

Immune BOOSTER

The Changing Nature of Childhood Illness by **Thomas Cowan**

When I was growing up in the early 1960s, I knew of one child in our school in suburban Detroit who had asthma. I remember this distinctly because he was often teased about his inability to breathe. When I was in fourth grade, there was another child who died of a brain tumour. I remember this, too, because of how traumatic it was for all of her classmates and the school community. Otherwise, I don't recall any other children who had any sort of chronic illness or who used prescription medicines. Many of us had horrible diets, yet chronic disease among children was relatively unknown. No one had ever heard of autism, let alone had a family member with autism. Food allergies, to the degree that anyone was aware of them, were unknown. Peanuts at the ball game were still a popular treat. Special education classes had not been invented yet, although there were always the inevitable 'slow learners'.

I graduated from medical school in 1984 and established a general practice in upstate New York. A few years later, I moved with my young family to New Hampshire, where we joined a vibrant community of other young families interested in Waldorf education, anthroposophy, growing and eating whole foods, and living as naturally as possible. My practice in New Hampshire was one of a number of initiatives that included one of the largest Waldorf schools in North America and one of the oldest Waldorf boarding high schools in the world. We established the first community-supported agriculture initiative in North America, had a strong commitment to the lives and livelihoods of disabled people, and engaged

'The rates of chronic disease represent a national emergency. How is this happening? How, as a society, as parents are we allowing this to happen?'

in many other small ventures based on art, biodynamics, and anthroposophy. I was the community doctor there for nearly two decades before relocating to San Francisco in 2003, where I've been practicing ever since.

STARTING OUT

Because there were many families in that community, many of my patients were young children. Few of their parents wanted them vaccinated, which was fortunate because due to the training I'd had in anthroposophical medicine, I had already come to the conclusion that vaccination and mistreatment of acute illnesses were the primary causes of chronic disease. In fact, the only vaccine I even kept on hand was tetanus, which I've administered maybe twenty times during my entire medical career.

As I developed my practice, I gained considerable experience in the medical care of young children, the age group for which vaccination is most relevant. It afforded me the opportunity to observe children who were in full compliance with the vaccine schedule, those who were in partial compliance with the vaccine

schedule, and those who were completely unvaccinated. Because I already had a great deal of skepticism about medical orthodoxy by the time I established my practice—and, indeed, it's why I developed the practice that I did; I could never have tolerated a traditional practice—I can't position myself as an unbiased observer. What I can say, however, is that my observations never caused me to call into question my stance. They only reinforced it.

CHRONIC HEALTH

I rarely saw an unvaccinated child in my practice with a chronic illness of any sort. In general, these children ate healthy diets, played outside a lot, and were in good health. However, among the patients who were partially or fully vaccinated because they'd seen other physicians or pediatricians in the past, I treated many who had one or more chronic health conditions, including asthma, eczema, seizures, and digestive disorders. As time went on, all of these disorders became more common among the partially or fully vaccinated children I saw. I believe this corresponded with the introduction in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s of certain adjuvants and excipients, as well as the introduction of ever more vaccines.

My New Hampshire practice also afforded me the opportunity to treat some of the illnesses for which most children are routinely vaccinated. I have seen hundreds of cases of whooping cough (including in all my three children); hundreds of cases of chicken pox; approximately fifty cases of measles; one case of tetanus; about twenty cases of mumps; a few cases of German measles; no diphtheria; no >