

## Guest Editorial

### NATURE TEACHES HEALTH VIA NUTRITION

Nature makes many more contributions to our health and survival by natural nutrition than we do by any artificial or highly controlled efforts.

Now that germ-free vertebrates have been grown experimentally long enough under research at Notre Dame University's Lobund Institute with sterilized food, and with the exclusion of all other forms of life, to the degree of success represented by the reproduction of a guinea pig delivering a litter of young, nevertheless, some very baffling natural facts overshadow such highly acclaimed experimental success.

One of those is the fact that if the germ-free chick's diet is compounded to be "deficient in a single vitamin" (like riboflavin, or niacin, or thiamin, or folic acid) "The germ-free chick will show deficiency symptoms much sooner than the normal chick."<sup>1</sup>

Another is the fact that scholars in these germ-free researches are astounded by the incredible natural phenomenon in that both the germ-free and the conventional chick will excrete the very vitamins omitted by their diets. The amounts excreted are such that would save their lives if taken orally.

This second and outstanding fact emphasizes the natural contribution to health and survival by the animal's instincts, or choices, which are exhibited, for example, by the experimental rat when it indulges in what is scientifically termed "coprophagy" or the eating of feces. The use of the screen-floor in the experimental rat cage, and the necessity to have but a single rat per cage, testify to the animal's instinctive resourcefulness in guaranteeing its health and survival via nutrition by its struggle for essential helps from that source. When starch is a component of the deficient diet of the rat in any test, two rats in the same cage will defy the concern of the experimenter for accurately controlled results, especially in vitamin studies. They will feed each other on their feces before those can drop and disappear through the screen floor.

Since, even in the absence of vitamins in the diet, there is synthesis of them within the animal body, as the studies of germ-free vertebrates tell us, even to the point of their presence in the feces (reported long ago by the habit of the pigs and chickens taking to the cow's droppings lately discovered as sources of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>); we can realize that the evolution of the instincts of the rat has given the animal a natural power of knowing where and how to maintain a cycle of reappearing and reused catalysts, by its own nutritional management in conflict with our insistence on deficiencies of specific compounds in its food source.

Apparently, many natural forces at work through the ages of evolution under nature's guidance for survival of the fittest, are still unappreciated, much less used for health management. Apparently too, such natural forces still transcend in health and survival values any supposedly complete guidance of nutrition by man's assembly of the components from the purified, sterilized, commercial and laboratory sources. Nature is still the greatest teacher of students willing to think and to observe.

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<sup>1</sup>Worlds Without Germs. The Laboratory. Fischer Scientific Co. 27:130 1959.

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