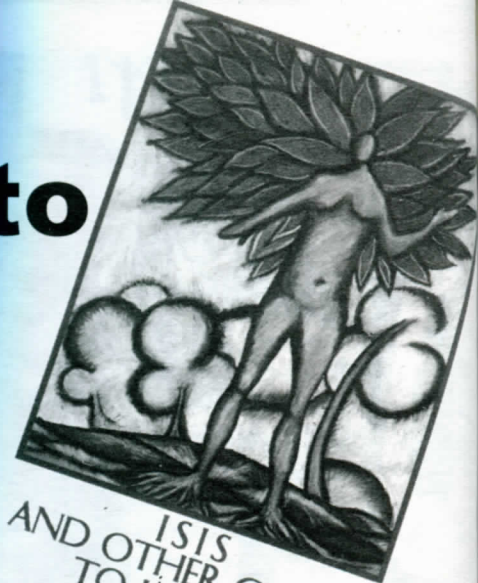


# Hints on the Road to Well-being

by Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz



**R**emember that old wives' tale about rubbing garlic in your armpits to combat a fever? How about the

distressing sponge baths of vinegar that we had to endure when we were sick during childhood? Young boys probably had to chew on guava leaves and spit out the mush on fresh wounds under sharp orders from the village *herbolario*. How quickly we dumped such quackery for the sterilized comfort and convention of prescription pills and labelled medication.

Well, good news and bad: those old wives' tale may be right after all and may have been drawing on hundreds of years of experience in medical lore. That means we're bound to encounter messy treatments once more as alternative medicine becomes acceptable again. The good news is that most indigenous therapies cost much less than bottled cures and cause less harm to the body. The bad news is that all those so-called New Age, age-old, traditional or medieval treatments have been collected in an attractive book that features interviews with wellness experts, first-hand accounts by initially skeptical patients, dosages and preparations, expected results and counter indications or what to look out for, and an overview of health as part of one's natural state.

*Isis and other Guides to Health: Helpful Hints on the Road to Well-Being* draws inspiration from Isis, the Egyptian goddess of justice, wisdom and fertility. It also lends its name to Isis International-Manila, an information- and resource-sharing center that helps create a feminist perspective on various concerns. Isis International-Manila published the book and launched it recently.

Topics discussed include traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, shiatsu, reflexology, aromatherapy, the use of herbs, macrobiotics, homeopathy, the cleansing diet, and so on. A listing of women's health groups in the country is also included, as are an essay on Mayan spirits and Philippine healers and a healing prayer.

The book focuses mainly on illnesses experienced by women because, as contributor Fe C. Arriola notes in her introduction, the medical profession could be more sympathetic to women's complaints instead of dismissing them outright as "psychological or nervous disorders." Research, Arriola adds, also shows that women are more likely to be over-prescribed or given inappropriate drugs that weaken their immune system and make them more prone to lingering or recurring ailments. Unfortunately, women have also been taught never to question the "experts," and wind up entrusting their health —and often their lives — to the medical establishment.

The alternative cures discussed in the book, on the other hand, have the characteristics of women: nurturant, intuitive, natural and participative. Above all, the therapies are "wholistic" and consider how a host of factors — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual — influence one's health and well-being. )

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