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In August, *The Journal of Family Practice* published an article called, "Dangers of Colon Cleansing" that received a lot of national attention. The Global Professional Association for Colon Therapy (GPACT), which is an alliance of colon-cleanse supporters, submitted a rebuttal and *The Journal of Family Practice* printed it this week. The rebuttal was written by Melisa Bunderson-Schelvan, PhD, the scientific liaison for GPACT.

The letter is in the October 2011 issue, Vol. 60, No. 10: 573, and states:

"As a scientist and certified colon therapist with a colon hydrotherapy practice, I was concerned by the lack of objectivity in your recent article, "The dangers of colon cleansing" (J Fam Pract. 2011;60:454-457). The authors cited literature describing adverse effects associated with common laxative preparations used prior to colonoscopy exams, such as oral sodium phosphate or polyethylene glycol, but neither one is generally used by patients looking to colon cleanse to "enhance their well-being."

Ironically, the use of colon hydrotherapy is growing in popularity as an alternative to these laxatives for colonoscopy prep,¹ yet the authors made no mention of this.

The article also contained jumps in logic that misrepresent colon cleansing in general, and colon hydrotherapy in particular. For example, the first case study involved a 31-year-old with Crohn's disease—a specific contraindication for colon therapy. Therapists certified by the Global Professional Association for Colon Therapy are taught to give extensive health background questionnaires before administering colon hydrotherapy, so it is difficult to determine whether the therapist or the patient was at fault for failure to disclose her health status. Other case reports the authors cited described isolated events that either involved people who already had severe health problems or could not be attributed to colon hydrotherapy with certainty.

There are risks inherent in most, if not all, medical treatments, whether given by an allopathic doctor or an alternative health practitioner.

While there is no denying the paucity of studies on the potential benefits of colonic irrigation, it is unfortunate that the authors chose to omit the few studies that have been conducted. One study found that daily water irrigations in patients who underwent sigmoidostomies for rectal cancer were not associated with alterations in the colonic mucosa structure.² Others determined that colonic irrigation was an effective alternative for the treatment of persistent fecal incontinence after dynamic graciloplasty³ and low anterior resection for a rectal carcinoma.⁴ In addition, the potential benefits of colonic irrigation have been shown in rats following the induction of pancreatitis by intraduodenal injection of sodium taurocholate.⁵

There are inherent risks to most, if not all, medical treatments, whether given by an allopathic doctor or alternative health practitioner. However, the huge number of colon hydrotherapy sessions performed worldwide has resulted in a vast database of testimonials to the positive effects of this therapy.

-Melisa Bunderson-Schelvan, PhD

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