

Going back to the future... again

The idea that, before the advent of modern science, our ancestors were somehow forced to use natural substances as a kind of last resort can be considered partially true. The truth can be different and, as we review the history of medicine, we must re-examine our whole mindset relating to how our predecessors understood and worked with nature. This is especially in the case of folk medicine, which still persists nowadays, but suffers a kind of prejudice. As is always the case, prejudices limit our understanding and can cause harm in many ways.

Although the ancients may not have had the technology and language of modern science, they certainly had knowledge. But it was a different, although no less powerful, knowledge derived from a different worldview and sense of being. Probably, as soon as the brain of *Homo sapiens* reached the stage of reasoning, through a process of trial and error they discovered which natural products could be used as food, which of them were poisonous, and which of them had some medicinal value. Their worldview was based on a relationship with and an understanding of nature, gained through perception and intuition as well as through pure observation. It was a worldview which experienced and understood natural phenomenon as part of a powerful, unified and ultimately divine system. (Figure 1)

Fortunately, in this meeting between contemporary biomedical science and traditional health practices, it seems that we are moving away from the purely confrontational phase towards a more intelligent dialogue in search of solutions.

These solutions involve transdisciplinarity in its broadest sense, where everyone has the potential to add knowledge. In this sense, integrative and complementary practices in health are all very welcome, especially as a national public health policy. Thus, considering individuals in their global dimension but without losing sight of their singularity when explaining processes of illness, these practices corroborate the inclusiveness of health care and contribute to the expansion of individuals' co-responsibility for health and increases the exercise of citizenship. May we all *bee* happy and healthy.



Figure 1. Ephesos, Ionia, AR tetradrachm. 340-325 BC. Chairimenes, magistrate (anverse) E-Φ, bee with straight wings /(reverse) ΧΑΙΡΙΜΕΝΗΣ, Forepart of stag recumbent right, head left, palm tree to left. Pixodarus O123-13; Isegrim 45709

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