

How Did We Get Here? A Historical Perspective

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How did we become so divided over a health issue?

Never have we seen such extreme positions.

We do not know which medical experts to believe. Do we trust government health experts over scholastic health experts, or alternative health experts, or experts in the trenches who are fighting this disease? Real time information is flowing like a fire hose via the internet. Is the pandemic viral driven or politically manipulated? Can we trust the numbers? Whose numbers do we trust?

We are told to, “follow the science.” Why is some science accepted and some science censured? Why can we go to bars and casinos and not church? Why can we go to the beach in Florida but not in California? We cannot even agree whether a pandemic exists.

In my personal quest for truth, I found a book by Paul Starr, “The Social Transformation of American Medicine,” which won the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction.

In this book we find that during the 1700’s American physicians were considered tradesmen, not practitioners in an exclusive professional institution. In the 1760’s some educated doctors tried to institute themselves to the exclusive status that physicians in England enjoyed. These doctors succeeded in organizing medical schools and securing licensing authority but failed to establish themselves as an exclusive privileged profession. During the Jacksonian era in the 1830’s and 40’s their claims to privileged competence evoked a sharp backlash that crippled their ambitions for the next half century. This backlash helped to elevate lay practitioners, who used native plants and folk remedies, to their level. In fact, a rival society of natural practitioners, the Thompsonians, nearly replaced them.

During this period Alexis de Tocqueville, from France, visited America and noted that the populace had been swept by a series of popular movements and were deeply concerned with improving their health through diet, exercise, moral purity, positive thinking, and religious faith.

Alexis de Tocqueville stated, “But a concern with health has not always produced faith in doctors. On the contrary, many of those most disposed to take health ‘into their own hands’ are skeptical of physicians. The advocates of popular health, even when they are doctors, frequently see themselves at war with the medical profession.”

Today medical doctors have achieved their exclusive goal of licensure and respect. If a revived de Tocqueville were to observe life in the USA, he would observe Americans jogging in parks, shopping in health food stores, eating right, buying organic produce, and reading endless guides about how to keep fit and stay healthy. He would probably conclude that health obsession is

more pronounced today than it was in the early 1800's. And I add that he would be horrified at the power the medical industry has over formerly sovereign citizens.

According to my research, science is the observation of life and noting what is constant and therefore true. We need to individually research and find the truth for ourselves, not rely on a "ministry of truth" to give it to us.

Following science and recognizing the truth is essential to surviving these turbulent times. We should remember the adage "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." Let us diligently be healthier through proper diet, exercise and loving, kind thoughts.

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