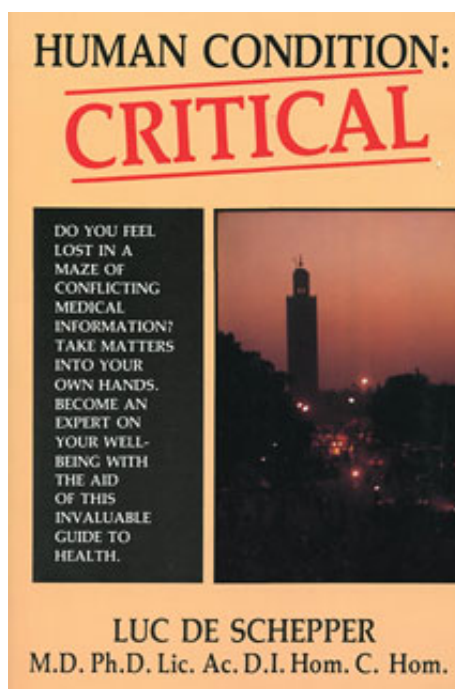


Luc De Schepper

Human Condition: Critical

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[Human Condition: Critical](#)
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Publisher: Full of Life Publ.



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Tel. +49 7626 9749 700
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<http://www.narayana-verlag.com>



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have written this book without the help and understanding from all my patients who have entrusted their care to me. I am greatly indebted to them. I want to thank my good friends Ted Rifkin and Ken DeSure, D.C. for reading the manuscript and giving me their invaluable and thoughtful insight. I owe a lot to my teacher Robin Murphy, N.D. who has strengthened my love for homeopathy. His generosity in sharing his knowledge is a trademark of only great teachers. Many thanks to my patients and friends Bill Blankenship, Kate Noonan and Marjorie Buettell for reading the manuscript and helping me in the most positive way. As usual, it was a pleasure to work with a professional like my editor Gretchen Henkel. And most important, without the support and artistic talents of my beloved wife Yolanda, this book would not have been possible.

Luc De Schepper M.D., Ph.D., Lic.Ac., C.Hom., D.I.Hom.

For more info

Visit Web site:

www.drluc.com

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PO BOX 31025

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INTRODUCTION

As we are nearing the end of the 20th Century, modern science is exploring many new ideas that could take the healing arts to new frontiers. A "bionic body," composed of neural prosthetics, could restore muscle contractions in people who are paralyzed. Implants of fetal cell material for diseases such as Parkinson's deliver a message of hope. There is hope that harvesting organisms such as sponges and coral from the relatively untouched seas could isolate active agents to prevent and cure diseases, from arthritis to cancer.

Yet the news on the medical front is not all good. Here is just a sampling of the headlines we've all grown accustomed to seeing: "Neglected for Years, TB is Back with Strains that are Deadlier" (*New York Times*, October 1992); "Official Scramble to Deal With Resurgence of Tuberculosis" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 1992); "Asthma Strengthens Its Grip, Especially Among Young" (*Los Angeles Times*, September 1992); "Travel-Related Cholera Cases Reported in U.S. Soar to All-Time High" (*Los Angeles Times*, September 1992); "Infectious Disease Threat Rising in the U.S." (*Los Angeles Times*, October, 1992); "The Private Pain of Prostatic Cancer: It is Killing More and More Older Men " (*Time Magazine*, 1992).

It seems that wherever you turn your attention, bleak messages about the health of humankind greet you. AIDS

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statistics appear so frequently in journals that we are becoming desensitized to the bad news: 1.5 million deaths projected in the U.S. by the year 2,000; one-third of the African population wiped out by the turn of the decade; AIDS rapidly becoming the number one health problem in Asia.

Adding insult to injury, more Americans lose access to a mediocre health-care system that already consumes 12% of the GNP (gross national product), adding more people to the already staggering 37 million with no health insurance at all. Advanced medical technology has made decent health care a rich man's privilege, too expensive for the working poor and even middle-class people.

The irony is that most of the money spent for health care goes to purposes other than the actual delivery of personal health care. Physicians deal daily with the high costs of practicing medicine. They confront excessive administrative paperwork to satisfy requirements from insurance companies, in a largely futile effort to cut costs. The present legal system has led to excessively high medical malpractice insurance premiums, and a defensive practice of medicine that by itself has added billions of dollars in costs. All these factors cost the physician and you, the patient, in health care dollars.

The price of prescription drugs has risen almost three times the consumer price index over the last nine years. Since more and more insurance companies cover only delivery of care, consumers are left to pay for their own medicines. It is not uncommon for retired people to pay \$500 every month for medications. And, adding fuel to the fire, many of the drugs that are being prescribed are advertised to doctors in misleading drug ads. A UCLA study published in the June 1992 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that not less than 60% of the pharmaceutical ads surveyed were in violation of federal regulations and warranted complete rejection or major revision.

And lastly, with cancer now striking one in three Americans and killing one in four, people like you and me have grown impatient and dissatisfied with therapies that don't work, cause severe side effects or make us feel like powerless non-participants in our own healing. In my opinion, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation are effective only for small numbers

of cancer victims and they have not significantly affected cancer rates: 600,000 people a year still die from this killer disease, and if anything, the rate has been climbing.

Americans are ready to replace toxic, expensive medications with safe, effective natural remedies and healing methods. I believe that doctors also are ready for these "new" medicines: too many doctors have lost their love for their profession, and not only because of increased government intervention. Partially too, they are more and more confronted with "incurable" difficult diseases, "mysterious" epidemics such as Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS) for which modern medicine provides them very little in terms of prevention.

With a health care system that is bursting at the seams, it is no wonder that consumers are ready for something else. More and more patients have turned to such practices as homeopathy, herbology, acupuncture, and chiropractic. This has already been the case in Europe, where the British royal family are fervent enthusiasts of homeopathy; and in France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, and Spain, which offer many good homeopathic courses to physicians. Even in the U.S., there are signs that alternative healing practices and methods are being taken more seriously. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) responded to a congressional mandate to research alternative medicines. Unfortunately, only the relatively small sum of \$2 million was set aside for the study. And much will depend on the set-up of the study: it must be designed by practitioners of the healing method that is under investigation. But I welcome the challenge if it is well done, mostly for the chance to show that these older, time-tested medicines will stand up to any scrutiny. The very fact that the government is willing to fund meditation, acupuncture, herbology and homeopathy opens up a whole range of possibilities in medicine.

Medicine must be responsible to the needs of people rather than to the needs of the profession. Organized medicine must take an honest look at itself, acknowledge that it does not have all the answers, and reach out to embrace other avenues to healing, as both orthodox and complementary medicine have much to offer. Each can fill in some of the gaps left by the other.

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There are some encouraging signs that thinking is changing even in "traditional" medical circles. For instance, I was thrilled to see the new oath of Hippocrates, drawn up by the School of Medicine at Yale University. It was administered for the first time in 1991. I think this beautiful oath says it all:

"Now being admitted to the high calling of the physician, I solemnly pledge to consecrate my life to the care of the sick, the promotion of health and the service of humanity.

I will practice medicine with conscience and in truth. The health and dignity of my patients will be my first concern. I will hold in confidence all that my patients relate to me. I will not permit considerations of race, religion, nationality or social standing to influence my duty to care for those in need of my service.

I will respect the moral rights of patients to participate fully in the medical decisions that affect them. I will assist my patients to make choices that coincide with their own values and beliefs.

I will try to increase my own competence constantly and respect those who teach and those who broaden our knowledge by research. I will try to prevent, as well as cure, disease."

This oath clearly considers the wishes of the patient and the doctor: that we will assist our patients in making choices that coincide with their beliefs, and that a practitioner shall not be persecuted if he or she practices an alternative form of medicine.

The goal of this book is to give the power of healing back to the people. Section One will teach you how to recognize good health, how to know who you are by using the ancient art of traditional Chinese medicine to recognize your weaknesses and strengths. Knowing these will not only help you avoid disease, but even more, will put you on the right track to health — by instructing you what foods you need, what triggering factors to avoid and what positive physical and mental steps you can take to reach health.

You have two choices: You can live in fear of impending diseases, which will only bring fear and despair to your heart (two emotions guaranteed to bring disease and death at the end). Or, you can spend that same energy to look in the opposite direction — the direction of health — and take it to improve your

health. Remember the famous words of the late President John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." It is the same when it comes to health. *Don't ask what your body can do for you, ask yourself what you can do for your body!*

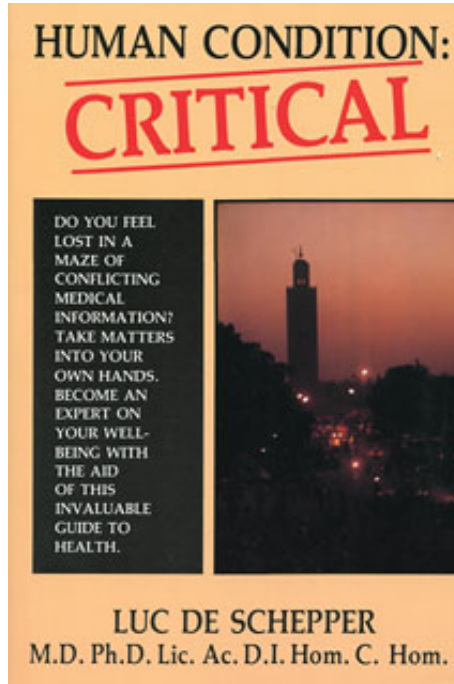
Section Two will explain the cause of any disease, even the most mysterious one. By recognizing the etiological factor behind your condition, you can put yourself back in control. In fact, this section will teach you how to go back into your past and construct a time line of events.

Section Three of the book is dedicated to homeopathy and the true domestic physician. It explains how homeopathy works, how to look for a good homeopath and how simple observations will give you the key to your personal health.

Section Four covers special topics like hypersensitive people (an ever-growing group of patients); CFIDS; alcohol and drug addictions; vaccination issues; the new threat of epidemic diseases; geriatric problems; and mercury intoxication. This section will teach you the secrets to these unsolved mysteries. A final chapter in this section will give you immediate help for acute situations. It includes a practical guide to self-help at home for such situations as delivery, post-operative care, sunburns and how to help your children get through their difficult growing up years without lasting damage.

When, with the help of this book, you have finally achieved balance in your life, it would be neglectful on my part not to teach you the methods to reach peak energy and strength in your life. That's what Section Five is all about. The result: the sky is the limit!!

This book will bring to you, the patient, the message that you are the employer of your health care provider. You are hiring a doctor for his or her services, and it is the doctor's duty to educate you so that you can take an active role in your own health. If you become a partner in your own health care as a result of this book, then my message has been successful. It is my hope that this book will give hope to millions of sufferers. May the encounter with new medicines put you on the road to a healthy, fulfilling life.



Luc De Schepper

[Human Condition: Critical](#)

216 pages, pb
publication 1993



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