

Foreword

Holistic medicine is widely accepted in the 21st century. Most medical professionals seem to understand that a malfunction of one body part impacts others. Further, most medical professionals accept that human physiology, chemistry, psychology and spirituality are closely interrelated. Moreover, Eastern and Western healing techniques have merged. Acupuncture is now covered by most health insurers just like physical therapy, surgery, and prescription pharmaceuticals. So what happened to the dental profession?

Modern dentistry is on the cusp of a new era. Thanks to innovative dentists like the late Doctor Ronald King, a holistic approach has been increasingly integrated into dental practice. More important, holistic dentistry is becoming integrated with holistic medicine. After all, isn't the mouth, with its teeth, gums and jaw, part of the whole body? That's the point of this book: teeth and kidneys can impact one another, jaw and stress are related, gums and the chemistry of digestion influence one another.

In this book, Bette Jo Arnett addresses both the dental professional and the patient. To the dental professional she says, "The teeth and gums are not your only responsibility. Your patient is a whole person with a history and a multifaceted environment. Your patient may have an allergy that limits your treatment options. Your patient's body and soul influence physiological responses to your treatments. Your patient is complex."

To the patient, Ms. Arnett says, “Know your options. Understand your whole body. Beware of unnecessary or inappropriate treatments. Dentists don’t intend to harm you. Sometimes they just don’t understand all of you. Help them. Explain the whole you.”

Ms. Arnett builds bridges between dentist and patient. The two desperately need to understand one another if holistic medicine is to work properly. We must begin to build a common language of holistic dentistry that can lead to a common understanding. Communication theory asserts that “language is culture and culture is language.” As Arnett teaches us a new language of holistic medicine she starts to build a new culture in the dental office. This new culture is Arnett’s vision and the centerpiece of her book.

Arnett’s examples are meant to be generalized. The dental professional and the patient must learn the principles she teaches. When she tells us that some people are allergic to mercury in fillings while other patients show no negative reactions, we learn a principle: be alert to potential allergies. When Arnett suggests that bridges and implants can cause negative reactions, she is not recommending against these procedures. She is simply pointing out that human beings are complex and often unpredictable organisms. Therefore patients should know all their options, including the option of doing nothing, before they make a decision. Further, patients should know that if they experience negative reactions, treatments can often be reversed. For example, dental bridges can be removed.

In sum, this book provides a grand vision of a new and more complex practice of dentistry that understands mind, body and environment. Bette Jo Arnett is a visionary

speaking to dental professionals and patients. I join Arnett in hoping for an additional audience that will find this book useful: the dental educator.

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