

In Memoriam

Lendon H. Smith, M.D.

June 3, 1921–November 17, 2001

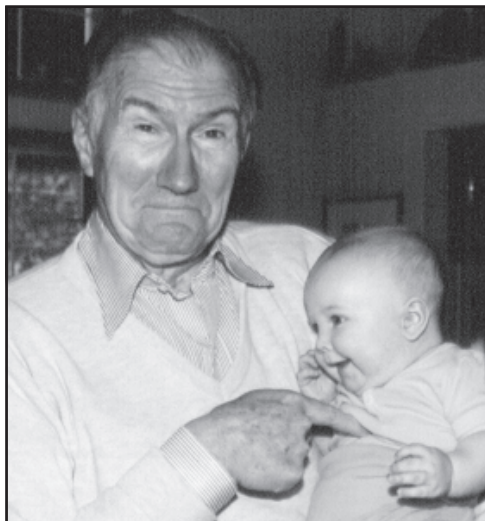


Photo of Lendon Smith and Evan Challen by Jack Challen

I raised my children into adulthood without their ever requiring a single dose of an antibiotic; for this I have Dr. Frederick R. Klenner and Dr. Lendon H. Smith to thank. A student came up to me one day after lecture and placed a slim paperback into my hands, saying “You have to read this!” The little book was Lendon Smith’s *Vitamin C as a Fundamental Medicine*, since retitled *Clinical Guide to the Use of Vitamin C: The Clinical Experiences of Frederick R. Klenner, M.D.* It is a digest of Dr. Klenner’s 27 published and unpublished medical papers, some dating from the 1940s, which had been collected, summarized and annotated by Dr. Smith into a mere 57 pages of astounding reading. Since much of Klenner’s work was published in regional medical journals, his articles previously had been hard to come by.

The antibiotic and antiviral effects of megadoses of vitamin C have been largely

unappreciated by the health professions. Dr. Klenner’s 40 years of experience successfully treating pneumonia, herpes, mononucleosis, hepatitis, multiple sclerosis, childhood illnesses, fevers, encephalitis, polio, and over 20 other diseases—all with vitamin C—is even less well known to the general public. Patients and orthodox physicians typically are amazed when they learn that Klenner employed 350 to 1,000 milligrams of vitamin C per day, per kilogram patient body weight. One can only speculate how much suffering might have been avoided if doctors in the 1950s had listened to this man.

If Klenner was one of the most innovative physicians of all time, Lendon Smith was perhaps among the most courageous, as he was one of the first to unambiguously support high-dose vitamin regimens for children. Such a position did not endear Smith to every one of his fellow members

of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and it is therefore further to his credit that he boldly stepped forward and, in the best traditions of Linus Pauling, took orthomolecular therapy directly to the people. In this he was particularly successful, achieving renown by way of his newsletter, *The Facts* and his many popular books, articles, videos and primetime television appearances. He appeared on *The Tonight Show* sixty-two times, an exposure such as orthomolecular medicine has rarely seen. Even Dr. Pauling never won an Emmy award. Dr. Smith did.

The man who would become nationally known as “The Children’s Doctor” received his M.D. in 1946 from the University of Oregon Medical School. He served as Captain in the U. S. Army Medical Corps, 1947-1949, went on to a pediatric residency at St. Louis Children’s Hospital and completed it at Portland’s Doernbecker Memorial Hospital in 1951. In 1955, Smith became Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Oregon Medical Hospital. He would practice pediatrics for 35 years before retiring in 1987 to lecture, to write, and to continue to help make “megavitamin” a household word.

And yet it was not until over 20 years of medical practice that Dr. Smith first began to use megavitamin therapy. A patient “wanted me to give her a vitamin shot,” he writes of an alcoholic woman from 1973. “I had never done such a useless thing in my professional life, and I was a little embarrassed to think that she considered me to be the kind of doctor who would do that sort of thing.” (*Feed Yourself Right*, 1983, xiii-xiv)

“That sort of thing” consisted of an intramuscular injection of 0.5 cc of B-complex, which, Smith reported, proved successful enough such that “she walked past three bars and didn’t have to go in.” This was the beginning of his evolution from conventional pediatrician to orthomolecular spokesperson.

It is a remarkable transformation. His first book, *The Children’s Doctor* (1969) contains only three mentions of vitamins, and two are negative. There is a powerful trend to be seen in Smith’s next fifteen books. As he learned about nutritional prevention and megavitamin therapy, he began to discuss it. In *Feed Your Kids Right* (1979), Smith briefly recommends up to 10,000 milligrams of vitamin C during illness. In *Foods for Healthy Kids* (1981), he now recommends vitamin C to bowel tolerance levels. But even his relatively mild statements, such as “Eat no sugar” and “Stress increases the need for vitamin B and C, calcium, magnesium, and zinc” can be a walk on the wild side for pharmacophilic physicians. And Smith’s *Feed Yourself Right* recommendations for B-complex and vitamin C injections, self-administered by the patient twice a week for three weeks (p. 61), are not calculated to dodge controversy. Nor did they.

Dr. Smith couldn’t have cared less about his critics. By 1979, he was a *New York Times* bestselling author, and by 1983 an advocate of four-day water fasts, 1,000 microgram injections of B₁₂, and megavitamins for kids. There were no RDA-level vitamin recommendations to be found in a Lendon Smith book. He was an outspoken critic of junk food. Two of his trademark phrases were, “People tend to eat the food to which they are sensitive. If you love something, it is probably bad for you.”

In 1981s *Foods for Healthy Kids*, Smith was confidently in favor of fluoridation: “There is no doubt that it works; fluoridation is not a Communist plot.” (p. 51). Twenty years later, writing at his website, www.Smithsez.com, he appears less convinced, having written, “If we continue to eat store-bought food, we will have store-bought teeth.” What’s more, he turned very cautious about routine vaccination. “The best advice I can give to parents is to forgo the shots, but make sure that the children in your care have a superior immune sys-

tem. This requires a sugarless diet without processed foods (and) an intake of vitamin C of about 1,000 milligrams per day for each year of life up to 5,000 mgs at age five.” (www.mercola.com/2000/nov/5/victory_over_sids.htm)

These are long evolutionary steps for a pediatrician who, 32 years earlier, wrote of vitamin C: “Excess is a waste and will not prevent colds.” (*The Children’s Doctor*, p. 217) Had he held to such incorrect but politically safe beliefs, Smith might have avoided being compelled to stop practicing medicine in 1987, under pressure from insurance companies and his state’s Board of Medical Examiners. Nonetheless, for fourteen more years, he would speak out in favor of megavitamin therapy. In this, he did the job second to none.

The popularization of orthomolecular medicine by courageous physicians such as Dr. Smith has enabled the benefits of nutritional therapy to reach families with sick little kids at 3 AM. Smith’s exceptional visibility has done a great deal to educate and encourage fathers and mothers to use vitamins to prevent and cure illness. For this, Lendon Smith ranks as one of the most influential pediatricians of our time, and one of the true pioneers of orthomolecular medicine.

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Lendon Smith was outspoken on many subjects. Some examples follow:

“The psychiatrist labels (attention deficit) a “disease.” He gets paid and the school gets federal funds for counseling the “diagnosed” child... (ADD) is not a disease; it is a nutritional deficiency.” www.smithsez.com/ADHDandADD.html

“We are a nation of walking wounded. A biological deterioration of American

health is thought to be taking place (due to our) food additives, pollution, medical system devoted to drugs and chemicals, foods grown on depleted soils, and vaccination programs.” “Many vaccines have not been found safe, nor effective.” “Risking one’s life by an intervention which is probably ineffective, to avoid a disease which will probably never occur, is not sound medical practice. Soap and peroxide seems to be safer than (tetanus) shots.” www.smithsez.com/vaccines.html “It is possible to augment immune function with super nutrition.” www.smithsez.com/Nutritionfacts.html

“Get the junk out of the reach of children. Those kids have to grow up and take care of us because we are in trouble from our mothers’ diet.” www.smithsez.com/Geneticinfluences.html “Vitamin C is our best defense and everyone should be on this one even before birth. Three thousand mg daily for the pregnant woman is a start. The baby should get 100 mg per day per month of age. (The six month old would get 600 mg, the year-old gets a thousand mgs daily, the two year-old would get 2,000 mgs., etc.) A daily dose of 2,000 to 5,000 mg would be prudent for a lifetime.” www.smithsez.com/AlivearticleonCancer.html

“There is no evidence schizophrenia is caused by a deficiency of any modern drug. Hospital food can make one sick. Registered Dieticians (RD) are typically 60 to 80 years behind current research in their field.” www.smithsez.com/mentallillness.html

Lendon Smith’s bibliography is published at www.doctoryourself.com/bibliolsmith.html