



BACK AT THE SHERATON GRAND !!

THIS MONTH through August, NTCOF's monthly first-Sunday services are at the Sheraton Grand Hotel on the southeast corner of 114 and Esters. We will continue to meet here at the Sheraton Grand except for the September 4th service which will be held at the Westin DFW Airport across the highway on the northwest corner of 114 and Esters.

HEALTHY SKEPTICISM about "Alternative Medicine"

"What most sets alternative medicine apart, in our view, is that it has not been scientifically tested and its advocates largely deny the need for such testing. ... [they] believe the scientific method is simply not applicable to their remedies. ... Alternative medicine also distinguishes itself by an ideology that largely ignores biologic mechanisms, often disparages modern science, and relies on what are purported to be ancient practices and natural remedies (which are seen as somehow being simultaneously more potent and less toxic than conventional medicine) ... There cannot be two kinds of medicine - conventional and alternative. There is only medicine that has been adequately tested and medicine that has not, medicine that works and medicine that may or may not work. [Marcia Angell MD & Jerome P. Kassirer MD; in an editorial: NEJM 339:839, 1998]

MYTHS & FACTS about "ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE"

Up to half of all Americans use "alternative medicine."

This figure comes from surveys that have included many things that are not necessarily "alternative" to scientific medicine. In fact, the largest categories of "alternative medicine" in these surveys have always been exercise, prayer, relaxation and meditation. Since the passage of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) in 1994, there has been an explosion of herbal products sold on the basis of deceptive claims. Increased use of these reflects the public's belief that the claims are reliable and that the products would not be sold if they were untrue. It can be estimated that the true prevalence of medical practices not in conformity with accepted standards of medical care is less than 10% and probably less than 5%

The U.S. government has found that more than 80% of modern medicine is unproven.

This assertion is used both to attack scientific medicine and to justify the acceptance of unproven claims and methods. (The latter is an example of the *tu quoque* fallacy, or "you do it too!") The assertion comes from an informal estimate made by epidemiologist Kerr White, an advisor to the U.S. Congress' Office of Technology Assessment which existed from 1972 to 1995. Kerr based his guess on

two surveys, in 1960 and in 1961, of the medication prescribing habits of 19 doctors in the UK. In 1995, White stated that "The figure was immortalized in OTA circles and publications for almost a decade. In countless addresses and conferences I often challenged others to provide better evidence but none was forthcoming. So the northern industrial town [in the UK] 'arm-chair' assessment persisted." [White K. Lancet 1995; 346; 837-838]

In fact, there are no figures addressing the question of what proportion of medical care in the aggregate is unproven. And "unproven" in this context could mean different things. For example, a medication shown to be effective in adult white women in their 60's used for a black man in his 20's could be said to be "unproven." But such use may very well be reasonable. On the other hand, any treatment that has not been shown to be effective for anything, and that is implausible, would not be reasonable in any situation. So the claim that "80% of medicine" is baseless is simply not true.

Herbs are natural so they're safe.

Plants contain many poisonous substances, often in amounts high enough to be lethal. Even many plants that produce edible fruits contain toxic substances in their leaves or seeds including, for example, cherries, peaches, plums, apricots, potatoes and tomatoes. Comfrey, coltsfoot and chaparral contain known carcinogens, and such substances are present even in common seasonings

such as black pepper, basil, turmeric and nutmeg. Biochemist Bruce Ames, inventor of the Ames Test for mutagenicity, has estimated that people normally ingest 10,000 times more naturally-occurring carcinogens than synthetic carcinogens. Plants evolved these substances for protection against being eaten. So, no, "natural" doesn't mean safe. "Natural" is most often a marketing term.

"Alternative medicine" is more holistic.

"Holistic" is another marketing term, the idea being that a person is treated as a "whole person," individualistically, and not just a sick body part. It's an attractive idea and it would be a great thing if everyone always treated others as complete human individuals and not just "my daughter's teacher," or "the guy with the transmission problem," or "that politician with the unruly hair" and so on. But how is it "holistic," for example, to treat every illness for every person as the result of "misaligned vertebra" or "a disturbance of the chi" or even "an imbalance in the humors?" It's not.

"Alternative medicine" doesn't do any harm.

There are at least five kinds of harm that can arise as a result of unproven and implausible ways of thinking about and managing problems of human health and illness. 1) There can be direct harm from some methods. Even if the risk is small, any risk is too high in the absence of a likely benefit. 2) Appropriate medical evaluation and management may be delayed or omitted. 3) The financial resources spent on unproven methods could have bought a better quality of life or other benefits. 4) For those who later realize that they have harmed or merely duped, there is psychological harm. And 5) There is harm to the greater society when people's ideas about health and disease are corrupted. This can adversely affect their ability to make informed and intelligent choices when it comes to their own health and that of their family and loved ones and when it comes to their participation in matters of public policy.

**COMING NEXT MONTH:
"USA BIRTHDAY!!!"
Why Religious Liberty is Important!
JULY 3, 2011 !!
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS
TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED,
APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website update is in process thanks to Sarah and Rusty Nejd!) , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Second Sunday monthly, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine this month; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**"To be conscious that we are perceiving
or thinking is to be conscious of
our own existence."
- Aristotle (384-322 BCE)**



The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Presenter:	Tim Gorski
Music Appreciation (usually) by "Faithless Companions"	David Burgess
Check out faithlesscompanions.com !!!	
Welcome Coordinator	Mark Barnick
Equipment Wrangler:	"Wild" Bill Holloway
Videographer:	John Gauthier
Minister:	Dr. Tim Gorski

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