

Water for Health, for Healing, for Life: You're Not Sick, You're Thirsty!

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Abstract

Water for Health, for Healing, for Life is a new approach to many health problems identified by modern medicine as diseases of unknown origin. It argues that chronic dehydration is the root cause of many health problems but unfortunately we have become accustomed to drinking less water than our bodies need. It calls for increasing water intake on a regular basis. It believes that there must be a paradigm change in modern medicine from solute to solvent in analyzing and understanding the functions of our bodies. The book has attracted strong criticisms as well.

Keywords: Water • Health

Introduction

If you are looking for alternative medication then this book might appeal to you. This was what attracted me to it in the first place. I have been drinking water first thing in the morning for the past three or four years and I can say that I feel the difference. So, when I saw Water for Health, for Healing, for Life: You're Not Sick, You're Thirsty! I thought that I had to learn more about water and maybe new methods of taking it for further benefits. The book might not appeal to the medical community as it is all about personal experience with taking water as a medicine; no laboratory tests have been involved [1].

Dr. Fereydoon Batmanghelidj, commonly known as Dr. Batman (1931-2004), a medical practitioner and author of the book which has been translated into 15 languages and it is his best known-work, and a graduate of St. Mary's Hospital Medical School of London University, was not satisfied with what the modern medicine offered to various diseases. He was of the belief that a very important thing was missing by the modern science of medicine; this is the role of water in maintaining the human health, i.e., shortage of water, dehydration, is the root cause of many diseases. This claim amounts to one cause of all disease which is not accepted by the modern medicine. Batmanghelidj argues it is wrong to assume that human beings drink enough water because they have the thirst alarming system in their bodies. He maintains that neither the thirst alarm turns on nor the thirsty person takes enough water every time the body is dehydrated. This is the cause of many diseases which can only be cured by treating the cause.

Literature Review

The modern medicine is built on a wrong foundation and it is perpetuated by profit-seeking pharmaceutical companies to the detriment of the people's health. It ignores the role of water in constituting the human body; instead, it focuses on the solid composition of the body so it often prescribes wrong medications which are largely made of harmful chemicals. The modern medicine does not encourage man to abandon his long-time habit of drinking water less than he needs, of dehydrating himself. On the contrary, it offers

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non-water solutions which normally make the matter worse for patients. The author asserts that there is a need for paradigm change in the modern and commercial healthcare system, and this book is an attempt in that regard.

This book is written to be understood by average readers however a great chunk of scientific and medical explanations is also provided to clarify the causes of certain diseases and how they can be cured by water.

Batmanghelidj speaks from experience and practice. He has researched the information and observed its application for more than 22 years as he claims. People with lasting diseases such as asthma and allergy have followed the advice laid out in this book and others and got cured (pp. 88-95). There are a number of testimonies by different people printed in this book. These people confirm the benefits of water for their diseases and conditions including obesity. Batmanghelidj's biggest clinical observation was during his prison term in Iran where he was held as a political prisoner by the Islamic revolutionaries for two and a half years, 1979-1981. In prison and out of necessity, he successfully treated well over three thousand inmates who suffered from stressed-induced peptic ulcer diseases by just taking the tap water. His assertion is that many diseases which are said to have unknown origins are originated in dehydration (pp. 8-10,70). He later published a short editorial about this discovery in prison in peer-reviewed Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology in 1983 in which he states that water is a highly effective treatment for patients with peptic ulcer problem [2].

There are many common diseases for which the current modern medicine offers no permanent cure. It offers drugs to be used permanently which only mask the problem. Hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetics, myasthenia gravis, muscular dystrophy, heartburn, dyspepsia, back pain, migraine, and asthma etc. These diseases are caused by chronic dehydration. The modern medicine largely studies the use of pharmaceutical products on human body, not the origin of diseases (pp. 9-25).

There are four wrong assumptions adopted by the modern medicine about water: Dry mouth is the only sign of dehydration (but there is a mechanism in the body to keep the mouth wet through saliva production while the body is thirsty); Water is a simple substance that only dissolves and circulates different things; The human body can regulate efficiently its water intake throughout the life span of the person; and Any fluid can replace the water needs of the body. But, water is also energy and a nutrient and it has 'a dominant metabolic role in all physiological functions of the body'; human body rations on water and fails to show its shortage through a dry mouth; and no fluids including tea, coffee or alcohol or even milk, can substitute the body's need for water. These fluids, except milk, contain dehydrating substances so eventually the body will lose more water than it previously had before taking the drink; 'caffeine and alcohol force the kidneys to flush some of the water reserves in the body.' This is something not understood by modern doctors. They believe that 'all fluids

are suited to the normal physiological functions of the human body' (pp. 12-28, 96,100, 241).

The author mistrusts the pharmaceutical companies and believes that their priority is making profit so they support the modern medicine which focuses 'primarily [on] the body's solid composition [solute]' rather than its fluid, solvent—only one fourth of human body is composed of solid matters, the rest is water. However, the body's solvent is far more important in the function of the body than its solute (pp. 26-35). Thus, the new paradigm will be water-centred (solvent) in contrast to the current medical paradigm which is solid-centred. Accordingly, medical research and study need to change their attention to water in the body rather than its solid components.

Discussion

The benefits of water for the human body are countless. We drink water because we feel thirsty; however we can be encouraged to drink it even when we are not thirsty if we know more about its role in the function of our bodies: 'Water is a nutrient', water is power and energy to the body cells and it cleans them and refreshes them including the brain cells (a body has up to a hundred trillion cells), it dilutes the blood and cleans blood vessels, it energises and solves food, strengthens the immune system, lubricates bone joints, reduces the risks of heart attacks and strokes, regulates the body's temperature, increases attention, reduces anxiety, stress, depression, fatigue, and the effects of aging including the loss of memory and other diseases, helps to lose weight, clears toxics caused by dehydration in all parts of the body, and, above all, it has no side effects (pp. 43-47,69,250). The view that water is energy for human body is challenged by Dr. Stephen Barrett who says that human's only sources of energy 'are the calories in proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and alcohol' [3].

Water involves with the creation of human body from the very first minutes it develops from a single cell in the uterus to a full-term baby, to birth and to death. The lack of adequate water in the mother's body causes problems for the mother such as morning sickness and it badly affects the physiology of the baby, also, against the common practice, formula milk causes problem because it is more concentrated than human milk—the author recommends giving water to babies from their second month onwards (pp. 51-61). Thus, regular water intake is very crucial for the formation and evolution of human beings. Shortage of water translates into many diseases which can pass on to babies in uterus, and after birth shortage of water appears in many forms and shapes in children, adults and elderly, male and female alike. We need to say that the author's argument is largely hypothesis at this stage. His only observed water-cured disease was his treatment of peptic ulcer of the prison inmates in Iran and the letters and statements he got from his patients or other people who used water for their diseases.

Three types of problems are caused by dehydration: feelings, diseases and conditions. The list of feelings include: feeling tired without a plausible reason, flushed, irritable and unreasonably short-tempered, feeling anxious, dejected and inadequate, depressed, heavy-headed, disturbed sleep particularly in the elderly, anger and quick temper, unreasonable impatience, very short attention span, cravings for drinks such as coffee, tea, sodas, and alcoholic drinks, and dreaming of oceans, rivers, or other bodies of water (pp. 73-80).

When the body does not receive enough water a system of rationing takes place, organised by histamine, whereby water flow to the cells gets restricted. The body does this to survive and adapt to the hardship but it causes problems as well. Diseases like asthma, allergies, hypertension, type II diabetes, constipation, and autoimmune diseases are the result of rationing water supply in the body (pp. 236-237).

One manifestation of disease is pain. Certain types of pain arise from the shortage of water in the cells which means there is not enough water to clear acid inside the cells: heartburn, dyspeptic pain, anginal pain, lower back pain, rheumatoid joint pain, migraine headaches, colitis pain, fibromyalgia, morning sickness during pregnancy, and bulimia. These diseases are rampant and the pharmaceutical companies produce drug after drug to kill or relieve them. But the

answer is not in drugs which only mask the problem; they are manifestations of dehydration which can be cured by taking water (pp. 139-140, 170).

Other manifestations of dehydration which are called conditions are in fact 'states of dehydration but labelled as "diseases of unknown origin" by the mainstream medical establishment.' They include obesity, dry and burning eyes, skin dehydration, kidney stones, raised low-density cholesterol in the blood circulation, raised triglycerides, cholesterol plaque formation in the arteries, coronary thrombosis, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, heart failure, repeated stroke, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer disease, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, scleroderma, hemiplegia, quadriplegia, aphasia, autism, attention deficit disorder, cancers, and AIDS. The author lengthily explains how water will help to present these problems from happening and how to cure them when they happen except for the brain damage; 'brain cells do not give birth to daughter cells in the same way of other cells in the body', and when damaged they are damaged forever (pp. 171,183, 217).

Two of the common problems explained in the book are obesity and skin dehydration (pp. 182-200). Over half a billion people in the world are obese and around two billion are overweight according to WHO data [4]. Obesity fatality is estimated to be around 400 thousand people every year.

Obese people generally eat first then drink water; they do that to respond to their feeling of hunger. But feeling hunger is very likely to be thirst originally. These two feelings or sensations get confused because both 'are felt in the same area and are brought about by histamine.' The person chooses to eat food because it is 'more satisfying to the taste buds than water' and over time it gets used to it and eats more food. And when the body gets more dehydrated as a result of solid foods then dry mouth appears and the person feels that he or she needs to drink water—dry mouth is a sign of dehydration but it comes as the last stage. Overtime the person eats more food and the extra is stored in the body as fat. This is mistaken, and the solution is simple if one follows it well; drink two glasses of water a half hour before each meal and two and a half hours after each meal. 'It seems to take about a half hour' for the thirst feeling to be separated from hunger (pp. 173-5). Remember that you also need to have salt and fat in your diet (p. 281).

The reason is simple. Collecting and storing fat is one of the major complications of dehydration. It is caused when the sensation of thirst is confused with the sensation of hunger, and instead of drinking water, the person eats. Brain function prefers to receive clean energy (so to speak) from hydroelectricity. When it is forced to use dirty energy from food, only 20 percent of this energy reaches the brain. Unless used in movement, exercise, or energy consuming occupations, the rest of the energy from food is stored in the form of fat (p. 176).

Skin dehydration is also a common problem. Skin is the first site of the body on which dehydration appears because the body resorts first to the skin for water when there is shortage of water in other body parts. Besides, the skin is exposed to all sorts of the outside environment so it gets damaged in the process. In order to repair itself, the skin needs to receive adequate water. When it does not get it, it will go prunelike; it will lose colour and moisture and as a result the person looks older than his/her age. This is more damaging for women than men due to differences of their skin structure (pp. 225-227).

The next question is: how much water we need to take in a day and how? Here is some advice on that matter. First we need to know that the body reuses the equivalent of forty thousand glasses of water in a day, and in the process it loses 6-10 glasses of water, so we need to compensate for that; to take minimum 8 glasses of water throughout the day—normally the body needs a little less than two litres of water in a day. We need to drink water before meals by half an hour and drink it after meals by two hours and a half. We also need to drink water every time we feel thirsty. Two glasses of water should be taken first thing in the morning, and take water before exercise (p. 240-241,251).

Generally, this book tries to bring about a paradigm change in the medical establishment with something which is available to everybody free or with little money; this is water. Water, only water and no other drinks, to be drunk more than what most of us are used to do. This is because: a) our bodies are more

dehydrated than we feel and as the result we drink less water than our bodies actually need, b) inadequate water in our bodies causes many physiological and psychological problems that are not recognised by the modern medicine as such or wrongly labelled with other names hence wrong treatment is given, c) water is known to have no side effects, and d) drinking water does not need 'doctors' prescription. This way, we can improve our health, prevent disease, and reverse 'stages of degenerative diseases' (p. 239).

Can diseases be prevented by regular and adequate drinking of water? The answer is yes according to this book; there have been cases when patients started taking more water and their health has greatly improved. But there is a general guideline: when you increase your water intake you normally increase urine production hence more salt in the body gets lost-sweating also causes salt shortage in the body. The solution is to increase your salt intake. Normally the body needs half a teaspoon of salt in a day. And you do not have to drink distilled water; regular tap water is fine as long as it 'does not contain toxic substances (pp. 87-88,102-103,115, 216, 251).

Conclusion

The salt addition to water and food stands against the view which considers salt as a bad substance for blood pressure. The author is of the view that salt will not raise the blood pressure, 'it might actually lower it.' 'The logic is simple. If you drink water and do not take salt, the water will not stay in the blood circulation adequately to completely fill all the blood vessels. In some, this will cause fainting; in others, it will cause tightening of the arteries to the point of registering the rise of blood pressure.' The author refers to some researches and says that 'people on restrictively low-salt diets are more likely to die from heart attacks or strokes than those who use salt liberally', thus, abandoning salt can be dangerous for the body function (pp. 118-119, 252,261-262,265).

Batmanghelidj's dehydration hypothesis-I call it so because his water solution has not yet been tested for many of the diseases he says to be caused by dehydration-has been criticised by several medical professionals including Harriet Hall, MD, who argues that: the feeling of thirst, dry mouth, should be taken as the most important indicator of dehydration therefore drink water when you are thirsty, and he warns against over-hydration which can cause death [5]. Batmanghelidj died at the age 73 from pneumonia which is lung inflammation [6]. This can be considered as weakness of Batmanghelidj's hypothesis; how could not water give a longer life to him or cured his pneumonia. This is a reminder that the healing power of water promoted by Batmanghelidj has limits.

Note

I have used an epub electronic type edition of the book for this review so the page numbers correspond to that electronic edition.

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