

Rationality and irrationality in ryke geerd hamer's system for treatment of metastatic cancer revisited

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to take into consideration the critique that met our first paper on Ryke Geerd Hamer's work. In that paper we examined the "five medical laws" found by the German physician Ryke Geerd Hamer and found that the first two were substantiated by contemporary holistic medical theory, while the last three were not substantiated. In the present paper we take into consideration the arguments presented against our analysis from Hamer and others. We conclude that our first analysis, in spite of being based on an incomplete reading of the sources, as most of them were in German, still seems to be accurate. We have met no arguments that can justify a shift in our position, either in the direction of giving more support to Hamer than admitting him two of five principles likely to be true, or in the direction of annulations of the given acknowledgment of the two first and most central principles of Hamer's medical system. We thus still expect Hamer's system to be efficient to some extent in helping patients with metastatic cancer to enter the state of existential healing called salutogenesis (possibly leading to survival and even "spontaneous remission" of cancer), but clinical testing of Hamer's approach is needed to take this exploration further.

Keywords: Quality of Life, QOL, human development, holistic medicine, cancer, spontaneous remission, alternative medicine, complementary medicine, holistic medicine, salutogenesis, consciousness-based medicine, Denmark.

Introduction

The aim of the first Hamer-paper (Ventegodt S, Andersen NJ, Merrick J. Rationality and irrationality in Ryke Geerd Hamer's system for holistic treatment of metastatic cancer. *ScientificWorldJournal* 2005;5:93-102) was to review from a theoretical perspective the Hamer system of cancer medicine (1-4), which he called "the new medicine" with the

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purpose to guide both the physician and the patient in the very difficult area of holistic treatment of cancer. We all want the best for our patients and we believe the solution is a wise combination of conventional and holistic therapies - in medicine in general and also in the treatment of cancer. We were not aware of the work by Ryke Geerd Hamer until his work was discussed at the First International Conference on Holistic Healthcare in Copenhagen, November 2004 in connection with the presentation of the first papers from our own holistic cancer healing project (5,6).

This presentation is a critical review of the arguments that met the first paper on Hamer. Our aim is to examine if the presented arguments have power to change our view on the medical principles found by Hamer. In the first paper we found that only the first two of what Hamer called his “medical laws” were substantiated by contemporary holistic medical theory.

It is no secret that our own research in clinical holistic medicine (5-62) the last decade has come to a modern synthesis that in many ways share similarities with the Hamer’s systems of cancer healing (comp. 1-4 with 5, 6) in spite of it developing completely separated from Hamer’s person or work. It might well be that we are to some extent positively biased towards Hamer’s work from this fact. But we still find ourselves to be sober and conscious scientists only looking for the truth in the service of our patients.

A critical review of the work of hamer

As it seems that Hamer has found something of meaning for many patients we found it of importance to understand how his problems with the academic society and “medical establishment” came about, since it seemed as if he was successful in many cases, highly loved and appreciated by thousands of his patients. Unfortunately, a Medline search (www.pubmed.gov) made before we wrote the first Hamer Paper showed a complete lack of clinical trials testing his method.

The Hamer “iron law of cancer”

Law number 1

Hamer claimed that all cancer forms arise from an emotional and “biological” shock (1, page 12), causing the patient to retract from the world with a destructive resignation regarding his fundamental wishes. He stresses that this shock must go so deep that it influences the whole biology of the patient’s organism and it must go deeper into existence than just the mind. Interestingly, this law is consistent with both Antonovsky’s work on coherence (7-12) and on our own life mission theory (14-21), which explains development of non-genetic and non-traumatic disease in general and in the same way. Unfortunately Hamer insists that there is no genetic causes of cancer and that no drug can cause cancer either (1, page 49-54). In his radical insistence on an all-psychological approach Hamer intimidates a generation of physicians doing research in genetics and the toxicological dangers of smoking. Nevertheless, his “Iron law of cancer” stating the psychosomatic element seems to be basically in accordance with the works of Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994), Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) and our own work in holistic medicine. From a theoretical perspective we therefore conclude that Hamer’s first law of cancer is substantiated.

Interestingly, the process of healing according to Hamer, includes a period called the “epileptoform crises” (analogous to an epileptic attack with muscle spasms), where the patient spontaneously regresses to the trauma to integrate this crisis (22). Only after this incident of healing the patient will improve (1, page 20). It is most noteworthy that Hamer observed, that the crisis must be sufficiently strong, for the patient to heal (1, page 21). What Hamer describe here is exactly the same process of healing as described in most work with holistic healing of the patient’s whole existence, improving health, quality of life and ability in general, as explained by the Antonovsky’s concept of salutogenesis and the holistic process theory of healing (7-12,22,23).

The fundamental understanding of the psychosomatic cause of cancer and the ability to win the patient’s trust and take them into the process of holistic healing of life and existence might very well

explain, why Hamer's clinical work has been successful for his patients. Claiming that traumas can produce cancer, we can also with our present knowledge comprehend, but also understand why he was not well understood and received 20 years ago. As a hypothesis for further research we would like to see this simple and somewhat provocative statement of Hamer expressed in a little more complex and deeper rooted way to embrace a better understanding of human consciousness (24-31). Only after decades of theoretical work and only after we recently have been able to induce similar healing processes with cancer patients in our own research clinic, have we been able to accept and understand the controversial first law of Hamer.

Law number 2: Every disease has a pathogenetic and salutogenetic phase

Unfortunately Hamer did not know about the work of Aaron Antonovsky (7-12), who at the same time did his clinical work and constructed his theory of salutogenesis. Antonovsky simply explained what Hamer observed, making the process of healing the reverse process of the process of pathogenesis (getting sick). His understanding of pain seems also to be in accordance with the contemporary understanding of pain, physically, emotionally and existentially, as a necessary part of the process of healing (1, page 56). Most importantly, Hamer stressed the importance of solving existential problems in real life, not only in the psyche (1, page 20). Understanding the process of healing and being able to take the patient into the process is really what makes a good holistic physician. From the success of Hamer with his patients, it seems he was able to do this.

Law number 3: Cancer development follows a simple system of symbolic transformation from psyche to brain and the organs of the body

Many holistic physicians and some of the very popular health prophets of our time, like Louise Hay (32), have claimed the existence of such simple systems, which can be used to read the mental and spiritual cause of a physical disease. Unfortunately we

have not yet seen such a system. Quite on the contrary it seems from our research that repressed emotional problems can be moved around in the body and resettle wherever it is most convenient for the organism. The chronic state of whiplash associated disorder is an example of this (33).

So law number 3, which Hamer gives phylogenetic and ontogenetic arguments for, seems from our present state of knowledge to be less accurate. Still there might be a considerable symbolic element in the disease making the patients able to "listen to the body", but not as schematic as Hamer believed, although we must admit that there could actually be such a symbolic psychosomatic system working in our organism, only with a more complex and not yet discovered set of rules. This is also an important hypothesis for further research.

Law number 4: Bacteria and virus are controlled by the body and helps the body in the process of healing

This law seems in complete contradiction with our present knowledge of immunology, so it is not likely to be true in our opinion. The reason for this understanding seems to be the benefit for the patient of going deeply into the salutogenic crisis, which often takes so many resources from the patient, that (s)he will get an opportunistic infection.

Law number 5: All diseases are rational and for the benefit of the patients

Hamer argues thus from an evolutionary and possibly teleological perspective. We have not found contemporary knowledge to support this law.

Critique on our first paper on Hamer

Hamer gave critique on the ScientificWorld Journalblog on our first Hamer-paper and other people were also active in this regard. Hamer presented several arguments (posted on the blog 30 May 2007), which we will go through:

Argument A: "... German New Medicine [or GNM, the name of Hamer's system] has three further biological natural laws [besides the two that we have acknowledged in the first paper as likely to be true] that logically derive from the first two natural laws."

RE argument A: We did not find argument A valid, as we cannot see how law 3-5 can possibly follow from law 1 and 2. The principles are not related.

Argument B: "Any competent radiologist with CT equipment can establish within a few minutes what is a Hamer focus in conflict activity and what is an artefact (they too exist, after all). All he would need to do is to shift the patient's head 5 cm from the center line of the apparatus. An artefact always stays in the middle line of the apparatus and shows through all layers. The Hamer focus on the other hand always remains at the specific brain location where it biologically belongs."

RE argument B: If Hamer is correct in his observation he might be right. We found this most unlikely. However this can be tested empirically, which is fine. We do not believe that geometrically perfect round circles are present in nature, and thus they must be artefacts.

Argument C: "...that something is wrong with the figure of 6,000 survivors (of 6,500 patients) that had passed through the Burgau Centre. In the meantime, I have been fortunate to obtain copies of all patients' records from the Office of the District Attorney of Vienna Neustadt. It is absolutely correct that more than 90% of the desperately ill patients survived 4-5 years. By myself I surely could never have verified this."

RE: Argument C: This is very interesting data; normally patients with metastatic cancer do not survive for so many years; mean survival time is for most metastatic cancers less than two years and often only a few month. But the diagnosis and prognosis for patients not having been through the Hamer cure should be compared for control. Hamer is not doing that systematically, so even if the data were accurate we still miss the compelling data that could prove his cure to actually work. However if the case records exist this can be tested empirically. We request Hamer to publish a more detailed analysis of these interesting data.

Argument D: "Aaron Antonovsky published already in 1985 (four years after Hamer's first presentation of his ideas and one year after the book "Cancer. Disease of the soul", 1984) his Pathogenesis and Salutogenesis - and that this should be considered contemporary with Hamer."

RE *Argument D.* We believe that Aaron Antonovsky presented the basic core of his idea of salutogenesis already in the 1960s and early 1970s (63,64). So it seems to us that Hamer might have caught some of his ideas from Antonovsky, most likely in an indirect way, as it seems that he has been unaware of the principles of holistic healing already being discovered by other researchers. It is quite normal that scientific principles are discovered many places in the same time, because the time is "ripe" for these discoveries. All pioneers often believe themselves to have invented the general principles.

Argument E: "It is also an indecency trying to indiscriminately throw German New Medicine into the same pot with so-called holistic or complementary medicine, using the rationale: "... it has so many aspects [of it] in accordance with established knowledge of holistic and complementary medicine". You simply cannot mix these, doing this is in fact very dangerous for the patients! "German New Medicine" has existed for the past 26 years and so far it has been officially and publicly verified 30 times. It is a coherent and logical system that comprises not a single hypothesis and it is, for all intents and purposes, in itself complete. One should really no longer doubt that German New Medicine is scientifically accurate."

RE *argument E.* We did not in Medline or PubMed find any of these verifications, so we cannot acknowledge these as they are seemingly not published in accredited, peer-reviewed journals. There might be valid studies in German, but we cannot read them and Hamer is not providing us with sources. Why Hamer is denying that his system is rooted in holistic thought is a mystery for us.

Summary: We have not found any compelling reason for changing our views presented in our first Hamer paper in the above arguments presented by Ryke Geerd Hamer.

Some general remarks

We still believe that Hamer's contribution to our knowledge on holistic treatment of cancer might be important, and we are anxious to see Hamer's documentation, which we hope that he will present soon. We have tried our best to assume a neutral, objective and scientific position, just evaluating Hamer's work according to known theory and experience in the field of complementary and holistic medicine. We are happy to see that Hamer wrote: "I am neither racist nor anti-Semitic. I cannot be bribed. I am only the tribune of all patients - Jews and non-Jews alike." Because this is what medicine is about: helping our patients, not discrimination anybody for political, financial or other reasons.

We do in contrast to Hamer believe that it is a fact that cancer often spreads to other organs (metastize); but things are really not simple in medical science as every type of cancer has its own individual pattern of spreading to other organs. Why is this so? Till this day nobody seems to be able to explain that strange fact. So Hamer could be right to speculate, and he has his right to make an alternative hypothesis, even if it seems strange, controversial and hard to understand. What would science be without creativity and free thoughts unbound by rigid and traditional views?

Until we know for sure what is going on in the body and how it manage its biological information, it seems a little arrogant just to neglect even the strangest of hypotheses. And please remember that in science we often see that the strangest theory becomes truth in the end – just think of how Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein's strange ideas were received in the world of physicists in the last century.

It has been criticized that we used a book in Norwegian as basis for our first paper on Hamer. But the book was by Hamer on his medical principles; it is a collection of interviews made in a very smart, sober, scientific, and convincing way. It is short, crisp, and businesslike, and therefore good for scientific discussion and critique. It also seemed to us that there was at least some hard evidence that Hamer actually did help a certain (low) percentage of the cancer patients that came to him with metastatic cancer and no hope of cure. That finally convinced us to write the paper on Hamer.

As we are not perfect in the German language, we cannot do the extensive review of the Hamer-material that is needed to make a fair scientific evaluation of his scientific and clinical work. And maybe that is not our job either.

As the issue of complementary treatment of cancer seems really to interest and concern many people, we do hope that a competent person or group of people with an intimate understanding of both complementary and holistic medicine and the German language, will take the next step into shedding light into this complicated issue.

A historical remark

Until about 1900 organic chemistry had not been sufficiently developed to give us all the drugs we have today; the biochemical revolution during the 20th century gave us penicillin and receptor-specific designer drugs, and these drugs dramatically empowered the physician to significantly impact the state of health of the patient. So around 1950 most physicians came to believe that the psychological and social dimensions of medicine were of much less importance than biochemistry, when treating a patient. This caused a major shift in the focus of medical science, and medicine turned from being "holistic medicine" - looking at the person as a whole - into "biomedicine", treating with drugs. So from 1950 the medical faculties of the universities of the world almost abandoned psychosocial strategies and biomedicine was given all the prestige and money for research.

The priority of the money for research meant a slow scientific development of issues relevant for holistic medicine and holistic health awareness like psychosocial medicine, quality of life, and sense of coherence. Only around 1990-2000 we saw enough evidence gathered to document that lifestyle, health attitudes, happiness, and philosophy of life might be extremely important for a person's health. In this period the use of complementary and psychosocial medicine - now becoming "alternative" - simply exploded. Today there are more consultations with complementary medicine than biomedicine in the USA, and this development is also happening in Europe now.

But strong financial interests and a strong lobby have been allowing industry and industry-friendly people to impact the policymaking of many European governments. Recent laws have made many types of complementary medicine illegal - comp. the fight around homeopathy used today by more than 10% of the physicians of the planet. Its medical practitioners have in some cases been sent to jail, or have lost their license, or their jobs. One recent way that complementary medicine has been repressed is by demanding that treatment results must be documented in the same way as the pharmaceutical companies are documenting their results - that is controlling against placebo.

But as a psychosocial intervention mostly is sheer placebo - the positive effect of a shift in patient's consciousness towards being positive, constructive and present - this design is robbing the holistic medicine of its fruits. Testing homeopathy the way penicillin is tested is going to kill this old and noble art, as the developing a person's character - the essence of homeopathy in our understanding - is sheer placebo. But nevertheless it seems to be highly effective medicine and has been so since Hippocrates and his students introduced the scientific character-medicine 2,300 years ago. Most interestingly, the science of holistic medicine is now beginning to understand why this is so healthy to step into character as a person.

A note on scientific documentation of the effect of holistic medicine

To solve the problem of documenting the effect of holistic medicine our group has turned an old design for documenting the effect of a medical treatment - going back to Hahnemann and further back to Hippocrates - into science. We have called this method the "Square curve paradigm". The idea is that you measure the state of physical and mental health of a chronic patient - as this is experienced by the patient - before and after the treatment, and if there is a significant and positive difference i.e. a treatment effect, you measure the patient's state aging after one year or so. If the effect is still there - if the patient feels cured by your treatment - and if you agree as a doctor - you can say that you have helped

the patient. A temporary improvement is of little value, and an improvement that you appreciate as a doctor that is not appreciated much by the patient is of little value. We would personally like all kinds of medicine - biomedicine, holistic medicine, and complementary medicine - to be tested this way, using the patient's own experience of being cured as the key to documenting success of treatment. We really like the concept of evidence-based medicine very much - especially because we are working with holistic medicine, where every therapist seem to think that there own method is superior, while it often is not - because only by scientific investigation can we approach the truth in a useful manner.

A careful reader should notice that we disagree with Dr. Hamar on this important issue. We do take a critical position towards Dr. Hamer's work, but as we find so many aspects of it in accordance with established knowledge of holistic and complementary medicine, we do believe that his complementary system might actually be able to help some of his patients - which represents very important progress as most of his patients are metastatic cancer patients judged to be hopelessly sick by biomedicine. If that is the case - if he can cure some of these, even just a small fraction - we most definitely should acknowledge Dr. Hamer for this important step forward. It is so easy to give critique of a colleague trying out a new path, and we also do believe Dr. Hamar to be completely wrong in several of his assumptions. But without such pioneers as Dr. Hamar daring to learn from observing the unexpected and taking it to radical new thinking and further into models and new ways of treatment, the whole development of medical science would most certainly stop. Please read our paper again carefully, and let us know if there are some points where we go along with Dr. Hamar, where we should not have. We are eager to learn about any mistakes we might have made, and we do not believe that our paper on Dr. Hamer's work will be the final word.

The authors are in no way supporting any philosophically nor politically direction or fraction. But, it is important to differentiate between a man's scientific contribution and his political attitudes; if we only accepted scientific contributions from people who shared our view of the world, science could soon be a dull enterprise. Dr. Hamer has made an important

contribution to holistic medicine, because he seemingly has shown the world that even very sick cancer patients can sometimes be cured. We know of spontaneous remissions of cancer - many cases actually from Dr. Úlrik Dige's research in Denmark - but we do not yet know how to induce such remissions (please see 5,6). Dr. Hamer's work seems to point in this direction. When it comes to Dr. Hamer's merits, our paper on his work presents what we found of documentation for the efficiency of his cures. This was actually sufficiently convincing for us to bring it to a wider attention through our article. Our interpretation of the documented material is not quite as positive as Dr. Hamer's own view. Please go through the material yourself and see if you can find errors in our presentation of the data. We will be most happy to correct any errors or misunderstandings on our side.

Discussion

We have seen many arguments from both opponents and supporters of Hamer's work on the TSW-Hamer blog, but none of the arguments presented have made us change our position on Hamer. The arguments of Hamer himself need scientific support to be convincing; just stating the superiority of his system is not convincing by itself. There might actually be some convincing data in the case records referred to by Hamer, but we need a sober scientist, preferably a non-supporter and non-opponent of Hamer, to go through the material, if it is in fact available at all.

From a scientific point of view, Hamer's life and work is interesting and important for the development of scientific holistic medicine. Most of the problems of Hamer's work (seen from the written texts on his work only) has seemingly arisen from the way Hamer has structured his understanding into an idiosyncratic system of holistic healing with five fundamental "medical laws", intending to address the healing of the patient as a whole person, while healing spirit, mind and body at the same time. Some of these "medical laws" are in agreement with the theories acknowledged by modern holistic medicine, like the theory of coherence by Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994) explaining that health comes from re-establishing coherence (63-70). This is related to the

work and ideas of Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970) and Viktor Emil Frankl (1905-1997) and the most progressive resilience literature, as well as our own work, theory of the purpose of life and the life mission theory, explaining the cause of much suffering and disease from resignation of the purpose of life (13-21). The simple explanation is that we repress our deep wishes and needs - our self - to adapt to our early environment and our parents; when we do so to radically we accumulate vulnerability, which become an important co-factor in a later development of diseases like cancer. Other of medical principles Hamer identified and called "medical laws" unfortunately lacks the content and structure that is normally expected from medical science, as they do not acknowledge and incorporate the established knowledge of immunology, toxicology, and other medical fields.

While reading his book, it appears that Hamer was a truly holistic physician: "The most important of everything is that the patient...have obtained new understanding, deep trust in the physician and a real insight in what is going on" (1, page 45). Hamer has in his work used the well-known efficiency and healing power of first winning the trust of his patients and then letting the patient do the work of healing himself. From our perspective, built on many such meaningful statements, his widespread reputation and popularity among patients, Hamer was a great clinical physician. From our review of his writings it seems that he was not such so great on theory. The lack of an academically acceptable explanation for his work is really very sad. Had Hamer only known more of Hippocrates, the holistic medical history of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, he would have been much better off referring to these traditions instead of insisting on finding out everything for himself and making his own new system.

On the other hand, we need the wheel of medicine to be reinvented again and again to keep it fresh and useful for the patients of our time and in the actual cultural setting. Hamer has done this with great effort and with the intent to benefit his patients. Many of his patients have apparently rejected the help they could have gotten from conventional physicians, like chemotherapy and radiation therapy, and turned to Hamer, but that made him open for criticism by other physicians, who saw him as responsible for harming

these patients. What is stated by Hamer in his book (1) might very well be understood as a warning to the patients towards his biomedical colleagues and thus he might actually be responsible for inspiring some patients to choose not to accept a documented cure and thus, if not cured by Hamer, dying in spite of the existence of a cure.

We believe that an adult patient must be respected for his autonomy and integrity, but at the same time a physician must do whatever he can to convince the patient to accept the most rational treatment. When it comes to metastatic cancer, the problem is that there often is very little to do, which has a documented clinical significant effect, the NNT (numbers needed to treat) to obtain an effect going up to between 10 to 20 (6,13). Patient autonomy must therefore from a medical ethical perspective be stressed more and the paternalistic position of the physician stressed less. Still, if we as physicians can understand the Hamer system and give advise to the patients about this system, we will be able to form a good dialogue with the autonomous and often desperate cancer patient.

We have in the present work no intention of testing the Hamer system clinically, but only to analyse it from a theoretical point of view. We wanted to compare the Hamer system with contemporary theoretical holistic medicine, to see what in his system must be acknowledged as true and valuable insight into the mechanism of holistic health and healing and what must be seen as not true (from our present state of knowledge).

A deeper theoretical understanding of holistic medicine in the future might show that this analysis is unjust to Hamer's system. To make it simple we have chosen to build this paper on a small book based on interviews with Hamer called "Cancer. The riddle that does not exist" (1), instead of on the very comprehensive and complex presentations (2-4) of his work. We believe that an analysis of the five principles or "medical laws" presented as the fundamentals of his holistic system of healing is sufficient for establishing the theoretical value of the Hamer system. In this paper we use our own wordings of Hamer's last four "medical laws", not to confuse the subject with the many idiosyncratic concepts of Hamer.

Ryke Geerd Hamer wanted his peers to acknowledge his discoveries as hard science. He therefore used the CT-scanner to make images of the brain and found that circular patterns (well-known as artefacts from the CT-scanner) carry vital information on the process of disease and healing. After studying the patterns for years, he claimed that visual pattern, which he then called the "Hamer Herd" or "Hamer focus" (the German word "herd" means "hearth", the central place of fire in the house) was always present in the CT scan of a cancer patient's brain in the pathogenic phase, revealing the path to healing for this patient. The Hamer focus looks like concentric circles around the part of the brain that in Hamer's interpretation represented the sick organ.

There is a slight possibility that the Hamer focus is actually a great new scientific discovery. It is though much more likely to be an artefact, which Hamer in lack of other hard evidence of his theory (which he desperately needed to get his position back in the medical society) gave too much importance. Unfortunately we do not have the resources necessary to test this part of Hamer's work. The concentric circles in the Hamer focus, shown on the front page of his book (1), looks like an artefact and very little as a biological phenomena, which in humans are almost never seen as concentric circles. If the centre of the phenomena actually is placed in the brain according to the system Hamer's described, this must be given further analysis.

The way we recommend holistic medicine to be practiced and understood (5-52), the use of CT scans and other high tech tools are not necessary, as the direct communication and emotional contact with the patient gives all the necessary information for the anamnesis and treatment. One of Hamer's mistakes, in our opinion, might have been to connect what seems to be an important re-discovery of the Hippocratic tradition of holistic treatment used on cancer patients, with the CT-scan picture, which made it very easy for his peers to ridicule his "spiritistic readings" of the CT- images.

The most problematic consequence of this attachment to his third law and the CT scans was his belief that cancers were not able to metastasise (1, page 47). He believed that metastases were new cancers developed by the new shocks patients received, when they encountered biomedicine. This

conviction made him highly unpopular with many biomedically-oriented oncologists (cancer physicians), because it made many of his believers avoid the conventional physicians. Our own position is the opposite and we believe that the modern holistic medicine should acknowledge the well-documented and sad fact that cancers do metastasise, often with the death of the patient as a consequence.

It seems to us that Hamer was too little rooted in the science of biology to make sufficient theories of the highly dynamic picture of cancer he experienced in his clinical practice. On the other hand biology definitely needs an upgrade to embrace this dynamics (53,62), as already stressed by big thinkers like Nobel laureate (in 1933) Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961)(63). Our review of the work of Hamer came to the same conclusion as the Swiss Study Group for Complementary and Alternative Methods in Cancer (SCAC) (64), who found no evidence that most of his assertions were correct, no case of a cure has been published, and an investigation by Der Spiegel through the German authorities identified 50 cancer patients that had been in the care of Hamer and only seven survived (56). Still we find that when treated only with psychosocial intervention a success rate of 15% with this group of mortally ill metastatic cancer patients is remarkable and encouraging for further research.

Conclusions

Ryke Geerd Hamer has for decades been a controversial figure with the claim that cancer was a simple thing to heal with holistic medicine. He gave his peers grey hair, because of his reference to his five "medical laws", most of which were not substantiated, and some of which were in direct conflict with existing medical theory and knowledge. It is pretty clear from our analysis, though, that the two most fundamental principles of Hamer's work, the principle of psychosomatically caused vulnerability ("The Iron law of cancer", Hamer's first "law"), and the principle of salutogenesis as the reverse of pathogenesis (Hamer's "second law"), are established principles of holistic medicine, worded nicely by the Jewish thinker Aaron Antonovsky, but in reality going all the way back to the father of medicine Hippocrates (71).

Hamer's understanding of symbols in medicine, on virus and bacteria and on the evolutionary process itself differs a great deal from traditional science and we cannot in contemporary holistic medical theory find support for his last three principles or "medical laws". As Hamer's understanding of cancer metastasis was built on these failing principles, we suggest that this aspect of Hamer's thinking is also not substantiated.

Altogether it seems that Hamer is in accordance with contemporary holistic medical theory. Regarding the most fundamental postulate that cancer patients can be healed by his system of holistic medicine, we believe this could actually be the case for some of the motivated patients. This must however be tested scientifically, before being accepted. If proven, we must recommend a rehabilitation of the name and work of Ryke Geerd Hamer. Clinical testing of a cure for cancer based on Hamer's system must be considered worth the effort; it must be done with physicians trained by Hamer if at all possible.

At the Research Clinic for Holistic Medicine in Copenhagen we do clinical research to understand how to use the first two established "laws of cancer", namely that we are often damaged by emotionally painful life-events making us vulnerable also to the development of cancer and that we can heal by reversing the pathogenetic process into a salutogenic process and regaining biological order. It is of utmost importance that we test and document the effect of such experimental treatments, and we have therefore developed a simple, easy-to-use, and low-cost strategy for documenting holistic healing (66). We invite the scientific medical community to cooperate in this important new field of evidence based holistic medicine growing from an emerging scientific understanding of the connections between health, quality of life, and consciousness (72). We encourage governments and research foundations to give funding for research in this promising area of holistic cancer treatment. The chance of succeeding with the development of a scientific holistic cure for cancer seems fair from a theoretical perspective and Hamer's work has pointed out a direction to follow, even if we do not want to use his particular system.

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