If you’re a regular reader of the blog on Randi.org, you’ve probably already heard about Dr. Andrew Weil. He is yet another Dr. Oz, Dr. Chopra, or Dr. Mercola, and he has often earned himself a dishonorable mention on Science-Based Medicine. If you still don’t know him, these book titles may give you an idea of his leanings: *Spontaneous Healing*, *Spontaneous Happiness*, *Life is Your Best Medicine*, *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health* and, *Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing*.

Weil is a proponent of “Integrative Medicine”, which is reminiscent of the push to rebrand “Creationism” as “Intelligent Design”; “Integrative” is a clear move away from the stigmatized “Alternative” and “Complementary”. Weil is the founder and director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. His institute offers courses to medical students in Ayurvedic medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, reflexology, traditional Chinese medicine and osteopathy.[1] Weil reports that the Center has already graduated over 1000 students.

I recently attended his seminar in Denver, but the topic was TBA. He had advertised widely as an “internationally recognized health expert”, charging entry at $30-$100 per ticket, but there was no talk title, and no blurb. Even still, he had a sizeable turnout. All was revealed when Weil was introduced to the audience. We were informed that he would be opening a restaurant in Denver in late October. The forthcoming True Food Kitchen will be the sixth of its kind, with other chains in California and Arizona.

Weil is a marketing mogul, with a wide range of products for your “Weil being”. Weil by Nature’s Path is his own brand of health food bars, chock-full of chia seeds and goji berries. He has his own brand of shoes because “our feet are our connection to the earth.” Dr. Weil’s Integrative Footwear features mules, clogs and loafers with names like “Wisdom”, “Mystic” and “Spirit”. He has a line of skin care, Dr. Andrew Weil for Origins. These products contain the key ingredients turmeric and his “mega mushroom” blend (which are reputedly full of irritants and don’t live up to their miraculous claims).[2] Now he’s in the restaurant business. True Food Kitchens serve foods from Weil’s anti-inflammatory diet, as promoted in his new book *True Food: Seasonal, Sustainable, Simple, Pure.*
However, his diet is just another take on the food guide pyramid (that again shows Weil’s predilection for mushrooms, allowing “unlimited amounts” of cooked Asian mushrooms.)

The basis for Dr. Andrew Weil's anti-inflammatory diet isn't meant to deprive a healthy body of great flavors, it's meant to take popular trends in cuisine and pair them with healthy living. Try the kale and quinoa, you'll live longer. Drink the seabuckthorn and acai, you'll feel better. At True Food Kitchen, we want you to feel better, live longer, and make your mouth happy in the process.[3]

At his seminar, Weil stumbled out on stage. He was hobbled over, flabby, and he looked as though he was in pain. He coughed throughout the performance. He was hardly a picture of health for a talk about health, although the talk was an afterthought. Weil waxed freeform about nutrition, healthy aging and breathing. When he stuck to medicine, he made some sense, offering some sensible advice about preventative healthcare, nutrition, and exercise. But the "devil" mixes lies with truth. As Bob Carroll says, "The appeal of Weil's integrative medicine is that he mixes sound scientific knowledge and advice with illogical hearsay."[4]

Clearly unprepared for the evening, Weil ended with a Q&A in which he showed his true colors. He spoke about how acupuncture should be part of everyone's health regime, as well as supplements and organic foods. In conclusion, he spoke about the evils of fruit drinks and coffee. Ironically, half of the True Food Kitchen menu offers coffee and fancy fruit juice drinks, with a surprisingly large range of wine, beer and fruity cocktails for a health food restaurant.

Weil's seminar was just an infomercial for his new restaurant. Actually, the menu looks quite appetizing, if you want to pay $14 for a salad, and $4 for a latte.

References

1. Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona http://integrativemedicine.arizona.edu/

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3. True Food Kitchen. http://truefoodkitchen.com/restaurants/true-food-kitchen/

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Dr. Karen Stollznow is a linguist, author, skeptical paranormal investigator and a research fellow for the James Randi Foundation. You can follow Karen on Twitter here .