

Book Review

Non Conventional Medicine in Italy. History, Problems, Prospects for Integration

Roberta Nuzzi

via Garibaldi 1 40124 Bologna, Italy

Guido Giarelli, Paolo Roberti di Sarsina and Bruno Silvestrini (eds), Franco Angeli Publisher, Milan, 2007. Foreword by Edwin L. Cooper (Founder and Editor in Chief of eCAM). Afterword by Amedeo Bianco (President, Italian National Federation of Colleges of MDs and Dentists, FNOMCeO)

Introduction

When one first discovers a book such as this, the naturally spontaneous and optimistic impression that arises is that a serious, top-level cooperation among non-conventional medicine experts and university researchers is finally getting under way in Italy, far from any sort of conflict of interests. And if one further considers that the results of this work have been acclaimed by a leading NCM/CAM journal, such as *eCAM*, and by the official journal of the Italian National Federation of Colleges of MDs and Dentists (FNOMCeO), it is clear that a milestone has been reached in CAM publications in Italy.

Born from the Permanent Committee of Consensus and Coordination for Non-Conventional Medicines in Italy

The origin of this book lies in the historic workshop at the Italian National Committee for Bioethics on 18 June 2004 held by a delegation of the 'Permanent Committee of Consensus and Coordination for Non Conventional Medicines in Italy'.

On that day a group of members of the Italian National Committee for Bioethics (among whom Prof. Carlo Flamigni and

Prof. Luisella Battaglia) came together led by Prof. Bruno Silvestrini, all open-minded and aware of the need for a dialog based on fairness, mutual listening and new scientific knowledge expertise. The dialog concentrated on the nine most reliable and representative CAMs disciplines, as acknowledged by Italian National Federation of Colleges of MDs and Dentists (FNOMCeO) in the Document on Non-Conventional Medicines signed on 2002, which now falls under the exclusive competence, practice and responsibility of MDs (chiropractic, osteopathy, phytotherapy, homeopathy, anthroposophy, acupuncture, ayurvedic medicine, homotoxicology). In this respect the recent Deontological Code of MDs and Dentists, approved on 16 December 2006, confirming the statement adopted on 2002, establishes as follows: 'physicians must not collaborate in any way with, or promote the activities of any person who is not a physician in the professional practice of Non-Conventional Medicines (in Italy)'. The 43rd National Congress of the Italian Society of Psychiatry, held in October 2003, witnessed the foundation of the Consensus Conference on Non-Conventional Medicines in Italy, which has produced a document signed by 41 associations till now, among them many NCM/CAM patient associations and the 'Tribunal for Patient Rights of Emilia-Romagna Region'. On 5 December 2003, the 'Permanent Committee of Consensus and Coordination for Non-Conventional Medicines in Italy' was founded, a non-profit organization which, since then, has become the point of reference concerning NCM/CAM for many institutions, whether on a national, regional, or local level. Currently, the Committee is made up of 23 associations: medical and scientific societies, federations and associations of patients, representing close to 12,000 medical doctors, dentists and veterinarians.

Inside the Book

This collective publication was born out of a project of collaboration between Dr Paolo Roberti di Sarsina

For reprints and all correspondence: Dr Roberta Nuzzi, via Garibaldi 1 40124 Bologna, Italy. Tel: +39-051-581700; E-mail: robertanuzzi@fastwebnet.it

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and Dr Guido Giarelli, subsequently extended to Prof. Bruno Silvestrini, the first to have founded a university department in Italy for natural medicine (at the 'La Sapienza' university school of medicine in Rome)—this project based on mutual esteem and groups effort has been growing in the Permanent Committee since 2004. The authoritative presence of many distinguished scientists and researchers, all reliable representatives of the CAM academic community, is one of the many qualifying aspects of the book. The book is the result of a challenging new paradigm of health, which the most open-minded eCAM Medical expert researcher should consider an opportunity to renew medicine as a person-oriented discipline committed to human health and well-being.

The first part of the publication deals with many 'open questions' regarding the request for NCM/CAM on behalf of individuals: both public and private offers, their different organization and professional characteristics; the role of the political system, on both national and local levels, according to NCM/CAM regulation; the challenges facing EBM and research, including methods of verifying the efficacy and effectiveness of CAMs; new paths in university education; ethical principles implied of

correct and safe CAM practice and the new world-view that they represent.

In the second part of the volume, some of the most qualified representatives of the various CAM currently practiced in Italy show the state of the disciplines in our country, recent history and CAM's instruments for education, professional practice and research, concluding with a consideration of the main problems involved in integrating CAMs in the Italian National Health System.

The overall result is a rich and varied overview of CAM without precedent, reflecting the trend toward a true pluralism in health, whose strong potentialities include all necessary elements and conditions for a deep renewal of our culture and systems in the field of health.

This book is a useful instrument for all those, from the medical researcher to common people, who wish to become acquainted with their understanding of CAMs. Due to its easy, clear and complete layout, this book is bound to become a book of reference on CAMs in Italy.

We strongly hope that the publication of this book will herald the legislation to which the government has committed itself and which we have been awaiting for nearly 20 years.