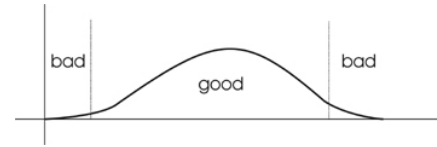


From the Kitchen

16 September 2009

Madness can be defined as doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. Insanity is sometimes defined as not being able to properly interact with the world as it exists.



Both madness and insanity are evident in the Australian medical system. To a large extent it is not a healthcare system because, despite its rhetoric, it appears more enamoured of medication than health.

There is a huge bureaucracy that oversees the practice of doctors. Doctors who fall foul of this bureaucracy can find themselves investigated and eventually the subject of a hearing. I have attended such hearings in support of doctors. At one of these, the doctor was told by one of the three medicos on the panel that his patient outcomes were irrelevant – all they were interested in were the procedures he followed and the records he kept.

Yes, there are a few doctors who will rort the Medicare system to enrich themselves. To catch these, the bureaucracy's computers look for 'outliers' on their statistical data, because a doctor who claims to see a hundred patients a day, six days a week, may be dishonest.

Such statistical analysis also flags any other doctor whose practice is unusual. Unusual does not equate with dishonest or with bad, but the bureaucracy doesn't see it that way. It is highly suspicious of any doctor who has any aspect of their practice falling below the 20th percentile or above the 80th percentile.

A doctor can be reprimanded for spending too much time with patients, for not writing a 'usual' number of prescriptions, for not referring enough patients to specialists or for making too much or too little use of pathology tests. I know a GP who has many of his patients referred to him by cancer specialists, because these specialists feel they can do no more for their patients. This doctor was recently reprimanded for not referring these cancer patients to oncologists, the very specialists who had given up on them.

The reason the oncologists have given up and referred their patients to this GP is that the specialists have no training in holistic medicine, nor in the often effective nutritional and lifestyle approaches. They know that this GP is an expert in these fields and that many of his patients have 'spontaneous' remissions. The fact that this excellent doctor helps his patients on the twisting path back to health, is irrelevant to the bureaucrats. Because his methods are not supported by peer-reviewed articles of double-blind placebo-controlled cross-over trials with large cohorts published in the 'best' (orthodox) medical journals, they are considered as not being good medical practice. In fact, the Medicare bureaucracy has formally notified the State Medical Board that this doctor may be a danger to his patients, because of his 'untried' methods. Patients overcoming cancer is not considered as evidence of good medical practice.

The doctor is not insane, as he understands and tries to actively engage with the medical world as it exists; and he is clearly not mad, as he refuses to keep doing those things that don't work.

Even though it angers me, I should not be surprised at this deplorable state of affairs. It has probably always been the case that those who espouse the dominant paradigm will attempt to bring into line those who don't. Add to this the billions of dollars of profit being made by the prescription drug industry and the big-machines-are-better medical industry, and the effective healers who also happen to be medical doctors will have a continuing struggle to be left alone to do their healing.

There *are* quacksalvers out there who will lead gullible people along useless paths for their own enrichment, but these are relatively few and they also exist within the orthodox medical profession.

The madness exists in the orthodoxy and its supporting government bureaucracy, in that its adherents keep doing more of the same and keep expecting miraculously different results. And insanity is rife there, as they fail to properly interact with the world as it is: people are much more than the purveyors of drugs and the manipulators of machines wish to believe. Humans are not just the results of their DNA configuration, nor merely bio-chemical reactions to be adjusted at will. Healing (making whole) is not properly understood by those in the orthodoxy. They talk, for instance, of the placebo effect and at the same time fail to understand it, frequently dismissing it as irrelevant. I challenge them to wake up. Looking beyond what they learned in their training takes courage and that is precisely what their patients deserve.