

The Healing Power of Nature

An Interview with Dr. Andrew Iverson

Dr Andrew Iverson, an unconventional herbology and botanical medicine expert, and author of *Nature's Diet*, goes a step further in his diagnosis of our current state of health. He presents to us in his book a more comprehensive vision of healing and well being that includes the whole person, not just the physical body. Surprisingly, he successfully shows how personal health today inevitably has a spiritual dimension to it, as well as a social and political one. As an expert herbologist, he insists in going back to the roots to find the answers.

Dr Iverson explains that News breakthroughs in medicine today often echo our grandparents' traditional wisdom and ancient remedies, and that nature provides everything we need for a full and rich life. He insisted that by identifying the causes of disease, we have the power to make changes that will create health, and thus our primary healthcare provider is us. This adds a sense of personal participation in our own well being, a sense of personal ritual, becoming consciously aware, and waking up.

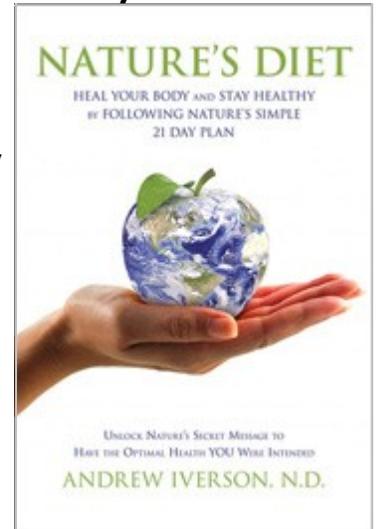
In his book, Dr Iverson explains in detail that flavor enhancers in processed food train our brains to want to eat more of the processed foods. We are addicted to flavor enhancers, and the population is drugged by Dopamine, the "feel good" molecule. We live today in a culture of "medication madness," as he describes it. Most people do not want to change to eat healthy and get healthy, and are nervous eaters, indoctrinated into the Western way of eating. Changing our habits that contribute to so many chronic and common illnesses today, and taking action for our own wellness, begins with becoming aware of the factors and causes behind the scenes. There is even a political side to our health, since many of the practices and products of transnational companies that produce and package the food we eat are at the heart of the issue, and seem to have the upper hand financially and politically on the food that is grown and made available to the public, across borders and continents?

The solutions are all around us, and are simple, easy to learn and apply for ourselves, according to Dr Iverson. "Nature holds the answers to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. All we have to do is be still, observe, and listen."

SC: Can you tell us a little about yourself and the work you do, which led you to write your recent book, *Nature's Diet*?

Dr Andrew Iverson: I was a naturalist since I was a young boy. My great grandparents homesteaded in Yelm, WA, where I grew up on a dairy farm and spent the majority of my time in the outdoors. I was infatuated with Nature and always was conducting some experiment with the plants or animal specimens I had collected in my backyard.

Years later, while attending the university, my mother had introduced me to a man that would later become my teacher — Ken Meadows. He was a biochemist that utilized Dr Carey Reams' method of urine and saliva testing to determine nutritional needs. I share the complete story of my meeting with Ken in the introduction of *Nature's Diet*.



The first day Ken and I met, it was like meeting a long lost friend. We talked for hours and I was completely absorbed in his explanations of science as it relates to the human body and Nature. Ken proposed the notion that *the body could heal itself*, if it was given what it needed for repair. That was a completely new concept to me. Up until that point I figured that the doctor was the one who healed me. Just as so many others still think that the medicine heals them or the doctor heals them or something outside of them does the healing. Little do we question how the medicine is able to do the healing without the simultaneous assistance of the *Wisdom of Nature within the body*.

Ken went on to explain to me, "Only human beings are capable of causing such damage to our Mother Earth. No other creature would destroy the very Mother who gives them life. Despite our poor stewardship, Nature still perseveres and lives onward. Nature is self-maintaining, self-replicating, self-purifying, and self-healing. You are also a part of Nature, a part of this circle of life. So why can't your body heal itself as Nature heals itself?"

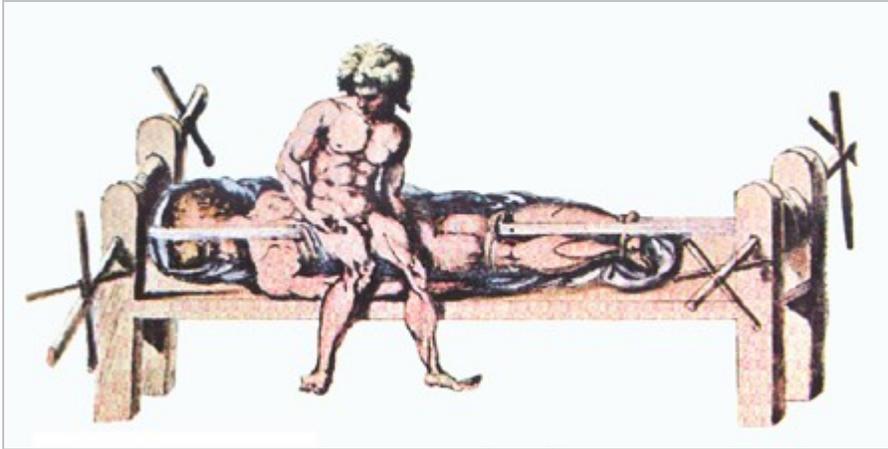
It would take the hands-on experience for me to prove what he was saying was true. Ken invited me to learn with him and I eagerly took the opportunity to observe Ken with his patients as he practiced the art of classical naturopathy as taught to him by his teachers. With every patient I admired how Ken became a detective seeking to find the "cause behind the cause of illness" and *teaching* what nutritional or botanical medicine could assist the body in healing itself.

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Through that tutelage I witnessed healing miracles that the conventional medical model was unable to explain. The conditions which these people had struggled with for years were gradually improving and many saw their symptoms disappear altogether. I knew that I wanted to continue this study and help people as he was helping people.

It has been 17 years since that time Ken and I first met. Three degrees later, and a full patient load at my clinic TRILIUM Health, I have had much opportunity to build upon what Ken had taught me. I, as well, have had my fair share of witnessing healing miracles in my practice. Patients with chronic conditions, which were written off by the conventional wisdom as something they would have to "live with," improved and often the condition went into complete dormancy simply by changing the diet.

Despite these seemingly straightforward associations, it was clear that most people in our society do not connect how their food choices can affect their health. I decided to write *Nature's Diet* because there is a huge need for nutritional education right now more than ever. As people are becoming increasingly frustrated with the idea of taking multiple medications for their symptoms, I knew that I had to share with others what I found in my own clinic that was making people better.



A drawing of a Hippocratic bench from a Byzantine edition of Galen's work in the 2nd century AD

SC: In your book you build your basic approach on the ancient principles of Hippocrates and Paracelsus who said, "Everything that man needs for good health and healing is provided in Nature." In a way you are going back to the origins of medicine, though it is not commonly practiced this way anymore. What are these principles and why is it important that we remember them today?

AI: Such ancient wisdom could not withstand the test of time if it did not resonate on a deeper level of Truth. The words from Hippocrates and Paracelsus were simple yet profound. They came upon these notions not because a machine made a diagnosis for them or a lab ran tests for them — they came upon them through observation and contemplation and actual experience. How many physicians today actually "think" through the origin of the patient's condition, let alone become contemplative enough to allow the answers to come to them? In fact, today, one patient's diagnosis and treatment could be the summation of dozens of outsourced techs and professionals, all contributing one specialized minutia of the diagnostic-treatment compendium. And, in the end, the answer of our demise is chalked up to the "hex of our dreaded genes," which are at the mercy of a "modern miracle drug" hoping for a cure.

Nature is self-maintaining, self-replicating, self-purifying, and self-healing.

The great philosophers did not have such luxuries. They observed all components of the patient from physical to mental through their faculties: By looking, touching, and even smell and tasting excretions as part of the diagnostic procedure. Diabetes was once diagnosed by tasting the "sweetness" of the urine, but that is certainly not what I am pushing for.

Hippocrates used a method of analysis identified as the *Four Humors*. This was the teaching that the body maintained four basic fluids, which he called *humors*, that were in balance when healthy, and in excess or deficiency with disease. Interestingly, about the same time period, Plato outlined a similar multi-system modality that he explained as the 5 elements: Earth, Air, Water, Fire, and Ether. What is so remarkable to me is that the basic premise of these elements carry throughout all ancient medical philosophy, independently of the country or tradition in which they are found. The Babylonians, Greeks, Egyptians, as well as the Tibetans, Chinese, and Japanese medical philosophies are all based in the elements. Even the seven chakras as are found in Hinduism and Buddhism, are correlated to these basic elements. Without the modern means of transportation by land, air, or sea, or communication by telephone, or even mail, how did such similar philosophies come to rise so extensively across the globe within the same era?



Ken was a student of the late mystic Dr Walter Russell, who presented to the world a new theory at the turn of the twentieth century that all matter in the universe was composed of light energy. Even though he had no formal or advanced education in chemistry or physics, he formulated a new periodic table of elements not yet in existence. It explained plutonium and the other radioactive elements, which he predicted years before their actual discovery by modern science. This conferred him an honorary doctorate in science, and he became associated with some of the greatest minds of the time including Nicola Tesla, who urged Russell to "lock up his knowledge in a safe for 1,000 years, until man was ready for it."

Dr. Russell was a childhood prodigy and taught himself to mold sculptures, paint masterpieces, and play instruments, all the while formulating complex scientific theses. When asked the secret of his life, he replied, *"I believe sincerely that every man has consummate genius within him. Some appear to have it more than others only because they are aware of it more than others are, and the awareness or unawareness of it is what makes each one of them into masters or holds them down to mediocrity."* Ken made sure that I read Dr Russell's books for a better understanding of the power each of us are endowed. I highly recommend reading *The Universal One*, the *Message of the Divine Iliad* and *The Man who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe*, among others.



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As Dr Russell explains, the knowledge is universally available for any and all to tap into. Going back to the five elements theory, maybe this explains how the ancient cultures separately recognized the elements Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Ether as the basis of understanding physiology and healing. Is this Universal Knowledge that Dr Russell tapped the same reasoning why thousands of separate tribes from Mexico to South America had a similar medical application of plants without ever comingling? The utilization of thousands of botanical pharmacopeia without a single scientific study makes a primitive tribe sound not so primitive. This includes the universal usage across tribes of the ceremonial hallucinogenic plants, such as peyote and ayahuasca, to bring visions for healing and guidance.



One of my favorite healers is a founding father of American Herbology, Dr John Christopher. Among his many stories was one he told of sharing herbal medicine recipes with a Native American Indian chief. The chief shared with him an herbal recipe that was a special cure for cancer passed down from his ancestors. Dr. Christopher compared his notes and was shocked in amazement that their recipes for cancer were almost identical! Later, a man named Harry Hoxsey came out with his own formula for cancer, and he said his great-grandfather watched a horse eat the particular herbs in the pasture when it fell ill with a tumor. Although these men had never met one another previously, would you believe that all three recipes were the same?

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SC: I found reading your book very exciting, like reading an ancient scroll with forgotten truths suddenly discovered by an explorer, with ancient formulas and traditions. Can you describe what the statement “Vis Medicatrix Naturae” — The Healing Power of Nature — means and how it applies to our health and well being today as well?

AI: This doctrine was embodied by Hippocrates, the father of medicine, who identified *The Vis* as “The Healing Power of Nature” within all creation. The followers of this medical approach believed the body contained within it the ability to rebalance the four humors by providing what was needed and then getting out of the way in order for the body to take care of the rest. The treatment was non-invasive and emphasized working with the body as opposed to working against it.

Although doctors of today take the Hippocratic Oath, there is very little that conventional medicine has in common with the style of medicine Hippocrates practiced. First, *Do No Harm*, the embodiment of Hippocratic philosophy has all but been lost with the reality that drugs are the fourth cause of death in the U.S., and the number one cause of death beyond all natural causes is iatrogenic (treatment induced) death.



As a naturopathic physician, our philosophy is much more like the ancient model based on six premises:

- 1) First, do no harm, 2) Identify and treat the cause, 3) Treat the whole person, 4) The doctor acts as teacher, 5) Prevention is primary, 6) Allow the *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* to do the healing.

My teachers taught me that the body in its great wisdom is always working to bring balance and healing, that the cell's only mission is to live. Each cell lives for itself and yet it lives for me — the collective of all other cells making up the organism. And each cell depends on the other for its existence. With this understood, if one affects the whole, then the organism has to have a way to indicate when the vehicle has been compromised. We recognize these as signs and symptoms of illness.

For example, a skin eruption is the most benign message that the integument, our protective barrier, is out of balance, not an indication of a lack of cortisone cream. Persistent ear infections and fever in children are messages that the immunity is needing support, not that the body is deficient in antibiotics or needs to stifle the natural response of elevating internal heat. Chronic headaches are a message that the circulatory system is out of balance, not that we missed our daily dose of Tylenol!

The physical body can speak to us in any number of "warning signs" that the medical establishment makes "go away" by the application of a particular medicament. Maybe you are experiencing any number of these warning signs from high or low blood pressure or blood sugar, to digestive symptoms, to emotional or psychological unrest. These are all signals to the organism that there is a deficiency or excess that requires balance. Unfortunately, the common response we have been trained as a society is to cover it up with a symptomatic medicament or to continue to ignore the warning signs until it has taken over the entire system.

SC: In an age when we are so accustomed to a quick and effortless remedy and rely on the right pill or medicine to alleviate our symptoms, statements like this one in your book seem unrealistic: "Everyone has a doctor in him or her; we just have to help it in its work . . . Our medicine should be our food." Can food really be our medicine?

AI: As previously mentioned with the teachings of Dr Russell, and the observation from ancient wisdom that is pervasive throughout the world, it is very clear that Creation provided all that is needed for our good health and healing within the network of Nature. We were not put on a planet to self-destruct by means of a disease as the only option. Hippocrates did not think food should be the medicine, he knew that food was our medicine, our nutritive sustenance, our life force connection with the sun and earth, and even our teacher. "Our teacher?" You might question. Yes, the plants can teach us what we need to know about them if we become present with their message.

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I've had the rare opportunity to walk through the jungles and collect food and medicine with traditional native healers in South America. One day I'll write about these in detail. I was impressed greatly when I was in Panama with a local curandero walking through the forest, as he would sing songs to the plants and then pause to listen. He would point to a specific vine and say, "This is the plant that we need for the little girl. You see why? It is a strong vine. It has great vital force and it is able to ward off its enemies. It will provide her with the strength she needs to ward off the invaders." Then he would go to another, chop off the vine and it would ooze red. "This we shall bring home for the old woman. Her blood is weak and this plant gives its life blood for her." He chopped the vine, put it in his basket, and then sang a song of thanks to the plant for its sacrifice and to the Mother for guidance.

This is the premise that once was universal — Nature provided for us and we provided back for her in stewardship and respect. Now it is much different. We depend almost entirely on the scientific method and much less on the senses we were endowed. By applying the knowledge we have acquired through the sciences and listening to the Inner Wisdom gifted to us as humans, we can marry the two for a grander understanding of healing.



SC: You make the point that News breakthroughs in medicine today often echo our grandparents' traditional wisdom and ancient remedies. Can you comment on this?

AI: This is quite straightforward. Here we spend millions of dollars in laboratory research just to prove that eating a specific vegetable is good for you or that walking an hour a day prevents heart conditions. We similarly spend billions to prove that a certain drug doesn't have deleterious side effects or margarine and Splenda are more healthy than the natural alternative. You commonly hear news briefs, "A new substance found in the seeds of this or the fruit of that have been found to be beneficial for this ailment." Why do we need to wait for science to prove to us what our Inner Wisdom will lead us to naturally if we just pause to listen as our predecessors have demonstrated?

Many are becoming susceptible to “technological anesthesia” creating a greater state of mental numbing and spiritual slumber. As a whole we are involuting into our devices on such a grand scale that we now have computers that are pocket sized and we carry them with us wherever we go. Answers are readily available in a blink of a Google search and with such streamlining comes the streamlining of our lives as well. Our food is almost all prepared for us out of a package, can, box or restaurant, and disguised by obscure labeling techniques. We have put the decision for nourishing our body in the hands of whatever the manufacture wishes to feed us. Our healthcare is mediated by a trip to the local drug store so that the symptoms will just leave us alone. Our interaction with other humans can be “friended” or “unfriended” by the click of a mouse. In this world where so many conveniences are giving way to the potential of using less and less of our Innate Creative potential, we are losing connection with that from which our vehicles have come.

As we advance into this new era of technological understanding, I challenge you to ask the question: Is my body speaking to me with warning signs? Is there another possible answer for a condition that was labeled incurable or only treatable with drugs? Am I taking time to listen and be aware of the answers all around me? As Ken would say, “When you seek healing, look to where you have come from and humbly ask Nature, “*What would you do great Mother?*” Then just sit quietly and wait for your answer to be revealed.”

Our food is almost all prepared for us out of a package, can, box or restaurant, and disguised by obscure labeling techniques. We have put the decision for nourishing our body in the hands of whatever the manufacture wishes to feed us.

For more information about Dr Iverson, *Nature's Diet* and *Nature's Diet Cookbook* please visit www.drandrewiverson.com or also found on Amazon.com

Dr Andrew Iverson's Naturopathic Family Medicine, Trilium Health Clinic: www.triliumhealth.com

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Dr. Andrew Iverson's newest release, *Nature's Diet Cookbook*, is the healthy cooking companion to *Nature's Diet*, coauthored by his mother, Rita Iverson. Own this kitchen essential and have fun making Dr. Iverson's all time childhood favorites along with international delicacies from his travels. He also features favorites from his family, friends and patients! You can feel assured that the meals you feed your family will be balanced, nutritious and wholesome, and of course, taste TRULY TERRIFIC!

Enjoy eating healthy!...Directly from the Doc's kitchen, to yours!

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