Would The Last Naturopath To Exit Please Turn Out The Lights?

By Hank Campbell — September 13, 2015

People who like alternative medicine are always pleased when someone mainstream embraces their field, because it legitimizes their belief system. (1) Alternative medicine is an easy narrative. Since it mostly requires belief, anecdotes are enough and recommendations needn't be bound by double-blind clinical trials. Want to believe that mimicking a symptom wards off a disease? Find a homeopath. Want to believe touching joints will prevent polio? Find an osteopath, in their words [2], "a parallel branch of American medicine" that just happens to posit that holistically moving body parts will cure and stave off disease. Just about any title with -path on the end of it is going to mean they think some aspect of real medicine is a scam. (2) The Wild, Wild West of alternative belief systems about medicine makes it easy to enter and therefore difficult to leave to pursue a mainstream career.

That's why it is rare to see a naturopath be shocked at how peers treat people under the guise of medicine and call out the field. Britt Hermes, a homeopath and alternative medicine proponent, did just that [3]. She became alarmed by the anti-science rhetoric coupled with dangerous practices. She went into the area because she was, she said, an idealist who truly believed that nature could cure a lot of things. Other naturopaths were instead often promoting a world view.

In a Vox article [4], Julia Belluz interviews Hermes, who is frank in her concern that states like Vermont and Oregon will allow naturopaths to act like primary care physicians. It's a fascinating read because Hermes clearly cares about helping people - and she felt like many others in the field did not.

The good news is that Hermes has not become disillusioned with helping people. She is now in a
graduate science program in Germany.

NOTES:

(1) See: Oz, Dr. Mehmet, though after the 18 months he has had, thanks to the American Council on Science and Health criticizing his anti-science beliefs [5], homeopaths may encourage him to go back to real medicine.

(2) Whereas real science and medicine is a lot less militant. Famed anti-science evangelist Dr. Joe Mercola gets about 25 percent more readers than the site I founded, Science 2.0, but science does not have rabid defenders the way homeopathy and anti-vaccine proponents do. Every time we are critical of him, his hordes gather at the Captcha to bemoan that I must be a corporate shill for drug companies because I don't sell supplements on the Internet. But Science 2.0, with 75 percent of his traffic, only has 3 percent of his revenue, so being on the anti-science side is where the money is.

On the upside, the FDA has never had to warn Science 2.0 about spouting nonsense the way they have Mercola.

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