

SELF TASTE TEST
New Low-Fat
Chocolates

SELF

HEALTHY
SKIN
for Active
Women

Get Sexy Thighs Fast!

Is Your Drinking
Water Safe?

SPECIAL REPORT

Junk Medicine
Sorting the Truth From the Trash

How Color Can Change Your Mood

AUGUST 1997

Healthy Skin for Active Women • Get Sexy Thighs Fast! • Is Your Drinking Water Safe?

214

27126

AUGUST 1997 U.S. \$2.50
CANADA \$2.75
FOREIGN \$3.00



JUNK

M E D I C I N E

JM

MODERN SCIENCE IS BETTER
AT CURING OUR ILLS THAN
ANYTHING THAT PRECEDED IT.
SO WHY ARE SO MANY
PEOPLE TURNING TO BOGUS
THERAPIES?

BY JOHN SEDGWICK

In May 1995, Kathy Keeton went to her doctor, afraid she had an ulcer. She was tired, she had lost her appetite, and she had a sharp pain in her stomach. After examining her and doing a sonogram, CT scan and biopsy, Jeffrey Mechanick, M.D., delivered a terrifying diagnosis: stage-four breast cancer. Keeton, the 57-year-old president of General Media, which publishes *Penthouse* magazine, knew all too well what that meant. "The next stage is you're dead," she says. The cancer had spread to her bones, liver, lymph nodes and near the vena cava, a major vessel in her heart. Dr. Mechanick told her that if the tumors didn't respond to treatment, she would have only a few months to live.

After consulting with a number of specialists at New York City's Mount Sinai Medical Center, Mechanick recommended a standard treatment of chemotherapy. But, in a development that is becoming increasingly common as the nation's faith in alternative medicine grows, Keeton startled them all by flatly refusing to have the chemo. She regarded it as little more than a doctor-approved poison. "Just the thought of putting that stuff in my body," she says, "well, I'd rather die." She preferred to take hydrazine sulfate tablets, an unconventional cancer treatment that Keeton's husband, publisher Bob Guccione, had been championing in the pages of *Penthouse* magazine for nearly a decade. Keeton knew two women who, she said, had recovered from life-threatening cancers after taking the drug.

The doctors at Mount Sinai were understandably reluctant to comply. "I think I had a row with just about every department head in the building," Keeton says. Hydrazine sulfate's proponents claim that the drug relieves cachexia, the wasting away that often accompanies cancer when the body channels nutritional energy away from its own needs to feed the rapacious cancer cells. But despite some promising early reports, three major studies sanctioned by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) failed to show any benefit, and hydrazine sulfate was relegated to the ranks of unproven cancer remedies, along with laetrile and shark cartilage.

Keeton, however, did not back down. Instead of relying exclusively on Mechanick, Keeton called for Joseph Gold, M.D., the researcher who has been seeking to legitimize hydrazine sulfate for more than 20 years. Some of his research, in fact, had been sponsored by Keeton and Guccione. Dr. Gold flew to New York City and recommended that Keeton take two tablets of hydrazine sulfate per day, one with breakfast and one with dinner. Almost immediately, Keeton says, she started to feel better. Her appetite returned and her mood lifted. Within nine months, the IV tubes that had been feeding her and providing pain medication were gone, too. Now, almost two years later, she

sits in the living room of her and her husband's grand New York City brownstone, and she looks exceedingly well. She says that all her tumors have "disappeared" except for "three microscopic spots" on her liver. "Every time I do a CT scan the tumors have gotten smaller." She runs a finger through her hair. "See? My hair is thicker than ever. It's all due to the hydrazine." She shows me her nails. "I've never had nails like this," she says proudly. "Never."

On its face, Kathy Keeton's story is a remarkable one, and it has a dramatic power that no number of dry, statistics-laden reports in medical journals about hydrazine sulfate's worthlessness could ever counter—at least with the general public. And that power will, no doubt, only be amplified by the foundation, book and public appearances that Keeton is planning, all to advance the cause of hydrazine sulfate. "This is now my mission in life," she says. "I have a great Rolodex and I'm networking everybody."

Yet, convincing as her story may sound, her case is a study of one, and, like most such isolated phenomena, it becomes more questionable the more closely it is examined. When I reached Mechanick to confirm the general disappearance of Keeton's cancer except for those "three microscopic spots" on her liver, he said that, unfortunately, all her cancers remained. "By CT scan," he told me, "she still has virtually the same amount of tumor as when we initially saw her." He acknowledged that they appear not to be growing significantly, but he attributes that in part to the fact that, once her illness struck, Keeton stopped taking estrogen supplements, which have been associated with an increased risk of breast cancer in several studies. Keeton had not said anything about estrogen supplements. In fact, she had told me that she had not gone through menopause as far as she knew, and that her own body was still, as she said, "making estrogen." Still, Mechanick was amazed by her survival. "I'd be lying to you if I didn't say I was surprised she is doing so well," he said. But he was reluctant to attribute her condition to the hydrazine. "I think that it is largely a matter of attitude. Kathy has a profoundly great attitude." Then he added, "Placebo effects are subjectively real, although we can't always explain them."

It may seem cruel to look closely at Keeton's account, but it is also necessary. For we live in a time when an increasing number of people are letting such glowing testimonials influence their decisions about medical care. Since Keeton went public, she says, she has received 200 calls a day from cancer patients inquiring about hydrazine sulfate. And, having visited Gold's research laboratory in Syracuse, New York, I can testify to the fact that its telephone now rings every few minutes with calls from patients or their doctors.

**The most alarming ones are
the alternative cancer remedies, if only
because their purveyors make the
most dramatic claims
to the most desperate patients.**

Such tales have fostered a thriving medical underground of alternative drugs and remedies that exists entirely separately from the aboveground medical establishment of white-coated doctors, modern hospitals and peer-reviewed journals. Yet despite all the adherents, many of the alternative remedies strike conventional physicians as little more than faith healing. The most alarming ones are the alternative cancer remedies, if only because their purveyors make the most dramatic claims to the most desperate patients. Examples abound: A series of synthetic blood and urine derivatives dubbed antineoplastons are, to the mystification of conventional scientists, being hawked as anticancer agents by Stanislaw Burzynski, M.D., whose 1996 income was reportedly \$12 million and shows no signs of abating, despite a widely publicized trial for insurance and mail fraud earlier this year that ended in a hung jury. The mysterious-sounding 714X (actually a combination of camphor, nitrogen, ammonium salts, sodium chloride and ethanol) is being advanced as a cancer treatment by Gaston Naessens, who moved to Canada after authorities closed his laboratory in his native France. Naessens has never submitted his therapy to clinical trials and few people have been permitted to examine a special microscope that supposedly allows him to make his diagnoses. Essiac, an antitumor herbal tea originally marketed by a Canadian nurse named Rene Caisse (Essiac is Caisse spelled backward) in the 1920s, is now more popular than ever, even though no clinical studies have ever shown it to have any beneficial effect.

There is, of course, also a wide range of silly-sounding but popular remedies for lesser ailments, such as the bee venom

So far, none of the homeopaths have taken him up on his offer, but such questions have done little to diminish the popularity of alternative treatments.

According to Beyerstein, the important distinction in medicine is not between alternative and conventional but between those remedies that have proved their safety and effectiveness in the time-honored scientific method and those that have not. By this standard, a once-fringe activity like hypnosis would get the gold star of medical approval, whereas the once-mainstream phrenology, in which cranial protrusions were thought to be indicative of interior mental state, would not. In short, if it can be shown to work, it's fine. If it can't, it's not. It's that simple. And, lamentably, few of the claims for alternative medicine check out. So that leaves the question, Why do so many people believe in this stuff? Antineoplastons? Coffee enemas? What could they possibly be thinking?

In the view of several analysts of the alternative-medicine movement, the success of the alternative approach has less to do with the actual remedies than with the refreshingly nonbureaucratic structures through which they are dispensed. In contrast to the high-tech, institutional bent of established medicine, the alternative variety is still very much a fringe affair, and that very marginality constitutes an important aspect of its appeal. "It's the *High Noon* myth," says Wallace Sampson, M.D., a clinical professor of medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine. "It's the solitary hero against the world." Gold's entire hydrazine research facility, for example, is just a cluster of rooms in downtown Syracuse, with some laboratory ani-

This small-is-beautiful attitude is often underscored by the alternative practitioners' charges that conventional medicine is engaged in a massive conspiracy against them.

therapy for arthritis, magnetic therapy for degenerative diseases and coffee enemas for detoxification of the liver. Finally, there are the old standbys like homeopathy, acupuncture, naturopathy and aromatherapy that have become almost mainstream—even though many medical scientists express their exasperation at all the unproven claims. Homeopathy, for example, relies on the idea that certain substances actually increase their medicinal potency when they are radically watered down; somehow, the added water "remembers" the original substance. Conventional scientists find that absurd. "Here's my standing challenge to the homeopaths," says Barry Beyerstein, Ph.D., a professor at Canada's Simon Fraser University and a leading opponent of what he calls health fraud. "Produce a homeopathic fertilizer for my lawn. If water 'remembers' the molecules it used to have, well, fine; let's spread the fertilizer on half my lawn. Then let's mow and measure the clippings to see if that half of the lawn grew any better than the other."

mals in the back; by contrast, the Bristol-Meyers Squibb laboratory a few miles away looks like a little city. This small-is-beautiful attitude is often underscored by the alternative practitioners' charges that conventional medicine is engaged in a massive conspiracy against them. Somehow, medical science's very opposition is seen as proof that the unconventional remedy works. The line is: Alternative method X, Y or Z must be powerful, otherwise conventional practitioners wouldn't be so threatened. In the case of hydrazine sulfate, for example, Keeton and Gold claim that the NCI deliberately sabotaged the trials so that they would turn out badly. Why? "They didn't like the idea that the drug was inexpensive, worked on all tumors at all stages and was developed by a small institute like this," Gold says. He adds that such a cheap and revolutionary treatment as hydrazine would "destabilize" and "disempower" the providers of conventional treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation.

A spokesperson for the NCI called the conspiracy charge

"preposterous," and it does seem like a hard thing to pull off. Even after Watergate and Iran-Contra, events that have very strongly shaped the mind-set of the alternativists, it is still difficult to believe that a government agency would—to say nothing of could—engage in such a widespread, tightly coordinated deception to gain such a relatively small advantage, especially if it might mean prison time, public scorn and/or the ruination of their careers should the conspirators be found out. If anything, medical researchers say, the incentives run the other way—to take up a possible new cure, whatever its source, if it really works. "What scientist wouldn't want to find a cure for cancer?" asks Ursula Goodenough, Ph.D., a researcher and professor of biology at Washington University in St. Louis. "I mean, give me a break!" After all, aspirin is just as cheap as hydrazine, and still the heart disease establishment was quick to promote it as a heart attack preventive.

Some medical scientists like Saul Green, Ph.D., a former researcher at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, suggest that the true conspiracy may lie on the alternative side, as he wryly notes that one alternativist never criticizes another. Sure enough, Gold was quick to defend Dr. Burzynski to me as someone being unfairly attacked by government prosecutors. Others claim that the alternative movement is just as riddled as the medical establishment with unsavory connections between commercial interests and the government. Creation of the Office of Alternative Medicine in the National Institutes of Health was largely spearheaded by Senator Tom Harkin, a believer in bee pollen therapy, and it is headed by Wayne Jonas, M.D., a major proponent of homeopathy. Is this a conspiracy?

In lieu of verifiable claims for their products, the purveyors of unproven alternative treatments rely instead on what Beyerstein calls "emotional truths"—certain articles of faith that feel true, even if they aren't clinically verifiable. For example, many alternative treatments make much of their being "all natural" products—thus appealing to a near-mystical belief in

cultures? Should we believe in a flat Earth, too? Despite all the complaints, modern science-based medicine has yielded longer, healthier lives than has any other system of healing.

Nevertheless, those disposed toward alternative medicine look upon ancient Chinese treatments and remedies with particular favor. Ironically, this comes at a time when the Chinese themselves are turning in increasing numbers to science-based medicine. According to Beyerstein and Dr. Sampson, only 15 to 20 percent of Chinese patients now choose what's known as traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), consisting largely of Qigong, herbal medicines and acupuncture, treatments that are experiencing rising popularity here. Indeed, the resurrection of TCM in China may have been a historical accident. Beyerstein and Sampson point out that TCM was actively promoted by Mao Zedong after the 1949 revolution out of necessity: China didn't have enough science-based-medicine practitioners to go around and couldn't afford to train more. Mao himself, along with his family and the upper echelon of the government, always relied on Western-trained physicians like Mao's own personal doctor, Li Zhisui, who studied at an American-run medical school in China. Qigong, with its ideas about supposed vital energies—the Qi—in the body, was developed at a time when Chinese culture still forbade the dissection of cadavers. It is necessarily metaphorical, rather like the ideas about the four humors that long governed medieval medicine in the West, and has never passed scientific scrutiny. Even acupuncture, which is emerging as a staple of American medicine, is thought in China to be of limited use. Beyerstein and Sampson cite evidence to suggest that acupuncture is simply a version of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), which has long been recognized in the West as a pain blocker.

As for the herbal treatments, Beyerstein and Sampson were concerned by the apparent casualness with which herbs were dispensed in China. Even in the U.S., the words *ancient Chinese formula* on a label for an herbal brew aren't al-

Despite all the complaints, modern science-based medicine has yielded longer, healthier lives than has any other system of healing.

the beneficence of Mother Nature, as opposed to the supposed evils of modern chemistry. This is why herbs figure so heavily in alternative concoctions. Yet, as critics like to point out, *all natural* is not a synonym for *safe*, let alone for *effective*. Strychnine, belladonna, hemlock and various mushrooms are all natural too, and they are deadly poisons.

Another common strategy is to tout an alternative's origins in the long ago and far away, as if anything that is of the here and now couldn't possibly be any good. Obviously, this arises from a distrust of modernity, with its stress-filled lives, congested cities and polluted environments. But do we really want to put our faith in ancient things from foreign

ways reassuring. For several months in 1991, a San Francisco woman named June Grell drank a senna "diet tea" that was described with that phrase, and she died suddenly of cardiac arrhythmia. Now that three other women have died in a similar fashion after drinking the tea, June Grell's husband, Christopher Grell, has brought a wrongful death suit against the manufacturer and the distributors claiming the tea caused his wife to lose important body electrolytes, which, he says, "could and did" result in her death.

In fairness, the limitations of medical science may have contributed to the rise of alternatives. Conventional medicine still cannot cure all diseases. *Continued on page 178*

America's Classifieds

AD RATES: 800-521-0890

HELP WANTED-HOME BASED

EARN EXTRA INCOME! Assemble craft products at home. Fun to do! Information: 1-800-377-6000 Ext. 8080.

HELP WANTED

HOME TYPISTS. PC users needed. \$45,000 income potential. Call 1-800-513-4343 Ext. B-1192.

BETTER HEALTH & FITNESS

JUNK FOOD MADE Healthy Cookbook. Pizza, lasagna, chili, boston creme pie, cherry delight, french bread, etc... \$20.00 G.A.B. Books, P.O. Box 1244, Anderson, IN 46016.

SECRETS TO BURNING CALORIES. No Exercise! Absolutely safe during breastfeeding. \$10.00 to CBC, P.O. Box 122, Random, IL 62876.

EAT ALGAE! Harvested Wild, Nutrient Dense. Many Reported Results. Guaranteed Satisfaction. 617-983-0058.

REJUVENATE. your body from the inside out! Look and feel younger, stronger, sexier, & healthier. Call the Body Rejuvenator Hotline 415-273-3941 then call 800-401-2564 to order.

ABOLISH FAT & FATIGUE without special diets/exercise! Pyruvate+ - Tested - 100% safe antioxidant fat burner! 800-865-0152.

VITAL ION™ EDIBLE OXYGEN for high energy, endurance, overall health. \$18.95/30-day supply. Call 916-642-0658.

ALLERGY SUFFERERS - New environment product labelled for killing dust mites. Call 888-KIL-MITE.

NATURAL ALTERNATIVES: The Latest Advances in Skin Care, PMS, Menopause, Weight Loss. 410-675-5115.

HERBAL HEALER-Natural Medicine Correspondence Courses-Herpetology, Nutrition, Acupressure, Massage... Brochure-501-269-4177 (http://www.drherbs.com)

ATTENTION! You need to know "The Strangest Nutritional Secret." Free cassette tape. 1-800-995-0796, Ext. 8534.

WEIGHT LOSS

ARE YOU DIETING with disappointing results? All natural/clinically tested **PYRUVATE+™** may be your answer. 1-(800)-680-5464.

NATURAL PHEN-FEN available now! Only \$29.95 per bottle plus \$3.50 shipping 1-800-458-1613.

BEAUTY AIDS

ORIGINAL ORGANIC NAILS 100% organic powder dip system. Non-Toxic/Non-Flammable glue. 203-931-9123 -main office, 203-934-4944 - Fax.

FINANCIAL HELP

FREE DEBT CONSULTATION. Lower Payments, Reduce interest, Stop Collectors, Consolidate Bills, Confidential Immediate Help, Non-Profit GSCCC 1-800-99-BILLS Lic/Bonded.

BILL PROBLEMS? Debt consolidation loans & programs available. Bad credit OK. FREE consultation. 1-800-408-0044.

NEGOTIATE! Information that could save you thousands \$. Before you buy or lease from new/used car dealerships call 1-900-378-8388 ex 3128 pro-call 602-954-7420 2.99 min/18+.

ROMANCE

ESCAPE INTO ROMANTIC FANTASY! Provocative entertainment for women! 1-900-407-4074, 1-800-793-0709/Ext. 69, MC/Visa, 18+, \$2.79/min.

WOMEN: IF YOU DARE... Listen or reveal secret fantasies! "Diary of Erotica" 1-900-976-9760, 1-800-793-0709/Ext. 69, MC/Visa, 18+ \$2.79/min.

EXPERIENCE THE PASSION on the nation's premier romance and fantasy line. Call 1-664-410-3702. Regular long distance applies.

OUR NATION'S LITTLE SECRET 1-800-EAT-6666 Hot Adult Conversation No credit card needed.

HOT FUN PARTYLINE & voice personals dating network. 1-664-410-3704. Only regular long distance applies. 18+.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! FREE Supplies! Rush SASE: Green SF, 4217 Highland, Waterford, MI 48328-2165.

STAY HOME! PROCESS MAIL! Pay Weekly! Guaranteed! Details: Rush Long SASE: M & M Advertising/SF, 1007 Federal, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33304-1422.

GOOD WEEKLY INCOME! Mailing Letters! Paychecks mailed on Wednesdays! Fire your boss! Rush Long SASE: Welsh/SF, 3336 Harrison, Butte, MT 59701-3544.

THIS IS BIG! Best weight loss program in America. Important update. 800-772-9118.

MAILERS! \$800.00 paychecks possible! Benefits too! FREE Application! Apply! Rush SASE. Scholastic Publishing B8-SL, Springfield, NJ 07081-0008.

PERSONALS

FREE LINGERIE & ADULT + Products Catalogs. \$2.00 s/h Desires-PO Box 2505-Darien, IL 60561 (630) 965-1402.

HOT MEN want to talk with you on the partyline. Call 1-615-525-5535 for fun conversation.

PSYCHICS

ANSWERS FOR THE HEART From The Heart. Accurate, Caring Psychics, Tarot, Astrology 1-800-824-7107. V-MC-AMEX-DISC.

LOVE PROBLEMS RESOLVED GUARANTEED. Theresa Stops divorce/separation. Returns Lover immediately. Toll Free 888-652-7232.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS BY POWERFUL PSYCHICS 1-800-547-2071. \$3.48/min., V/MC. 18+.



ONA & HOLLY EXTREMELY ACCURATE
Helping You Enrich Your Life Through Their Powerful Insights. Checks By Phone.
1-800-978-7850

crashcourse

The Vacation Planner

Continued from page 175

hours at the bottom of your suitcase.

Slim down toiletries to shed excess bulk. If you're staying in a hotel, take advantage of what's offered there, such as shampoo, conditioner and bath gel. Pack products that do double-duty, such as baby shampoo you can also use to wash your clothes. Refillable sample sizes of your favorite products are great for travel and are often available as a gift-with-purchase at cosmetics counters. Gotta Go travel cases come well stocked with bottles for you to fill at home, plus a pump, funnel and identification labels to simplify the job.

One thing our frequent travelers agreed everyone should bring is a packable nylon tote. What they agreed no one need lug around anymore: a hair dryer. On the optional—or realist's—list: a packable raincoat and/or folding umbrella.

MAKING THE MIND-SET SWITCH

"Vacation is time for you. Unless it is an absolute emergency, tell your office you won't be available," says Maynard Brusman, who often plans vacations where contact with the office isn't an option. "It's important to be able to get away and not be constantly checking your E-mail and voice mail." The world won't end because you're taking a week's vacation. "Rather than focusing on the things you might be missing, think about what you will gain," says Brusman. "These include peace of mind, physical and creative energy, a new experience and, possibly, a new contact. You'll be happier and more productive when you return."

If you simply can't relax unless you're sure that the office hasn't burned down, it's fine to stay in touch, says Ruth Klein, as long as you do so on your own terms. "Leave a number where you can be reached in an emergency, but specify exactly what you mean by *emergency*. If you must check in, give yourself two days of relaxation first. It takes most businesswomen 48 hours to unwind. Then set aside two hours to make calls. If you're relaxed, you're better prepared to deal with any possible crises." ☛

JUNKMEDICINE

Continued from page 147

People naturally turn to alternative practitioners, who are often less candid about their deficiencies. Further, the sometimes unfeeling nature of the medical establishment may be responsible for the appeal of alternative cures. By offering up a numbing, profit-minded bureaucracy, managed care has laid itself open to methods that at least put a more human face on medicine, even if it cannot always offer the science to back them up. "People are hungry for a better relationship with their doctor," says Herbert Benson, M.D., the Harvard Medical School professor who gave alternative approaches early legitimacy with his book *The Relaxation Response*. "That's part of what has opened up the whole mind-body area."

Just by taking an interest in the "whole you," and by having a little time to spend, the alternative therapist can accomplish a lot. What's more, many of the more successful alternative practitioners do have a remarkable touch with their patients. Gold, for example, struck me as anything but the slithery huckster of patent medicine cliché. He was a kindly gentleman who generated a calm decency that itself seemed restorative. As alternative medicine expert Andrew Weil, M.D., has pointed out, there is often a special charisma to the first prophetic proponent of any new therapy. That may explain why so many alternative treatments gradually lose whatever efficacy they might have, even though the formulas remain the same: The movement's leader gradually disappears from the scene and takes his healing with him.

Also, the reliance on personal testimonials like Keeton's may be a natural reaction to the complexity of hard science. This has become a frustration for medical scientists trying to counter the alternativists' emotional appeals. Asks Green, a frequent critic of unconventional medicine: "When a Burzynski can produce a mother holding a baby and saying, 'This man is keeping my son alive,' who is going to hear me?"

Finally, there is the puzzling fact that, like Keeton, many people do seem to get better after taking alternative treatments, regardless of the fact that medical science can find no physi-

cal reason why they should. Scientists call this the placebo effect—the mysterious truth that even inert medications can “work” if the patient believes in them. But to call any substance a placebo is not necessarily to dismiss it. “The power of belief has powerful medicinal effects,” says Dr. Benson, who has written a new book, *Timeless Healing*, to explore the phenomenon. “Angina pectoris, bronchial asthma, cold sores, congestive heart failure, rheumatoid arthritis—placebos work in 50 to 90 percent of cases. The placebos tap into the wirings, the mind-body connections that can bring about health.” Benson points out that until medical schools adopted strict scientific methods in the early part of this century, medicine chiefly relied on the placebo effect for its potency.

So, if unconventional medicines sometimes do work, why are they so bad? Because they are a con job, pretending to be something they are not, says the medical establishment. “Deception of any kind is terribly unfortunate in medicine,” says Benson. As it is, he worries that the country is becoming awash in what he terms “snake oil.” And while the power of belief is formidable, it is not infallible, and very often these unproven remedies do nothing at all, no matter how much desperate patients would like them to. And, in doing nothing, they serve as the cruelest imaginable betrayals to the most vulnerable. Goodenough started to speak out against junk medicine after a close friend spent thousands of dollars on treatments of shark cartilage in the hope that they would cure her signet-ring cell carcinoma, a disease for which conventional medicine offered no cure. Her physicians gave her eight months to live, and, despite the shark cartilage, “she died right on schedule,” says Goodenough. “There is this line of argument that at least stuff like shark cartilage gives the terminally ill some hope. Well, yeah, it might at first. Then there’s a real bitterness that sets in when it turns out the stuff hasn’t done anything. You’re still dying, and now you’ve been hosed.”

One way to restore the medicine to a more reliable basis would be to insist on large, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of the type that hydrazine sulfate routinely failed in NCI-administered tests. Why? To begin with, there is truth in large num-

bers. Medical literature is filled with isolated cases of “spontaneous remission”—a clearing up of symptoms for reasons that are simply unknown but could easily be attributed to a certain magic tablet if that was the last thing ingested before the sudden improvement. In a single, isolated case, that is a dubious link. As the examples increase, the link becomes more legitimate. What’s more, by being double-blind and placebo-controlled, neither the patient nor the clinician is aware which participants are receiving the active drug and which are getting the inert substance. This removes the ever-present temptation for both clinicians and patients to shape responses to the drug in accordance with their hopes or expectations. “Researchers can always come up with reasons to reject data,” says Sampson. “It is all perfectly logical—but it just happens invariably to go in a way that confirms their original biases.” If a researcher doesn’t know which data are his, he is less likely to twist them in his favor. Thus, it’s not surprising that to Keeton her condition represents a near-total hydrazine cure, while her doctor, inclined to believe in science-based medicine, found results that communicated hydrazine doubt. Finally, a study needs to be placebo-controlled in order to make sure that it is indeed the medicine, and not the faith in the medicine, that is doing the healing.

The power of belief in these alternative medicines can be extreme: Keeton, after all, had been a prominent backer of hydrazine long before she got sick. “I’m sure there was some positive thinking,” she acknowledges. “Did it play a role in my recovery? I hope so. I don’t know. But I know that hydrazine sulfate did.” The problem, of course, is that there is no way she, or anyone, can know that for sure in one isolated case. It takes lots of cases to determine if a given therapy is effective or if the belief in the medicine is responsible for the improvement. Large clinical trials are the only sensible way to lift alternative medicines out of the underworld and into the light. If medical science is to serve the needs of the public, it has to be based on solid, reproducible results—not the mingled dreams of alternative practitioners and their too-credulous patients. ●

JOHN SEDGWICK, SELF’s national correspondent, last wrote about the virtues of single-sex schools (March).

the catalog connection

To receive information from SELF’s leading catalog advertisers, fill out the form below and drop it in the mail.

- 1 Save on your first order! Discover Basic Impact’s innovative bodywear, swimwear, 100% cotton knit and fleece casuals and accessories. Comfortable and fashionable. For a free one-year catalog subscription, check #1, or call 1-800-232-5111 and mention code 335.



Good Vibrations



- 2 Quality, tasteful and sensual toys, books and videos at affordable prices. Promoting sexual health and pleasure since 1977. Confidentiality and satisfaction guaranteed. For a catalog, check #2 and enclose \$4.00.

- 3 Newport News delivers an exceptional assortment of stylish apparel and home furnishings at unbeatable prices. 100% guaranteed. For a free catalog, check #3 or call 1-800-894-9639 and ask for Offer #0152.



the catalog connection

Please send me: 1. FREE 2. \$4.00 3. FREE
Check the box(es) that correspond to those listed above, and mail coupon along with \$1.50 for handling to:

SELF Magazine Reader Service Department
P.O. Box 11542 Riverton, NJ 08076-1542

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Coupon expires 9/30/97. Check, money order or US currency only. No stamps or international orders please. Allow 6-12 weeks for delivery. Void where prohibited by law.