

Paradigm Shift in Neurology - Healing Neurological Disorders by Understanding the Mind

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Abstract

The practice of medicine is both an art as well as a science. However, in the pursuit of science, we have neglected the art aspect or the human touch. Scientists have been puzzled by what is within our brain - a black box - the mind! In contrast to conventional medical teachings, it could be that all diseases originate in the mind. Symptoms are just the metaphors signaling disturbed emotional well-being. Our team explored all patients with various symptoms in detail to look for any underlying psychosocial stressors. Different symptoms seem to correlate with different stressors. There is a distinctive pattern. Symptoms in different parts of the body or different sides, e.g., left versus right side, denote different underlying stresses. Disease= Dis+ease. Patients develop the disease when they are not at ease with their daily lives. Therefore, treatment of any disease, be it functional or organic, is to address what makes the patient not at ease and highlights the need to change. From our experience, when patients were at ease, symptoms got better, and the need for medications decreased. When one is “at ease”, there is no disease. Different people have different personalities and different stress coping mechanisms. This article shares new insights into how different physical symptoms decode different messages from the mind and how our emotions influence health. This is the time for a paradigm shift. By tackling the psychological root of the mind using a holistic approach, the patient’s inner healing mechanism can be stimulated.

Introduction

The WHO has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity - the importance of mental health has been recognized. These quotes are not unfamiliar to us:

‘No health without mental health!’

‘The study of medicine begins with the patient, continues with the patient, and ends with the patient.’

‘It is much more important to know what sort of

patient has a disease than what sort of disease a patient has.’ ‘If someone wishes for good health, one must first ask oneself if he is ready to do away with the reasons for his illness. Only then it is possible to help him.’ ~ HIPPOCRATES

Background

Hippocrates believed that when treating the patient, we need to see the person as a whole; treating the mind was as noteworthy (Boyd, 2000). In most

circumstances, if we trace back, there is usually a connection between the life events or interpersonal events with the appearance of symptoms and the onset of the disease. Currently, the cost of healthcare worldwide is escalating and is non-sustainable in the long run. Despite extensive global efforts in the fight against infectious diseases, the covid pandemic and the continuing epidemics of tuberculosis, HIV, influenza, and the emergence of novel zoonotic pathogens remain our significant clinical challenges worldwide (Bloom & Cadarette, 2019; Smith, Machalaba, Seifman, Feferholtz, & Karesh, 2019; Kleisiaris, Sfakianakis, & Papathanasiou, 2014). Even though the average human life span has been prolonged successfully, most aged are crippled with multiple diseases. Increasingly, more people die at a young reproductive age - due to cancers and accidents, leading to an imbalanced world population pyramid (McKeown, 2009; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015; Population Reference Bureau, 2019)

Louis Pasteur argued all his life with Claude Bernard whether germs cause sickness or humans catch disease by being susceptible to them (Siegel, 1986) Despite the insights of these eminent doctors, medicine still focuses on disease, giving it a false

orientation. Many people are inclined to think that diseases catch people, rather than understanding that people catch disease by becoming susceptible to the illness. People who did not get sick rarely got studied. Psychoneuroimmunology gives some insights into pathogen-host interactions and the host's innate immune system (Danese & Lewis, 2017) Currently the practice of medicine is rather defensive, investigation oriented, and lacks human touch. Most of the studies published are mainly pharmaceutical driven and profit oriented. For example, evidence on statin use is now controversial (Li et al., 2019; Dispenza, 2014). There are two schools of thought:

- a. Statin is helpful.
- b. Statin is harmful.

The truth is that half of those who suffered from myocardial infarction had normal serum cholesterol. When we analyse data derived from randomised controlled studies, we assume that all the subjects' minds recruited in the trial are the same - but the truth is, everyone's mind is different. Conventional science and medicine tend to standardise patient care and downplay the effect of the mind on the body. However, the human mind is complex. We have to treat the mind to let the patient heal completely! This is the time for the paradigm shift.

Table 1: Differences between conventional medicine and holistic medicine.

Conventional medicine	Holistic medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conventional science and medicine tend to ignore or downplay the effect of the mind on the body• According to the paradigm of conventional medicine, the body is like a machine.• When a machine is broken, you do not engage it in conversation.• Thoughts, beliefs, and emotions are not taken into consideration in the treatment for a medical condition• Doctors use physical methods - scans, tests, drugs, and surgery - to diagnose the problem and fix the broken part.	<p>In holistic healing, we do not treat the body and the mind separately. In fact, there is a significant connection between mind, body and soul</p> <p>Disease = Dis+ ease (not at ease) People become sick when they are not at ease with the situation, they are in.</p> <p>By tackling the mind, changing the thought process, and coping mechanism, it is possible to accelerate healing.</p> <p>By understanding the reasons people fall sick, and by tackling psychological roots, symptoms may improve.</p> <p>Patients are less likely to experience tumour relapse, multiple sclerosis, or recurrent stroke.</p>

What is the perspective of a disease? Why do people fall sick?

Physical health is the result of harmony of the body, mind, and spirit.

Disease, from the word itself is ‘dis-ease’. From the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)’s perspective, disease is “yin-yang” imbalance. From the ayurvedic and spiritual perspective, there is no peace of mind, often coupled with hatred and suppressed anger.

“The organs weep the tears the eyes refuse to shed”
— ***Sir William Osler***

When faced with adversity, if we suppress our emotions and do not cry, this energy becomes trapped in the organs and our body will develop symptoms. The underlying psychological root depends on the function of the organ in the part of the body involved.

Disease is Dis+ease (not at ease)

Disease is a combination of “dis” and “ease” meaning not at ease. People are more susceptible to disease or illness when their minds are not at ease with their current situation or the people they interact with. Therefore, the management of any disease is to identify the factors that make patients uneasy and bring to their awareness that they have to make changes to be at ease. It could mean changing their thoughts or environment or changing the employment.

Current mainstream medicine focuses mainly on treatment. However, treatment is not the same as ‘healing’. The doctors or healers give therapy to the patients, but we all have our inner healing mechanism. When we are at ease, the symptoms will improve, and it is possible to reduce the dosages for medication. When we are at ease, there will be no disease.

Our body cannot lie! The body has a multitude of ways to convey its messages.

Symptoms are just metaphors. Physical symptoms, ranging from headache, numbness, tinnitus could just be the manifestations of our disturbed inner wellbeing.⁹

Unraveling the Mystery of the Mind

Do we really know our brain well? No matter how much we try to figure ourselves out, there will always be parts of our psyche that we will never fully understand. For instance, a child who was drowsy while studying suddenly becomes alert and, attentive

with excitement when given a tablet or smartphone. This is an example that our mind can control our physical state. The mind is like an umbrella. It only works if it is open. Doctors need to be open-minded that now is the era of mind, body, and health. ‘Pure’ science cannot define the mind. Our mind and body are intertwined and inseparable. Our state of mind can neither make us sick or hasten our recovery from illness. We have the power to heal ourselves, and the power to remain well. Emotional well-being is essential for physical wellbeing. You are your best doctor. Therefore, apart from treating the disease, the restoration of harmony between mind and body is vital. Healthy people without any co-morbidity, when exposed to the same pathogens in the same environment do not have the same degree of disease severity. Smoking is known to cause many kinds of oxidative and toxic damages to the body system, but the longest living human being, Jeanne Louise Calment, who lived to 122 years and 164 days, had a daily habit of smoking cigarette after meals and before sleep. Therefore, the phenotypic manifestation of any disease is not just influenced by external factors such as smoking, food, and extreme temperature, but also the internal factors of emotional well-being, peace of mind, and sleep that can affect host immune system via psychoneuroimmunology. While it cannot be seen or proved scientifically, the unconscious mind continues to exist, as everyone knows – patients improve with psychotherapy or hypnosis. However, psychoanalysis has been subjected to criticism, as its effects are not consistent

Why placebo works?

The placebo effect is more than just positive thinking i.e., believing that a treatment or procedure will work (Li et al., 2019; Dispenza, 2014; Wager & Atlas, 2015). It is about creating a stronger connection between the brain and body and how they work together," says Professor Ted Kaptchuk of Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, whose research focuses on the placebo effect. Placebos have been shown to be effective for conditions like pain management, stress-related insomnia, fatigue and nausea following cancer treatment.

When the patients believe that they are given something good for their symptoms, their mind becomes less stressful, less fearful, they have the peace of mind and can sleep well, then their body can repair itself. Measures such as aromatherapy and meditation that calm the mind or improve sleep have well been known to improve pain management and health.

How can our mind and emotion affect our body?

Our personality affects our response and reaction to life stresses. Different people have different characters with different coping mechanisms and are prone to various diseases when cannot cope well with life challenges. When we are not at ease with the situation, we become angry or anxious. Anger and anxiety are the two most common negative emotions that may lead to illnesses (Amstadter, 2008; Spielberger & Reheiser, 2009). There is an essential link between emotion and health through the interaction between our subconscious mind and our autonomic nervous system. Likewise, there is a relationship between physical and emotional health, for example. The effects of chronic stress on the immune system are tremendous. To elaborate further, anger arises from living in the past. Something happened, but we are unable to resolve the conflict and cannot let go or forgive. On the other hand, anxiety or worry, is trying to live in the future. We worry about something that will happen. We cannot live in the past; neither can we live in the future. We can only live in the present moment. Our future depends on what we do now. Anger is likely the emotion that leads to most accidents, falls, fractures, bleeding rashes, all types of inflammation such as conjunctivitis, tonsillitis, appendicitis, and arthritis, abscesses, ulcers, organ perforations, vessel blockages and resulting heart attacks and strokes, as well as all types of chronic pain. Giddiness, vertigo, hand or leg numbness, itchiness, unsteady gait are often related to anxiety and insecurity.

Examples of how physical symptoms correlate with our mind:

What is the underlying cause for headaches? Headaches occur when one is faced with a dilemma, when it is difficult to make decisions, or when there is

a conflict between the conscious and the subconscious mind.

A headache or migraine occurs when there is a conflict between the conscious and subconscious minds (Mayo Clinic, 2004; Holman, 1938). Our brain has two hemispheres: left and right cerebral cortex. The former is more of logical thinking, and the latter is quoted as the emotional brain. There could be an inner fight between the logical brain and the emotional brain for patients who present with headaches. For example, some patients may wish that the CT scan were normal not to have additional health problems to deal with. On the other hand, they may also wish that the scan is abnormal so that they have a valid reason no need to face the stress they are currently having in life. Children can present with abdominal migraine due to the stress and anxiety in daily life that influence the gut dysmotility via the gut brain axis. The similarities between migraine headache and abdominal migraine in terms of precipitants, associated symptoms and demographics may suggest a shared aetiology (Scicchitano, Humphreys, Mitton, & Jaiganesh, 2014; Abu-Arafeh & Russell, 1995). Collins & Thomas (2007), proposed a biopsychosocial approach; that the interplay between psychological factors, altered gut motility, and abnormal visceral perception caused an alteration in the “brain-gut” axis linking the enteric nervous system and the central nervous system, leading to paroxysmal abdominal pain.

Many people experience left-sided headaches as a result of work-related stress. The conscious mind thinks, ‘I have to work to earn a living, to support my family. At my age during this economic crisis, it is not easy to find a new job’. The subconscious mind thinks, ‘Please resign. I don’t like to work anymore; I don’t want to face the boss’. An inner struggle disturbs the person’s inner peace, leading to insomnia and ultimately manifests as physical illness. If one chooses to ignore the inner voices, they will become depressed. Depression occurs as a result of passive reaction to anger. The person is upset and angry about something but does not have the courage to change the situation, feels helpless, hopeless, and finally becomes depressed. Virtually all diseases, whether functional or organic, are linked to emotional dis-

tress. A person becomes ill when they are emotionally distressed. When one is not at ease with the situation, one is afraid or refuses to make changes, it is like being imprisoned in an invisible jail. Stress perpetuates when one refuses to make changes, and the disease ensues when one fails to cope with daily stress. Many teachers, government servants, and chief executive officers present with medical conditions such as headaches, neck pains, shoulder aches, transient ischaemic attacks (TIA), insomnia, and cancers. Deep behind these medical problems is the work-related stress that needs to be addressed.

Other examples of correlations of symptoms with underlying emotions:

Eye symptoms:

If one is angry about what one sees in reality, one can develop red eye or glaucoma.

If one feels that the future is bleak, one starts to have blurring of vision or blindness.

Ptoxis, diplopia, blindness, blurring of vision are due to stress and hurt, it is a refusal to see what one truly sees.

Ear symptoms:

When what the person hears in daily life is hurtful to the ego, for example, constant exposure to criticism and nagging, this can lead to reduced hearing or tinnitus.

An earache in child happens when the child is angry, not wanting to hear or is experiencing too much turmoil (e.g. hears the parents arguing)

Face represents our self-esteem and personal dignity. Prior to any facial asymmetry due to Bell's palsy or stroke, a patient often experiences some life scenarios that make him/her feel humiliated. For instance, Bell's palsy is common during pregnancy. Prior to Bell's palsy on the right side of the face, a pregnant lady experiences some heartbreaking event such as her husband not being faithful. Another example, a lady develops Bell's palsy on the left side of the face one day after delivering her baby. She had sub-fertility and needed in vitro-fertilization to conceive. Upon delivery, however, medical attendants noted that the baby had deformities. Bell's palsy on the left side of the mother's face was the result.

Trigeminal neuralgia commonly occurs when one is in conflict, has difficulty to express oneself or make decisions.

Mouth problems are related to communication. When one has difficulty to communicate one's needs or frustrations, one can develop oral symptoms.

Aphthous ulcer, sore throat, tonsillitis occur as a result of one wanting to say something but was unable to.

Neck pain or shoulder pain

Neck pain is very common among managers or supervisors. This is related to stress, pressure from superiors and pressure from subordinates, and pressure from customers in daily life. The person thus feels trapped in the middle. The function of the neck is to bend and turn. When one refuses to bend one's principles, ego, or personality, or refuses to follow orders, one starts to have a stiff neck. Pain occurs when one is upset due to being forced to bend one's principles, ego, or personality, or to follow orders. All the energy produced when upset will be trapped at the back of the neck.

Shoulder ache comes from being overwhelmed by responsibilities or other burdens one carries.

Shoulder pain comes from the inability to shoulder responsibilities. If the person is right-handed, left-sided symptoms originate from stress related to work, parents, siblings or children.

Right-sided symptoms are due to stress related to spouse or ex-partner, and boyfriend or girlfriend. We often see that a patient who has to take care of parents who are sick, or children with special needs start to have left shoulder ache. Those who have to take care of spouses who are sick develop right shoulder ache if they feel overwhelmed with the responsibility.

Goitre - can be the result of constant fight, flight, and fright state. The person is constantly under stress, always rushing for time (flight), sometimes fight in the heart (answer back), with a lot of worries (fright).

Chest pain - overwhelming heartache, someone hurts your heart, experience recent heartbreaking life events lately, or grief from loss of ego or loved ones.

Heart attack and stroke:

Both patients with heart attack and ischaemic stroke have blood vessel blockage. As disease = Dis+ease; whatever disease happens in our body is closely related to our life. The analogue for vessel block - 'road block' in life. From my observation and experiences, here are numerous chief executive officers (CEOs) who developed heart attack or stroke when faced with life adversity, 'roadblocks' such as share market crash, business failure, and relationship failure. However, not everyone will get heart attack or stroke when facing roadblocks in their lives. This is because depending on our personality, if one road is having traffic jam, some will choose an alternate road and there by avoid the roadblocks. However, those with type A personality are highly goal driven and sometimes refuse to change their perspective and path when faced with adversity. They may insist others to conform to them, and hope that the environment changes to suit them. However, when others refuse to conform to them, the roadblock persists. When the person faces challenges in every aspect of life without good psychosocial support, the stress coping mechanisms fail, they develop chest pain or experience a stroke as a result.

Heart

We often describe a shattered love affair results in a broken heart. Studies reveal that of among our body organs, the heart may be the most susceptible to emotional influence. Where a physician once healed the body, a psychiatrist the head, and a clergyman the soul, the holistic doctor plays all three roles. When a person has stress to the level beyond their coping mechanism, sudden death occurs. This is a condition known as Karoshi. Structural heart failure could occur after an argument between spouses; a condition called Takotsubo cardiomyopathy.

Gastritis occurs as a result of anger over not being able to control the situation or control someone's behaviour.

Bone & skin

Bone is the inner support of our body.

Backache: Upper backache - lack of ego support. Feeling unloved. Middle backache - lack of love.

Lower backache - worries about money and lack of financial support.

Sciatica - lack of financial support, worry about money and of the future.

Hand - refers to current situation, siblings, colleagues, and spouses.

When we are not comfortable with the current situation, we could possibly have hand symptoms.

Worries - numbness

Anger - pain, fracture

Rheumatoid arthritis -feeling unloved, lack of support, victimised.
 Criticism, resentment, blame.
 Hemiparesis due to stroke - suppressed anger

Legs

Our legs carry us forward in life. Leg problems indicate a fear or a reluctance to move forward in a certain direction.

Leg -related to future, issues with children or subordinates.

Left leg - son or male subordinate, if the person is right-handed.

Leg numbness - arises from worry about the future or children.

Anecdotal Accounts on Lateralisation

Lateralisation follows the law of gender representation of all things and beings, also known as the Yin and the Yang. Based on holistic practice of Chinese traditional medicine, when there is a disruption in the energy of the Yin and Yang, illness or disease can occur. For a right-handed person, left-sided symptoms are due to an imbalance of negative energy related to work, parents, siblings or children. Right-sided symptoms are due to an imbalance of negative energy related to spouse or ex-partner, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

For example, a senior physician who was the head of the department came to consult me for the recent onset of bilateral leg numbness. His nerve conduction study and the biochemical tests, including oral glucose tolerance tests (OGTT) were normal. I asked him if he was worried about something lately. After exploration, he revealed that he recently received a letter of transfer to head in another hospital in Kuala Lumpur. The symptom of numbness was a manifestation of his inner worries. He was unsure whether to accept the offer to move forward. He also worried about his future if he turned down the offer. If he accepted the offer, he was unsure whether to move to Kuala Lumpur alone or if his children would also follow him to relocate. After arriving at an understanding and resolving the inner conflict, his symptoms resolved without medication. There was a 24-year-old young man who presented with quadriparesis following a motor vehicle accident. On examination, the right side of his body was weaker than the left. An accident often happens as a result of the mind not at ease, such as anger or frustration of not having the freedom to speak up for oneself. An accident also relates to rebellion against authority. After exploration, he revealed that the day of the accident was the day his ex-girlfriend, hence the right-sided (partner / relationship) predominant weakness, married someone else. He was very

upset, angry and, at the same time, reluctant to move forward hence the lower limb symptoms. Joints are connection between two bones. The analogue in our daily life is connection i.e. interpersonal relationship. Joints also allow flexibility. The majority of patients with rheumatoid arthritis are perfectionists. However, the people surrounding them refuse to co-operate, so the perfectionist patients become upset. The energy produced when upset will be deposited in the hand joints or knee joints. Why the hand? The hand refers to current situation. Diabetes mellitus is a state where there is an excess of glucose, but the body cannot utilise the glucose due to a lack of insulin or reduced insulin sensitivity. The analogue in real life is failure to appreciate the sweetness of harmonious relationships. In other words, if a patient's relationship improves, his/her diabetes mellitus status may stabilize or improve.

Conclusion

In summary, our body can speak in a unique manner. The concept that physical symptoms or signs are linked to underlying emotional roots is gaining popularity. The concepts expounded are simplistic, that is, eye diseases result from anger with what one sees, ear problems from what one hears, oral disorders from inability to communicate, and chest pain from heartache. In conclusion, understanding the imbalance of energy interaction between the environment and the inner body is critical for the body to heal. Unlike psychoanalysis, hypnosis is useful to probe into a patient's subconscious mind but is time-consuming. Based on Angela's Decoding of Physical Symptoms (ADPS), the localization and lateralisation of the sign and symptoms can help physicians to grasp the patients' underlying distressed emotions faster. The mind can always influence the physical body. The realisation of the actual cause of the illness is the first step to true healing.

Future Perspectives

This is the time for the paradigm shift. It is crucial to understand why patients fall sick, what makes them not at ease leading to dis+ease. With this holistic approach, by tackling the psychological root in the mind, the patient's inner healing mechanism can be stimu-

lated. Instead of playing the passive role, now patients understand and become empowered to make changes to put themselves at ease, thereby reversing the disease process and possibly preventing the disease from

progressing. Perhaps we should change our research focus from genetic or molecular fields to the study of the mind.

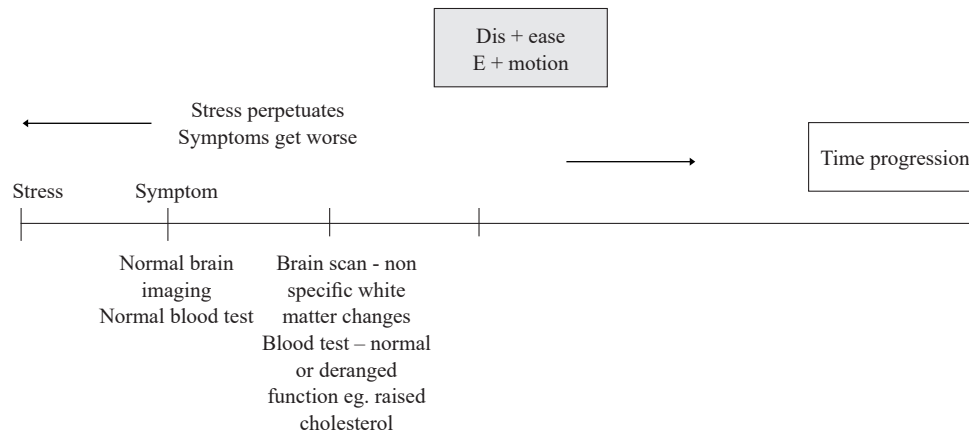


Figure 1: Stress and the symptom progression, disease

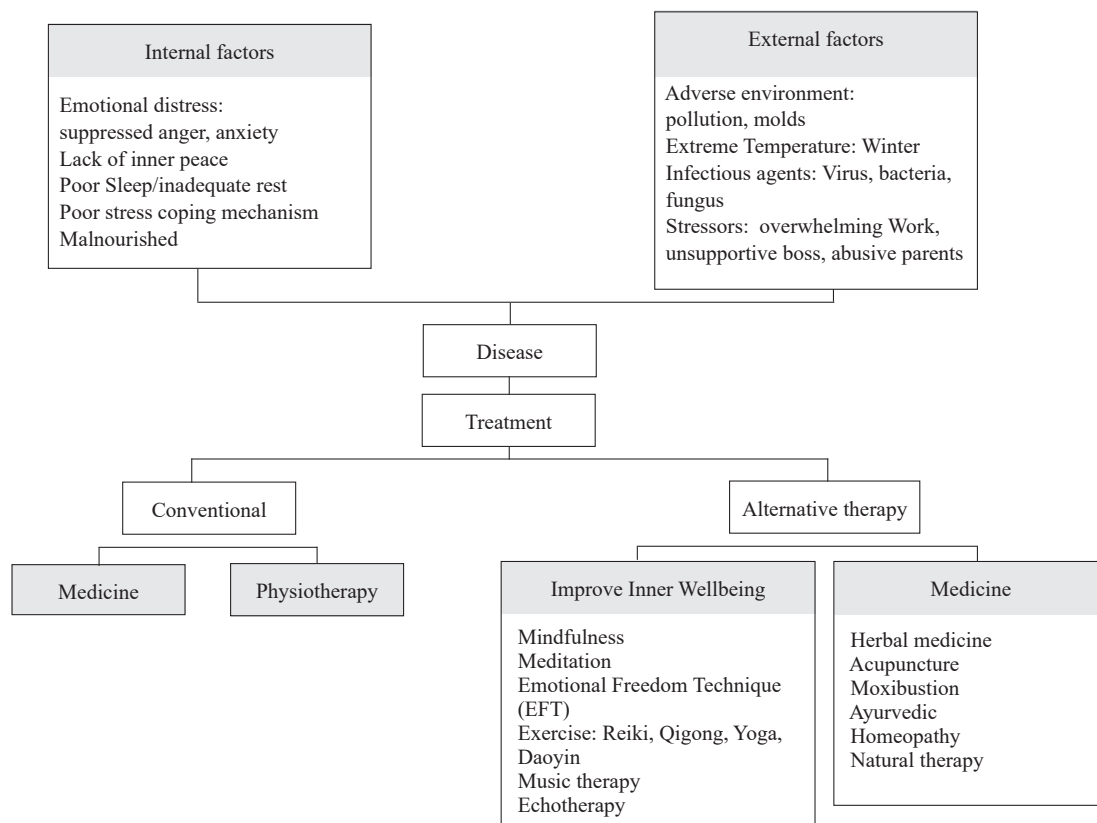


Figure 2: Cause and treatment of Disease

Epilogue

All truth goes through 3 stages: First it is ridiculed. Then it is violently opposed. Finally, it is accepted as self-evident.
~ Schopenhauer

In science the absolute truths of today are always relative truths of tomorrow. As the Irish dramatist and critic George Bernard Shaw said, "All great truths begin as blasphemies". Sometimes in science it takes more than 10 years for a bright idea to be allowed to become an acceptable truth. The Mind is like an umbrella, it works only when it is open. We need to be open-minded. Therefore, when a doctor stops learning, the doctor ceases to be a doctor.

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones. -Proverbs 17:22 I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug. - 3rd statement of modern Hippocrates oath

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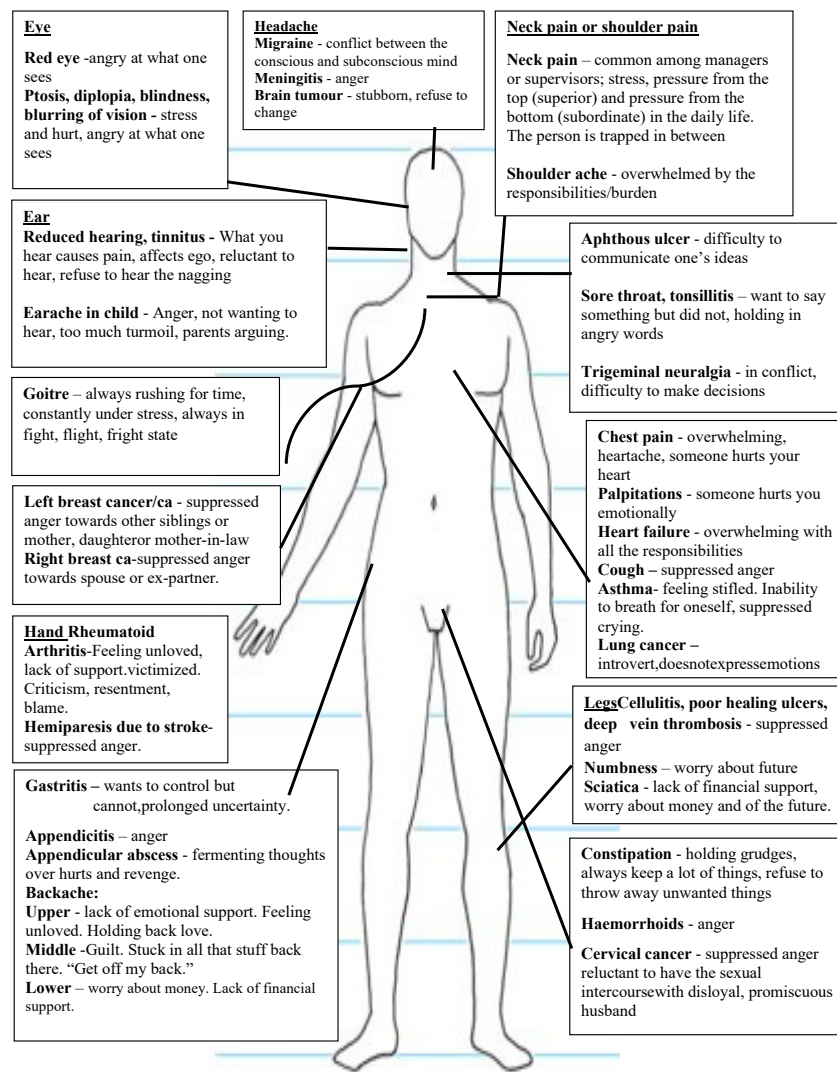


Figure 3: How our mind can affect our body as illustrations below: Angela's Decoding of Physical Symptoms (ADPS)

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