

BOOK REVIEWS

NUTRITION AGAINST DISEASE

Roger J. Williams, Pitman Publishing Corporation—New York

For literally millions of years man has had to contend with starvation (lack of calories) and sometimes with malnutrition, i.e. an imbalance between protein, fat and carbohydrates as well as vitamins and minerals. The unique combination of adequate total calories combined with various forms of malnutrition is very recent. Ironically it has coincided with an explosion of information about nutrition which has been virtually ignored not only by the public but by physicians and nutritionists. It is still possible for an eminent professor of nutrition to lament that the average physician knows as much about nutrition as his secretary and if she is pregnant she knows much more.

Professor Williams, discoverer of pantothenic acid and a pioneer in the application of nutrition to prevention of disease has written an unusually attractive and interesting book. It *is* in fact two books. The first 227 pages deal with the evidence, his reasoned arguments arising from them and his conclusions. The second book, pages 229 to 310 is an appendix of about 1100 medical and scientific

citations with a brief note about the contents of the report and where it relates to the main theme. The appendix itself is very interesting and helpful.

It is obvious after one has read this book and many others which are beginning to appear that no physician can properly practice his craft if he is not familiar with the science of nutrition. We seem to be entering another era of nutritional interest which may surpass the two decades before the last world war. The Academy of Orthomolecular Psychiatry can be a potent force in reopening medical interest in nutrition.

Professor Williams believes that the remarkable advances occasioned by the germ theory of disease and the potent antibiotics widely used have turned the medical profession away from nutrition. It is true that doctors are accustomed *to* and patients expect very rapid responses. The idea of specific diseases has been reinforced by clear cut responses of a few simple deficiency diseases such as scurvy, beri beri and pellagra to ascorbic acid, thiamine and vitamin B₃. Doctors have little patience for conditions which respond just as dramatically from disease to health if the process requires a long time. Whatever the reasons *it* can not be denied that nutrition (Continued on next page)

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is rarely taught in medical school and that physicians who are now foremost in this field have become so in spite of their medical education.

Professor Williams is aware of the relation between genetics and environment, between gene and its chemical environment. His term genetotrophic describes an organism whose potential for development of form and function is predetermined by genes but whose final outcome is determined by the availability of the essential nutrients required for these genes to do their work. He has also presented the most powerful evidence that our biochemistries are as unique as our finger prints. The use of minimum daily levels of nutrients is as meaningful as would be mean finger print indices, they are helpful in the mass and useless for the individual.

In this book Williams considers the common physical and mental degenerative diseases of man. The physical diseases are rare in non-industrial

countries but the mental conditions described are universal. The physical conditions include heart disease, obesity, arthritis and old age. There is no need to summarize each chapter. It is shown that optimum nutrition supplemented by adequate doses of certain vitamins will prevent or alleviate most of them. The same may be said about schizophrenia and alcoholism with special emphasis on a few specific vitamins, i.e. B₃ and B₆ for schizophrenia and B₃ and B₃ glutamine for alcoholics. Each chapter must be studied closely. As an Orthomolecular psychiatrist practicing over 20 years I feel able to conclude that Dr. Williams is on the right track and that any errors in theory are minor and due to our ignorance of many aspects of nutrition and medicine.

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