

Geopathic stress

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The idea of stress as a factor in ill health is now widely accepted and the effects on the body are relatively well-documented. The true range of the causes is not so much in evidence. Geopathic stress as a causal link to ill health is usually ignored as most people are unaware of its presence. This article explores the concept of geopathic stress, its effect on the environment and the implications of this for the individual's healing process. It is argued that geopathic stress can undermine both the body's subtle energy system (the etheric body, chakras and meridians) and the body's electrical system (brain, heart and muscles), thus delaying healing and recovery. A challenge is made to all health-care professionals who are dedicated to the development of holistic care to further their understanding and awareness of this phenomenon.

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'geopathic' is derived from two Greek words: geo, meaning 'of the earth' and pathos, meaning 'suffering' or 'disease'. The literal meaning of the word geopathic is suffering or disease from the earth. Geopathic stress is the general term used for energies emanating from the earth which may cause ill health in human beings. Interest in geopathic stress first arose in Germany in the 1920s. Gustav Von Pohl (1993), building on earlier studies in Stuttgart, found a causal link between areas with a high incidence of cancer cases and geological faults. Until recently, much of the research in this area had been carried out on the continent. However, in 1989, Powerwatch UK was formed in this country, as an opposition group to the building of large electricity substations. Stress from electricity substations can travel down geopathic stress lines and geopathic stress can propagate down power lines and railway lines. Since the setting up of this group, the negative effects of electricity substations have reached the media's attention and the group now coordinates a strategic nationwide approach to the health hazards of electromagnetic fields. What is known about geopathic stress and electromagnetic fields and what, if any, are the implications of geopathic stress for the caring professions and healing environments?

GEOPATHIC ENERGY

The earth has a natural magnetic field. As the earth rotates, it acts as if it has a big magnet at its centre, creating electric currents in the molten metals found within the earth's core. Through this activity, a magnetic field is produced. Human beings, animals and plants have evolved and are accustomed to living

with this magnetic field as a backdrop. Indeed, it is thought that many mammals and animals use the energy of the magnetic field for migration and navigation purposes. The magnetic field is dynamic, constantly changing with the natural variations of the earth's rotation, i.e. the seasons and weather conditions. Electromagnetic radiation is also part of man's environment. The electromagnetic spectrum is vast and includes sunlight, radiowaves and microwaves.

Geopathic and electromagnetic energies cannot be seen and, as yet, their effects on humans are not adequately explained in scientific terms. There is little doubt about the positive effects that electromagnetic radiation has had on human health. We know, for example, that a major benefit of sunlight is photosynthesis; it assists in the production of vitamin D and without electromagnetic radiation we would not have the benefit of x-rays and electricity. However, these energies can also have a detrimental effect on our health. As they hold no boundaries, they can pass through windows, doors, walls and body tissues. The risks from overexposure to x-rays and sunlight are now well known and individuals are advised on protective measures. However, it is not just sunlight and x-rays that can cause a deterioration in health. The human body can act as a receiver for electromagnetic waves. Amidst much scepticism and debate, research studies have demonstrated that constant exposure to electrical emissions has a negative effect on human health. It has been reported that living close to power lines can cause or exacerbate headaches, depression, allergies, anxiety, irritability and may even lead to fetal difficulties, increased tumour growth or cancer (National Radiological Protection Board 1992). Electricity that has such a negative effect on the body is referred to as electromagnetic pollution. Electromagnetic pollution does

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not just come from living close to power lines; the average person is exposed to this type of pollution every day through television sets, microwaves and computers. When the body is already stressed by the effects of electromagnetic pollution, it is also more susceptible to geopathic stress (Thurnell-Read 1995).

Geopathic stress occurs as a result of disturbances in the earth's magnetic field. These can occur either through natural disturbances such as geological faults and underground water, or through man-made disturbances. Examples of man-made disturbances include underground transport systems, mining, public utilities and ley lines. Ley lines are usually recognized as a man-made phenomenon. Ley lines occur where sacred stones (stones that have been energetically charged) are laid in a straight line. Like electromagnetic pollution, there is much scepticism from the scientists as to whether or not geopathic stress actually causes illness. However, it is thought that it can undermine the body's natural defences (Thurnell-Read 1995). The body is affected both through its subtle energy system and its own electrical system.

THE BODY'S ENERGY SYSTEMS

The concept of the body's subtle energy system is well established in Eastern Philosophy. The energy, which is believed to be absorbed through the acupuncture meridian lines, is known as ch'i in Chinese thought. This ch'i energy is seen as the basis of the life-force. The meridian lines are electromagnetic in nature and are therefore vulnerable to disturbance by other electromagnetic energies. It is believed that these meridians form the interface between the physical and the other subtle bodies: the etheric body, the spiritual body and the emotional body. These subtle bodies are connected to the physical body through the chakra system and it is suggested that the chakras facilitate the change of energy into forms which allow the different subtle bodies to interact. When this system is interfered with by electromagnetic and geopathic energies, essential energy connections between the subtle bodies may not occur, leaving the physical body prone to illness (Gerber 1988). At the physical level, geopathic stress can also interfere with the body's own electrical system. Many bodily processes are electrical, including vital messages from the brain to the cells and the electrical impulse that maintains the heartbeat. These sensitive systems can be disturbed by outer magnetic fields: it is a fact that a high-voltage electric shock can cause the heart to stop beating. But what of the effect of the more subtle electrical processes on the body? All bodily fluids are good electrical conductors and some writers have commented on the effect of this on cellular renewal and bodily organs (Chopra 1990, Gerber 1988). Thurnell-Read (1995) states that geopathic stress

can cause illness by bringing out any underlying weak point in the body. This has implications for us all, but especially for patients who, when hospitalized, are exposed not only to large amounts of electrical emissions, but may also be in an area prone to geopathic stress. Some beds in hospitals may be located over geopathic stress zones, impacting the healing and mortality rate in these beds. Furthermore, hospitalized patients usually have already weakened defences.

HOSPITALS AS HEALING ENVIRONMENTS

Biley (1996) wrote in a recent article, 'get the environment right and the patients will start to heal themselves'. Given the previous discussion, it is not just a matter of improving the design of the hospital. Rather, we need to pay attention to both internal and external factors, including the location of healing environments. As previously identified, geopathic and electromagnetic energies pass through walls, doors and buildings. Things suffer as a person would; buildings may be sick, broken and dying (Moore 1992). This, in turn, has an impact on the people within the buildings.

SICK BUILDINGS?

Sick-building syndrome is a contemporary health problem of serious magnitude which is thought to affect thousands of workers on a daily basis. Research studies have highlighted a number of factors that may be implicated in the development of sick-building syndrome. These include ventilation systems, light intensity (both of which require electrical emission), carpeting and tobacco smoke (Morrow 1992, Bachmann 1995). However, Morrow (1992) suggests that it is likely that the development and persistence of sick-building syndrome is not caused solely by the internal characteristics of the building. The relationship between the building and the external environment also needs to be considered as a variable. Reported symptoms of sick-building syndrome include such complaints as anxiety and irritability, increased stress levels, headaches, allergic reactions and mucosal irritation (Soine 1995).

These are similar symptoms to the effects of exposure to electromagnetic emissions. Studies have also noted that women's health is much more likely to be threatened by sick-building syndrome (Soine 1995, Stenberg & Wall 1995). Given that nursing is still predominantly a female profession, it would be interesting to explore these factors in more detail. However, this article is more concerned with the potential threat to the patients' well-being. The age-old saying 'hospitals are no place for sick people' comes to mind.

As carers, we cannot afford to ignore the dimensions that our senses cannot perceive.

Thurnell-Read (1995) states:

Patients in hospital beds where geopathic stress is a problem are likely to suffer more post operative complications and take longer to get well . . . geopathic stress can undermine the patients energy and sleep patterns thus delaying their recovery.

It is obviously not feasible to suggest that hospitals are relocated to areas of low electromagnetic pollution and geopathic stress, although, economically, if patients' healing is improved and staff sickness reduced, then there may be arguments for that. However, with the high level of electromagnetic waves being used within hospital departments, such as X-rays, radiotherapy, theatres, intensive care, CSSD and kitchens, attention should be paid to some simple corrective techniques.

DETECTION AND CORRECTION

Areas of negative geopathic stress can be detected through kinesiology (muscle testing), dowsing (using rods or pendulums), through sensing (psychic responses) or through observing animal behaviour. Once areas of negative energy have been detected, there are several methods of correcting the effect on the environment and, subsequently, the patient's health. One straightforward solution is to move the patient's bed and relocate areas of therapeutic importance within departments where possible. Feng shui is another useful way of correcting negative energy: it attempts to harmonize the energy of buildings and landscapes. The concept of ch'i is central to the practice of Feng shui, as the Feng shui expert concentrates on enabling the free flow of ch'i through the environment (Rossbach 1992). Mirrors can be placed to reflect the negative energy, thereby cancelling out the charge. Colours can also be used as corrective measures as they are related to the wavelength of light waves. Gemstones can be placed in areas of geopathic fault. Magnets are another possible solution, redirecting the electromagnetic energy away from susceptible persons.

CONCLUSION

The concepts of geopathic stress and electromagnetic pollution challenge our understanding of how the body interacts with the environment. We are more than just a physical body, we are also all that we cannot see; that is the energy known as the subtle bodies. As carers, we cannot afford to ignore the dimensions that our senses cannot perceive. Working towards a holistic model of healing means being open to and inviting further understanding and knowledge with regard to such phenomena. Consideration must also be given as to how these phenomena affect the body's own energy systems, including the subtle bodies, ch'i and the chakras. As Thurnell-Read (1995) warns:

We have an energy presence that can be disturbed by other energy presences, and we ignore this fact at our peril.

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The one real object of education is to have a person in the condition of continually asking questions.

(Bishop Mandell Creighton)