

Naturopathic Theory: Emunctory Theory

Origin

The theory of emunctories outlines that in order to initiate health you first need to eliminate the toxic substances stored in the body by stimulating the emunctory pathways. The idea that toxins within the body were a cause of diseases was reinforced by the work of Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland⁽⁹³⁾, Samuel Thomson,⁽⁹⁴⁾ Johann Schroth,⁽⁹⁵⁾ Vincent Priessnitz,⁽⁹⁶⁾ Louis Kuhne⁽⁹⁷⁾, John Henry Tilden⁽⁶³⁾ and the Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine project.⁽⁹⁸⁾ (see the section contributors).

Description

The Emunctory Theory states that proper elimination of toxins is essential to overall health. Eliminating toxins is often the first required treatment focus, especially for chronic disease. Elimination of toxins assists vitality and its corollary; lack of elimination blocks vitality or vital force.

The primary emunctory pathways include the lungs (breath), kidneys (urine), bowels (stool), skin (sweating). Menses/ejaculation and voice (speaking)⁽⁸⁾.

Secondary emunctory pathways include all other ways that the body excretes toxins include nasal discharge, eye discharge, skin eruptions, etc.

Part of the naturopathic assessment involves determining the effectiveness of the emunctory pathways. A clean, healthy diet and adequate water are essential, but treatment must also activate and normalize emunctories functions with the naturopathic application of nutritious foods, hydration, herbs, hydrotherapy, tissue salts, cupping, open skin treatments, lymph drainage, etc.

The organism will use the pathways of elimination or emunctories that are more available, and this, in turn in Naturopathic practice we use the routes of elimination that are more available. For example, we will always use at least two emissaries skin and the other (lung, kidney-bladder, large intestines).

Contributions to the Emunctory Theory

Recognizing the importance of eliminating toxins has been discussed over the centuries. Below are a few of the practitioners that stressed the importance of eliminating toxins and that added to the Emunctory Theory:

- **Prieto's (1927-1994) Principle of Selective Elimination** All harmful substances that are introduced into the living environment are neutralized and eliminated by the pathways and in such a way as to produce minimal wear on the body.⁽⁹³⁾
- **Hufeland (1762-1836)** writes in his book "Lehrbuch der Allgemeinen Heilkunde"⁽⁵⁴⁾ about emunctories intestine, skin, mucosa, kidneys and lungs, that to organize secretions through these organs is one of the most important parts of practical medicine.
- **Samuel Thomson (1769-1843)** was an American Botanist. He described the following theories about emunctories and toxins: detox and elimination as one important health path; using plants and bathes to detox through emunctories.⁽⁹⁴⁾
- **Johann Schroth (1798-1856)**, an Austrian Naturopath, opened with the sanatorium in Lindewiese and Gräfenberg one of the first therapeutic centers of detoxifying cures with herbs, nutrition and whole body wraps, which are known until today.⁽⁹⁵⁾
- **Vincent Priessnitz (1799-1851)** was an Austrian farmer and naturopath. He stated that all diseases that are not caused by accidents, are originated from strange substances or bad moods and further he stated: no effective cure can be done without the expulsion of morbid substances from the body. The main expulsion was the way through the skin by applying hydrotherapy. One other theory of Priessnitz was that the skin, that covers our body, is one of the most important organs (emunctories) whose normal activity is essential for the maintenance or recovery of health.⁽⁹⁶⁾
- **Louis Kuhne (1835-1901)**, a German Naturopath, stated that every disease is caused by toxins that are not eliminated.⁽⁹⁹⁾

- **John Henry Tilden** (1851-1940) was an American medical doctor and known as the representative of toxaemia. He said that diseases are caused by toxins in the blood. In his view, each disease is an effort by nature to eliminate toxins through emunctories.⁽⁶³⁾

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