

## A VOICE OF REASON

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FOR MORE than 10,000 years, natural therapies have been used, while conventional medicine is but 100 years old. They deserve the recognition universities have given them as they have healing modalities and benefits proven by credible and peer-reviewed research.

The World Health Organisation estimates that more than 80 per cent of the world's population relies on natural therapies to treat, prevent and cure diseases, yet in Australia we have closed-minded colleagues determined to damage and bring into disrepute the entire natural health profession.

Do the Americans have it completely wrong? Not only do they have dedicated courses in universities but almost 85 per cent of US medical schools offer elective courses in alternative and complementary medicine or include it in required courses.

There is no better than modern medicine when it comes to surgery, emergency and trauma, but for almost everything else, traditional, natural or alternative medicine is far more effective - particularly for chronic illness which modern medicine is completely unable to treat or cure.

*These therapies, unlike modern medicine which focuses on symptom control, work to treat the entire person, recognising and stimulating the body's innate capability to heal the root cause of illness. Modern medicine actually suppresses and thwarts that innate healing mechanism by unbalancing the complex human organism and its systems, particularly the immune system, with the liberal use of drugs and ignorance of the importance of diet and lifestyle.*

With conventional medicine's birth came the slow and deliberate move by the medical profession to discredit what became labelled "alternative medicine". I can only presume that what lies at the heart of it is the threat to conventional medicine's power base and the unhealthy relationship it has long enjoyed with the trillion-dollar pharmaceutical industry.

It is about time the Australian medical profession started educating rather than medicating. It is unfortunate that it is the public's disillusionment with modern medicine and its inability to treat many diseases, as well as the dreadful side-effects of any treatment offered, that have increased the popularity of complementary and alternative medicine. It should have been due to the interest, enthusiasm and reason of doctors, scientists, researchers and politicians.

As a qualified medical specialist and surgeon, I am ashamed of the medical profession when it so blatantly displays its ignorance and persists in attacking a profession from which we have much to learn.

**Dr Valerie Malka is a surgeon and former director of trauma services at Westmead Hospital, NSW**

*Dr Valerie Malka has been the Director of Trauma at Westmead Hospital since 2000, a position which was expanded to involve the greater area of Western Sydney in 2003. She is a trauma and general surgeon with particular interests in Education and Quality Assurance, as well as being an EMST/ATLS Director and DSTC Instructor. Her greatest passion is in Humanitarian Work, having most recently joined the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee. Most recently she completed a Masters Degree in International Public Health with a major in Humanitarian Law. She is greatly committed to ensuring that patients receive the very best of trauma care, from the time of injury to the time they are ready to return home to their families.*

