

## Once More Unto the Breach, Dear Friends, Once More...

Written by James Randi  
Monday, 07 September 2009 00:00

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Please forgive me if I hammer once again at this theme, but I see that just this month, the prestigious Mayo Clinic has issued a lengthy report that stresses the importance of not accepting "alternative medicine treatments ranging from herbal remedies to acupuncture" simply because they have become more popular and offer more options, cautioning that these treatments aren't always proven safe or effective. The report asks that people "Be open-minded yet skeptical of medical claims." While I certainly agree with this advice, and it's stated in an appropriately caring, polite, and skeptical fashion, I'm somewhat alarmed to see that the report also contains:

With any alternative treatment you consider, find out if the potential benefits outweigh the risks. It's a good idea to talk to your doctor and do research on your own before trying any treatment.

With due deference to the authority of the Mayo Clinic, I will state that I have met - quite recently - fully-qualified, licensed, practicing physicians who have endorsed or at least tolerated various aspects of quackery - especially acupuncture. Though innocently presented, such professional opinions originate in benign ignorance. Never assume malice when incompetence will do.

One of the references at the end of the report - at [tinyurl.com/mqsfgs](http://tinyurl.com/mqsfgs) - bearing the same respected *imprimatur* of the Mayo Clinic, repeats the same ragged almost-endorsements of acupuncture that I've found all through the "orthodox" outlets of the medical profession, a seeming reluctance to call nonsense by its proper name for fear of being rude. Duh. These deluded quacks don't deserve *any* courtesy, consideration, or sympathy, and no matter whether they devoutly follow medieval Chinese or Indian mythology, or have developed their own cute variations of the idiocy, they are dangerous people.

What irritates me most about this situation, is that endless tests of acupuncture have been done, all over the globe, and the notion has failed, and failed again, to pass those tests. It seems to me that the Mayo Clinic - and Sloan Kettering, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, National Institutes of Health - *have the financial and technical means* to conduct a proper, thorough, extensive, definitive, comprehensive, test to determine whether acupuncture actually works, or not. *It can be done*, and though it could add the quacks to the ranks of the unemployed, it would provide rational people with a standard to which they could refer. Hey, it was done with the practice of blood-letting, so

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why can't it be done with this variety of wrong thinking?

This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, not the 14<sup>th</sup>...