



NATURAL SOLUTIONS

Clinical Kinesiology, Acupuncture, & (w)Holistic Healthcare

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Introduction to WHAT'S MAKING OUR CHILDREN SICK?

By Michelle Perro, M.D. and Vincanne Adams, PhD

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The following quote is from the introduction of the book.

“In this book, we argue that a new generation of kids with chronic, hard-to-diagnose, hard-to-treat health problems is getting sick because of chronic exposure to poisons in the environment, and specifically in and from foods. Our children have guts that are impaired and immune systems that are overtaxed, making it hard for them to clear even the simplest health problems, such as colds. Eating processed foods that are high in carbohydrates, sugar, and hollow calories is the first problem, but in this book we argue that it is not the *main* problem. The more insidious danger is foods that are full of pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics. How is it that at a time when we have the most efficient food productions systems in the world, we are simultaneously putting ourselves at the greatest risk for food -induced health problems? In this book you will be offered one reason this is happening, what kinds of science can be relied on to make sense of it, and how food-focused medicine might be able to remedy these problems.

“What’s making our children sick?” is a question we ask rhetorically, and without arrogance. In this book, we try to answer this question literally, and with humility. Children in the United States--and indeed, all over the world where a Western diet and industrial agriculture reign--are struggling with a new wave of chronic health problems that simply didn’t exist decades ago. We are not talking about broken bones and sprains, cuts and bruises, and coughs and colds that we *know* kids get all the time (some of which can be serious). What we are talking about in this book are chronic health issues that persist over years, problems that require long-term use of medical interventions and don’t ever really go away. We are talking about problems that linger and are *managed* but have a huge impact on the quality of our kids’ lives and the lives of their families.

What are these problems? Despite enormous strides in protecting the health of our children through medicine and public health, ¹ today one in thirteen American children has a serious food allergy, a rate that increased by 50 percent over the last two decades. ² Nearly 9 percent of our kids have asthma, with dramatic increases in rates from 1982 today. ³ The prevalence of childhood eczema/atopic dermatitis in the United States is 10.7 percent overall and as high as 18.1 percent in individual states— again, a rate that nearly doubled in the past several decades. ⁴ More than 1.6 million Americans have Crohn’s disease or colitis, and one in ten is a child.⁵ One in roughly 140 Americans has celiac disease—a rate that has increased 4.5 times over the past fifty years, with rates increasing among children in particular, and this is before we get to gluten sensitivities.⁶ Gastrointestinal reflux affects 8 percent of children, and today 10



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percent of infants younger than twelve months with reflux now develop significant complications resulting in a disorder called gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD.⁷ Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) occurs in 6 to 24 percent of kids from middle school through high school.⁸ Type II diabetes accounted for less than 3 percent of all cases of new-onset adolescent diabetes up until ten years ago, and now accounts for 45 percent of these cases.⁹ One in five American children is now obese. One in forty-one boys and one in sixty-eight children have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.¹⁰ 11 percent of our children have a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)¹¹, and just over 20 percent (or one in five) of our children either currently or at some point during their life will have a seriously debilitating mental disorder. These, too, are rates that have skyrocketed over the past two decades.¹² Finally, nearly 60 percent of our children experience chronic headaches, with 7 percent of these being chronic migraines.¹³

These numbers are staggering. What's happening to our children? Why are they so sick and with so many chronic, hard-to-treat ailments? Why have these problems shot up among children over the past several decades? What ties them all together? Looking at the numbers cumulatively, one might say that our children are experiencing an epidemic—an epidemic of complex, chronic ailments that doctors can do little about aside from minimizing the symptoms.

There are, in fact, no cures for many of these problems using the usual tools in the typical conventional medical toolkit. At best, doctors can treat the symptoms, eliminating the outward signs of disorder using strong medications that suppress the body's reactions. But these often only work temporarily once the medicines were off, the symptoms usually return. The underlying causes of these ailments are hard to eliminate partly because for many of these ailments we don't have adequate models of causation. Many of them have complex causal pathways that involve multiple physiological systems and sometimes multiple or cumulative triggers. As a result, parents of children with these disorders struggle to find help, not to mention even understand these conditions, and as a result bear an enormous weight.

Might it be that our children are in the midst of a health crisis that has yet to be named, yet to be fully understood? Perhaps we cannot name this crisis because we are looking at these health problems using old and insufficient models of disease and treatment. In fact, we argue it is possible that some, *if not all*, of these problems are related to similar underlying sources of pathogenesis (pathways to disease) that affect each child differently yet can be treated by way of some simple, low-tech, integrative medical interventions *starting with food*. In this book, we will provide the scientific and clinical evidence that supports this proposition.

We believe it is possible to look at health through a new lens that will enable us to tie these chronic health problems together and find a way forward. First, it is clear we need a vast transformation in how we live, and particularly in not just what we eat but how we provision ourselves with food—that is, we need to change what is in our food supply. Indeed, in this book we posit that the systemic health failures among



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our children are a result of something even more troubling than the physical symptoms and their bodies; they are the cumulative outcome of being born into and living in an environment that has been made toxic by agrochemical industrialized food production.

As a society that values and depends on the well-being of our future generations to thrive, we need to rethink the causes, complexities, and treatments for many of the chronic diseases on the rise today among our kids. Our children are sick because they are exposed to toxicants in the water, air, furniture, and petrochemical products they use. The amount of common household chemicals in use has been on the rise since World War II despite their known health hazards, and they are largely unregulated. But more than just toxic chemicals, our children are regularly exposed to toxicants that stress their developing immune systems, organs, and brains in even more insidious ways: through the so-called “healthy” food they eat. We will argue in this book that unless they are eating 100 percent organic food or homegrown vegetables from ecologically managed soil, they are eating toxic ingredients such as pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics. They are eating foods that are grown with, and contain, ingredients that are harmful to their health. One reason for this, among many, has been the rise in agrochemical technologies used to grow our food since the mid-1990s, including (though not limited to) the use of genetically modified (GM), or genetically engineered (also called *transgenic*), crops that were designed to be used as, instead of, or in association with pesticides. We call this *industrial food*. *Modern* food is *industrial* food. GM technologies, although designed for the opposite outcome, have actually increased toxicants in our food environment. As a result of how we have “improved” our food production systems, our children today are now exposed to and end up consuming more toxic chemicals than any generation before them.

... Food-based chemical toxicants are finding their way into the blood and guts of our children, quite literally. We have a whole generation of kids were growing up sick with chronic ailments and compromise capacities for living and learning. Survival for these kids means some-thing totally different than it did for their parents and grandparents. The struggle for health (though never absent) now means dealing with allergies, asthma, rashes, digestive malfunction, and in many cases, neurocognitive impairment. These, we believe, are related to chemical contamination that was meant to be harmless and is now vital to the industrialized production of our foods.

Industrial food production is just beginning to be understood from the perspective of the body’s microbial ecosystem. We examine the evidence that chronic inflammation, aberrant immune responses, and, consequentially, chronic ailments are tied to persistent exposures to these chemicals. We are not alone in this position, though our perspective is far from mainstream. What we argue is that we are seeing in clinics across the country chronically afflicted children who suffer from being the unwitting participants in several decades of experimentation with agrochemical he produced foods. This is an epidemic-scale health crisis. Children carry toxic loads from the mattresses they sleep on, the soaps they use to wash their hands, their sunscreen, and their antibiotics. Add to that a mix of toxic exposures the fact that much of their food is loaded with chemical toxicants, and you can get very sick children— children who are being made sick from the inside out. And in order to get our kids healthy, we need to think of their problems in terms of a damaged ecosystem; healing them might actually require healing our environment and



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detoxifying our foods in order to detoxify their guts. We need an approach to health and healing that thinks about human survival in terms of environmental sustainability, a form of *ecomedicine*, if you will, that place is a focus on food.

What has been missing in mainstream conversations and critiques about industrialized food production is a map to connect the dots between the science and the symptoms, the data from animal studies, new knowledge about the microbiology of God health and the clinical experiences of doctors who are trying to stay one step ahead of these debilitating problems. Thankfully, there are leading-edge scientists and clinicians who, along with mothers and fathers a very sick children, are starting to make these connections. If you are one of those parents, or no parents like this, or if you are a physician trying to help these kids, our book is written for you.”

[The footnotes 1 through 13 are specific references to scientific research articles and studies that are described in detail on pages 213 and 214 in the book [WHAT'S MAKING OUR CHILDREN SICK?](#) This material is too detailed and extensive to include in this brief introduction; please consult the book for these particulars.]