

The Power of Thought

Be mindful of what you think and say (it might come true).

By Mark McClure, MD

The health and healing (rejuvenation) of every cell in the body is influenced by what we think and say. The spoken word, embodying sound energy, bridges the inner subjective and the outer objective world, making manifest our inner thoughts. Our thoughts, an inner dialogue we have with ourselves, form the dominant energies we communicate to our bodies. As such, our speech and thoughts have a potent effect upon mind and matter. This is particularly true when facing a life threatening illness such as cancer. Evidence that this is so has been the subject of numerous scientific studies.

For example, researchers have discovered that the healing or destructive power of the mind (speech and thoughts) upon the body can make a profound difference on the quality of life and survival of cancer patients. Perhaps one of the most widely quoted studies in this regard was published in 1989 by Stanford University researcher David Spiegel, MD. This is ironic since Dr. Spiegel initially set out to disprove the notion that the mind had power over disease!

In his study, he divided 86 women with metastatic breast cancer into two groups; one group of women received standard medical treatment only; the other group received standard medical treatment plus weekly group therapy sessions and lessons in how to use the mind to help control pain (self-hypnosis). When he tabulated the results of his ten-year study he was stunned with the results (as was the medical community). Although all but three of the women had died, the group of women who had received additional instruction survived twice as long and experienced a better quality of life than did the women receiving standard therapy alone.

Furthermore, all of the long-term survivors were in the study group. Investigators at the University of Rochester, using the same protocol for a group of men with prostate cancer, reported decreased psychosocial stress in the group of men who used self-hypnosis and received group support.

Another example of how speech can affect the survival of cancer patients was reported in the journal *Psychological Medicine*. Researchers S. Greer and Peter Silberfarb prospectively followed a group of women with early breast cancer for five years. They studied each patient's psychological response to breast cancer by conducting a

structured interview three months after their surgery. At the conclusion of the study, the researchers discovered that they could predict recurrence-free survival by analyzing the patient's verbatim statements at their three-month interview. In other words, these women's inner dialogue (thoughts) expressed as speech influenced their five-year survival.

In still another example of how important it is to control one's speech, investigators Idler and Kasl reported in the *Journal of Gerontology* that opinions (thoughts and speech) about the state of one's health was a better predictor of survival than objective factors such as physical symptoms, extensive exams, laboratory tests or behaviors. Amazing as it may seem, they reported that patients who said their health was "poor" were seven times more likely to die than those who said that their health was "excellent"!

Finally, prayer, a means of communicating one's inner thoughts with the Divine, has a positive effect on survival. Epidemiologist Jeffrey Levin, PhD, discovered that over 250 empirical studies of the value of prayer have been published since the nineteenth century. He reports "positive effects (of prayer) for (reducing) both morbidity and mortality have been found for cardiovascular disease, hypertension, stroke, and nearly every type of cancer." (*italics added*) I routinely use prayer in my practice of medicine and have found it to be an integral part of the healing process.

Together, thought and speech are a powerful duo affecting all levels of well-being. It follows naturally that we're well-advised to carefully consider the nature of the sounds we make. Whether the sounds are spoken or simply thought, their quality determines much in our destiny and health. For ourselves and for others, the effort to practice right speech on the inner and outer levels is a good investment to make.