Infectious Organized Crime: Virus, Fungus or Us?

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Michael Cheikin MD
Holistic Medicine and Physiatry
www.cheikin.com 610-239-9901

"Ecology" is defined as the relationship between organisms and their environment. Global Warming frightens us because it demonstrates that our safety, health and future are intimately connected to that of our planet.

Individually, we are ecological webs. We were designed to carry trillions of organisms that are not-us, in us and on us. In fact, we only comprise 10% of the total cellular population. Despite our illusion of being in control, we are at the mercy of this ecology. Like tornados and tsunamis that remind us of our subordination to wind and water, infections can quickly (or slowly) dominate individuals and communities. Like Global Warming, there is a parallel ecological crisis in our bodies, contributing to the epidemic of chronic diseases of adults and children. While there are many factors involved, such as nutritional deficiencies and toxicities, this article will focus on our microbial ecology.

The Original Discoveries

Edward Jenner discovered the smallpox vaccine in 1796. Fleming discovered penicillin, an agent produced by yeast to kill bacteria in 1928. These discoveries revolutionized our concept of illness and treatment and clinched the allopathic model of "magic bullet" and "one disease, one cause". However, they really worked by utilizing natural ecological and immune processes, not by "nuking" specific organisms or injecting newborns with multiple vaccines containing hundreds of chemicals.

Examples of Co-existence and Competition[3]

Type	Description	Example
Symbiosis	A and B both require the other to survive	The bacteria living in our gut.
Commensalism	A requires B but does not harm or help B	Barnacles on whales; Hermit crabs
Mutualism	A and B both benefit, but the relationship is not essential	Clown fish and Sea anemones
Necrotrophic Parasitism	A requires B and eventually kills B	Certain Bacteria ("flesh-eating")
Biotrophic Parasitism	A requires B and harms B in the process, but keeps B alive	Ticks, Fungi, Parasites, Viruses living on/in mammals
Amensalism	A kills B but not for benefit (though it might)	Large tree killing a sapling in its shadow

Re-Evaluating the Paradigm

Human cells evolved from the very bacteria and yeast that run our ship--our hardware and software was borrowed from them and they know it far better than we do. They know how to make signal molecules that confuse, hide from, or decoy our immune system. They also grow hard and soft "biofilms", like plaque on teeth or arteries, fortresses that incorporate iron, calcium, magnesium lead, mercury and other materials that enable them to hide and defend from our immune system. Some of these strategies render the standard tests for infection, antibodies or allergy ineffective. Thinking that we can outsmart (or genetically modify) these organisms is both arrogant and ignorant.

We have organized crime within our bodies. We are paying extortion to a set of critters to protect us from others, and to make substances that we need. As demonstrated in the table, we are living in a complex symbiotic web. We need these organisms more than they need us, and when we don't heed their demands, other organisms come in, contributing to inflammation, fatigue, and some cancers.

Understanding Infections and Antibiotics[3]

The bacteria, yeasts, viruses, parasites and other organisms that we carry are constantly communicating, negotiating and competing. When we see one critter coming over the wall, what we don't see is that it is standing on the shoulders or carcasses of others. Examples are outbreaks of yeast or herpes or shingles (virus) following a bacterial infection or stress. An infection represents the last step of a chain of events, where a team of organisms have succeeded in dominating the town by sabotaging the immune system. There is growing recognition of "sub-clinical" and "stealth" infections[3], where the infection is not apparent, but is the root cause of secondary and tertiary effects, such as inflammation, pain and metabolic disorder.

Antibiotics do not kill single organisms. They work like a bomb, which wipes out an area, including civilians and infrastructure, but is necessary to enable the troops to go in. It is ultimately the immune system that has to complete the job. Without sufficient preparation, or resources (bullets such as omega-3 oils and iodine), then the battles falter, or surveillance fails and there is a resurgence.

Application to Diagnosis and Treatment

These concepts are changing our understanding of the cause and treatment of acute and chronic infection (Lyme, yeast, herpes, H pylori, etc.) and illnesses. The best methods, including the naturally derived agents discussed above, are based upon utilizing these ecological and evolutionary concepts. The use of probiotics[3], herbal and naturally occurring adjuvants, and the recent recognition of biofilms will continue to improve our approach to chronic infections and illness. Stay tuned!

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**

3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles such as "Stealth Infections" "Allergy and Infection" and future articles on "The Infectious Ware Metaphor"" and others.

Michael Cheikin MD is a holistic physician, Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation ("Physiatry"), Pain Management, Spinal Cord Medicine and Electrodiagnostic Medicine and licensed in Medical Acupuncture. Dr. Cheikin has extensively studied yoga, diet and metabolism, Ayurvedic, Chinese and energy medicine and other alternative modalities for over 30 years. He specializes in obscure, chronic and severe problems that have not responded satisfactorily to other methods of healing.
www.cheikin.com