middle ear pain in children. [Archives Pediatric Adolescent Medicine 155: 796-99, 2001]

Modern medicine’s over-reliance upon patentable molecules to kill germs has reached a dead end. Thousands of hospitalized patients now die needlessly every year due to antibiotic drug

### Date of Antibiotic Introduction and resistance

Antibiotic	Discovered	Introduced into clinical use	Resistance identified
Penicillin	1928	1943	1940
Streptomycin	1944	1947	1947
Tetracycline	1948	1952	1956
Vancomycin	1956	1972	1987
Garlic (allicin)	1858	-	never reported

*Adapted from Williamson JS, Wyandt CM, Microbial resistance: the plague of tomorrow, Drug Topics, May 21, 2001*



*Extracts of wild oregano, which contain carvacrol, exhibit potent antibiotic action comparable with prescription antibiotics without the onset of germ resistance. Allicin is the active antibiotic ingredient in garlic. While most brands of garlic pills provide little if any allicin, a fresh clove placed in a food blender will produce as much as 13,000 micrograms of allicin. However, laws prohibit these products from being labeled as antibiotics so few consumers are aware of their potency and application.*

resistance. Millions more will die prematurely, setting back much of the progress modern medicine has made, unless antibiotics are found that don't induce resistance by germs. Health authorities are gravely concerned. [Nature 430: 242-49, 2004] No germ resistance has ever been observed with garlic or oregano. [J Nutrition 131: 1106-08S, 2001] Oregano and garlic molecules are the most promising "new" antibiotics. Since medical doctors don't prescribe these natural antibiotics it is likely that the public, once informed of their benefits, will elect to use them on their own since no doctor's prescription is required.

**2000 BC Here, eat this root**

**1000 AD That root is heathen. Here, say this prayer.**

**1850 AD That prayer is superstition. Here, drink this potion.**

**1920 AD That potion is snake oil. Here, swallow this pill.**

**1945 AD That pill is ineffective. Here, take this penicillin.**

**1955 AD Oops! Bugs mutated. Here, take this tetracycline.**

**1960-1999 AD Oops!...39 more times. Here, take this more powerful antibiotic.**

**2000 AD The bugs have won! Here, eat this root.**  
-Anonymous

## **Calorie restriction/fasting**

Yet another dated medical technology recently making news headlines is calorie restriction. The Bible describes this by another term-- fasting. Moses fasted for 40 days at age 80 and lived another 40 years in good health. Following Moses by 2500 years, Harvard researchers now say calorie restriction could make it possible for humans to live, as Moses did, for 125 years in good health.

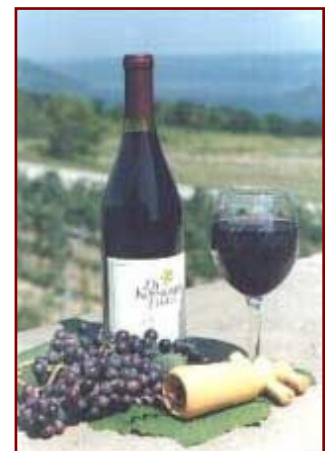
In 1963 Polish doctors called calorie restriction "hunger therapy." [Pol Tyg Lek 18: 405-09, 1963] The mechanism behind calorie restriction has been discovered. Calorie restriction is a biological threat that activates the Sirtuin 1 survival gene which gives cells longer time to repair their DNA. [Nature 430:686-9, 2004; Science 305: 390-2, 2004]

## **Red wine therapy**

While few people are expected to severely restrict calorie consumption to achieve superlongevity, Harvard scientists say there are molecular mimics of this same longevity mechanism. The molecule that has been identified as the best activator of the Sirtuin 1 survival gene is resveratrol, a molecule



*At age 80 years Moses fasted for 40 days and lived to the age of 120 in good health. Today researchers are heralding the practice of calorie restriction as an unequivocal method of achieving superlongevity.*



*Resveratrol, a red wine molecule, mimics the effects of calorie restriction.*

preserved in bottled red wine. [Nature 425:191-6, 2003]

Wine, consumed in moderation, has historically been regarded as medicine. [Drugs Exp Clinical Research 1999; 25:163-5] The French Paradox confronts biologists with an enigma – the French who customarily drink wine with their high-calorie meals experience far less cardiovascular disease and low rates of senile dementia (Alzheimer's disease). [J Internal Medicine 250:291-308, 2001]

Now, red wine pills are being developed as calorie restriction mimics without the calories, alcohol or preservatives, in an attempt to produce superlongevity. [Chembiochem 2004 5: 427-30, 2004] Airtight capsules are required to preserve the resveratrol red wine molecules in these pills.

### **Sauna therapy, radon spas and hormesis**

Furthermore, Harvard researchers now believe calorie restriction, a mild form of starvation, is just one of many biological stressors that activate the Sirtuin 1 survival gene. Other biological stressors that may activate the Sirtuin 1 gene are exposure to mild heat and total, low-dose, whole-body radiation. [J Gerontology 59: B705-09, 2004] Exposure to low-grade biological stressors like heat and radiation are examples of a biological phenomenon called hormesis which is defined as a low-dose of a toxin that has beneficial health effects. Hormesis is also known to slow aging. [Toxicology Applied Pharmacology 197: 125-36, 2004; Acta Biochim Poland 51: 481-92, 2004]

### **Sauna Therapy**

The sauna, or heat therapy, has been used in Finland for over 2000 years. The Finns traditionally regard the sauna for its longevity effect. [Annals Clinical Research 20:220-3, 1988] Modern experiments indicate sauna therapy may help to prevent or treat

atherosclerosis (blood vessel disease), chronic heart failure, blood pressure and arthritis. [Japan Heart Journal 45: 297-303, 2004; J Am College Cardiology 39: 754-59, 2002; Annals Clinical Research 20: 271-75, 1988]



### **Radium and radon gas therapy**

People living in homes over fissures in the earth's crust may be exposed to low levels of radium in water or radon gas, producing a hormesis effect. According to Professor Klaus Becker, Germany, "Radon treatment may be one of mankind's oldest therapies." Professor Becker writes that the ancient Romans and other old civilizations sought out radium water springs. In Japan, the Misasa radon springs have been popular for 800 years and cancer rates are low in the area surrounding this spring. Radon spas are popular in Germany and Austria as they have been for centuries. [Third Eurosymposium on Protection Against Radon, Liege/Belgium, May 10-11, 2001] Radium spring water and radium medicines were once touted in the 1800s and early 1900s but were later branded as medical quackery. [Seminars Nuclear Medicine 18: 46-64, 1988]



**Radon springs in Misasa, Japan have been popular for 800 years.**

Here again, scientific studies validate radium therapy. Radon gas may relieve symptoms of osteoarthritis. [Journal Pain 5: 20-25, 2004; Rheumatology International Dec. 12, 2003]



**Radon health mines in Montana recently made the pages of National Geographic Magazine.**

Radon therapy has been shown to be beneficial by Japanese scientists in modern times. [J Radiation Research 45: 83-88, 2004] Low-dose radiation, producing a hormesis effect, has been shown to have a profound ability to increase survival rates among

individuals with late-stage cancer in Japan over and above that produced by conventional radiation treatment. [Professor Kiyohiko Sakamoto, *Tohoku Radiological Science Center / Tohoku University, The Seventh International Conference on Nuclear Engineering Special Symposium, April 21, 1999*] **But low-dose irradiation treatment of tumors remains an unused technology worldwide.**

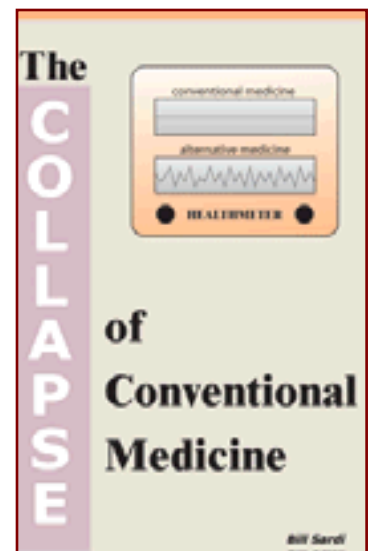
### **Health risks posed by low-dose radiation are imagined**

The public has been brainwashed into believing any exposure to radiation poses a health risk. The alleged health risks posed by radon gas are imagined. Radon gas exposure only poses theoretical risks that are extrapolated from high-dose radiation data. It cannot be assumed that high doses of radiation produce a certain level of risk and therefore lower doses pose a fraction of that risk. The 20,000 annual lung cancer deaths in the US that are attributed to low-dose radon gas exposure by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are based upon theoretical data from miners who have been exposed to high-dose radon gas. The EPA estimate isn't a real body count. [Health Physics 87: 68-74, 2004]

Professor Zbigniew Jaworowski, former chairman of the United Nations committee on radiation effects, says the widely held view that even low levels of radiation damage health has no basis in science. Jaworowski says "*low levels of radiation are probably essential for life itself.*"

To substantiate the claim of radiation hormesis is the fact that the lowest rates of cancer in the US are where radon gas exposure levels are high. While the EPA attempts to protect citizens from even the lowest natural radiation exposure (background radiation from terrestrial exposure is around 2.5 milliSieverts), people living in the Iranian city of Ramsar are exposed to 250 milliSieverts and experience no harm. Low dose radiation appears to stimulate DNA repair, similar to the effect produced by calorie restriction and wine. [BBC News, August 11, 2004] Scientists now believe radiation hormesis therapy may gain scientific credibility. [Med Physics 25:1407-10, 1998]

It's going to be difficult for modern medicine to navigate an about face in light of all of the studies validating medical technologies once thought to be antiquated. The medical industry is too pre-committed to existing technologies, and too reliant upon insurance payments to pay for "*approved*" therapies to ever depart from its current course.



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Ironically, while many traditional therapies have been disregarded and even branded as quackery by modern medicine, many of the treatments offered by modern medicine today (for example, cholesterol reduction, mastectomy, prostatectomy, estrogen replacement therapy, blood pressure medication and glaucoma care) have either been dis-proven or there is not adequate data to justify their continued use. Only a patient-driven revolution will bring about significant change in the practice of medicine and adoption of many of these nearly forgotten therapies.

Modern medicine touts high technology like cat scans, ultrasound, endoscopic microsurgery

and drugs that block cell receptors. But modern medicine's armamentarium doesn't address the new paradigm – prolongation of life and health in the later years of life, or what has been called life extension. In this regard, the hormesis effects of calorie restriction, red wine (or red wine pills), sauna and radon therapy hold greater promise.

In this “*back to the future*” report, imagine soaking in a sauna bath or radium hot springs while sipping on a glass of red wine (or red wine pill) after eating a low-calorie meal. It's a lifestyle that has been waiting for you for at least 2500 years.

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\* Bill Sardi has a commercial interest in red wine pills