

Today's Presentation

Program: Differences in Health Care between the US and France

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Introduced by: Russell Judd

Attendance: 115

Guests: Jim Stohler, Vi Farrell, Phil Woodley, Todd Stockwell

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Today's presenter was Rudy Rouhana, MD. Born in Lebanon (Middle East), Dr. Rouhana attended IU, received his medical degree from the University of Montpellier in southern France, and interned at Methodist Hospital in family practice. He recently retired after 42 years of family practice on the eastside of Indianapolis. He returns to France, where he met his wife, regularly.

Drawing a comparison between ancient and modern medicine, they both stress fitness, hygiene, and prevention. The significant difference is the many and ever-growing clinical tools and techniques available today.

Ancient Medicine:

Ancient Chinese medicine stressed diet, yoga, exercise, and acupuncture (which is recently scientifically supported). Indian medicine stressed diet, exercise, and no abuses such as alcohol. Persian medicine had its own practices and recorded them on Babylonian tablets. Likewise, the Egyptians kept great records in the Library of Alexandria.

The Greek Hippocrates, from the island of Kos, was deemed the Father of Modern Medicine due to (at least) two main points: the Hippocratic Oath (to do no harm in the practice of medicine) and a commitment to treat the indigent at no cost. Hippocrates is also credited with establishing medicine as a separate, distinct discipline (Wikipedia).

The concept of modern medicine grew with Galen (Galien), another prominent Greek in the Roman Empire. The ideas of Hippocrates and Galen of a disciplined approach to medicine were dominant for 1000 years. As Islam spread through the Mediterranean in the Dark Ages, the Arabs and Jews built on the learning of the Greeks and Romans. About 900 AD the Medical School at Montpellier in southeastern France evolved with influence from Israelis, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans. (By the way, Montpellier is the oldest continuously operating medical school in the world. They grant diplomas with the seal of Hippocrates.)

Modern Medicine:

Modern medicine, based on the disciplined scientific approach, has grown spectacularly with frequent new milestones. Modern medicine is very capable throughout the advanced nations. Various ratings would put the best national systems in Canada, Australia, Japan, Western Europe, and the United States. The main difference is cost. The US spends 18-20% of GDP on medical care and Dr. Rouhana can see that rising even up to 25%. Only the US can afford this expense. In the other advanced nations, the cost of care is dramatically less. The consistent difference is that the US is based on private, independent medical delivery while the other advanced countries all have nationalized medicine where all citizens are automatically covered.

In the US, high medical costs drive many patients into bankruptcy, executives of hospitals and medical equipment manufacturers are very highly paid, and malpractice insurance is very expensive. The high cost of care precludes good care for all. These are all in contrast to medical delivery in the other advanced countries. Medical care in France is high quality, immediately available, accessible to all and delivered in modern clean facilities. The cost to the patient is very low, yet physicians in France are well-compensated. Patients can also purchase supplemental insurance, as in the US, to cover most of any remaining expenses.

In addition, the medical outcomes in the US are comparable, but not significantly better, than in the other advanced countries.



Dr. and Mrs. Rudy Rouhana