

Regeneration vs. *Substitution*

by Dr. Dean Black

My adventure with herbs began with a sneeze. A Chinese medical doctor, with whom I'd become acquainted, noticed my droopy condition. "Hay fever?" he asked. I gave a runny nosed nod. A few minutes later I had a plastic bag full of herb powder. I learned quickly: don't sneeze with a mouth full of herb powder! Soon I'd mastered the technique of quick swallows with grape juice to avoid the bitter taste. Within two weeks, my hay fever was gone.

"How?" I asked. My Chinese doctor friend, Dr. Tei Fu Chen, explained the philosophy that would change my life. Through 5000 years of experience, he told me, the Chinese have learned to divide herbs into two broad categories, which they call **regenerative** herbs and medicinal herbs. This difference is the key to their philosophy.

Regenerative herbs are herbs that nourish, meaning that they give the body raw materials that the genes use to create their chemistry of life. The raw materials have no effect unless the genes make something of them, so that **regenerative** herbs always leave the body in charge—meaning the genes are in charge. That's why they're called **reGENE**rative herbs.

There is a marvelous secret to herbs that the Orientals have understood for thousands of years. Medicinal herbs don't nourish, at least not as their main function. They affect the body, but they do it by bypassing the genes. They create a chemical effect that the genes have nothing to do with. Our modern drugs do this too.

For example, a woman's body makes a hormone called progesterone. So do certain plants. Progesterone also exists in purified form as a drug. Whether a woman makes progesterone or takes it as a plant or drug, the effect is the same.

Some plants contain the raw materials of progesterone, which is not the same thing as containing progesterone itself. If a woman eats the raw-materials-containing plant, she'll get progesterone only if her genes choose to make it. But if she eats the progesterone-containing plant, or if she takes progesterone as a drug, she'll get progesterone whether she needs it or not.

Medicinal plants and modern drugs create their effects without consulting the genes. **Regenerative** plants create their effects through the genes, so that they leave the body and its inner wisdom in charge. **Regenerative** herbs allow chemical effects; medicinal herbs and drugs insist on it.

At this point in his explaining, Chen introduced a concept that truly opened my mind. Medicinal herbs and drugs work through *substitution*, he said. In other words, they take over for the body. An antibiotic does the job of the immune system. Insulin shots do the job of the pancreas. Blood pressure drugs do the job of the body's own regulatory mechanisms. As a result, they can weaken the body. When the body isn't asked to do its job, it breaks down. Use a wheel chair when you don't need one, and you'll soon need one. Use an antibiotic when you don't need one, and your immune system will get lazy. Use insulin when you don't need it, and you'll become a diabetic.

Look at our modern science of medical *substitution*. Today we have substitute hearts and substitute kidneys. We have mechanical substitutes and chemical substitutes. Extend our science of *substitution* a hundred years into the future, and ask yourself: "What are we going to end up with?" Will we be able to die function by function, organ by organ, and yet somehow be able to "live" on through *substitution*? Is that truly a health science?

A true health science must have two parts. First, and most important, is **regeneration**. Its question is this: how do we strengthen a body that has become weakened? Second, and subordinate, is *substitution*. Its question is how do we sustain a body in crisis until it can be strengthened, through **regeneration**, to the point that it can again take care of itself? The problem with our Western medical science is that it is pure and simple *substitution*. Its question is, how can we prevent death without creating life? It refuses to be subordinate to anything. And *substitution*, by itself, can only weaken. That is the crisis of modern medicine.