A Critical Evaluation of Dietary Recommendations in the Edgar Cayce Readings

Part 1

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Abstract

Edgar Cayce was born in 1877 and raised in a small, isolated rural community in Kentucky. He was capable of appearing to enter into a self-induced hypnotic trance, during which he conveyed information on a variety of subjects of which he was completely unaware in his conscious state. These "readings" (ECR) were recorded by a stenographer during the last two decades of his life, until a few months prior to his death in 1945. This paper evaluates the dietary and nutritional advice that was presented in the ECR.

Striking similarities exist between current dietary guidelines and some of the dietary advice attributed to Cayce. For example, contrary to contemporary recommendations of the time, the ECR advised adults to emphasize the daily consumptions of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy products, red wine, fish and fowl, but eschewed fatty meats, all fried foods, sweets, carbonated beverages, and refined grains. Moderation was advised regarding consumption of salt, sugar, fats, and oils. ECR also contain accurate statements concerning several nutritional facts, clearly unknown at the time the statements were made, such as the importance of silicon. However, serious errors also occur in the ECR, most notably the oft-repeated assertion that vitamin D is provided by various plants.

Uniquely, the ECR counseled avoidance of various food combinations, including milk and cream in coffee, combining starchy foods at the same meal, and consuming citrus fruits with cereals. Although currently inexplicable, these recommendations suggest several hypotheses that can be tested in well-designed controlled human clinical trials. Other testable hypotheses suggested by statements made in the ECR include the value of a predominantly "alkaline diet" especially in prevention of infectious disease, and the effect of gelatin on the absorption of vitamins from vegetables.

Background

Besides the scientific method, other ways of acquiring knowledge have been used for centuries. These include personal experience, trial and error, intuition, personal revelation through dreams and meditation and from paranormal or "psychic" sources. The latter is perhaps the most controversial of these. However, scientific evidence for the existence of psychic phenomena has been compiled by Radin.[1]

One of the best known American psychics is Edgar Cayce. His "readings" (ECR), were given during a self-induced, hypnotic trance state from which he had no memory upon awakening. Cayce was born in rural Kentucky, received an 8th-grade education, and had not travelled outside the US. Nevertheless, during the trance he was capable of speaking classical Greek to a Greek scholar; giving information which led to recovery from terminal illnesses, including advanced tuberculosis; and exhibiting many other documented phenomena.[2] Although he died over a half-century ago, his life and work have been the subject of numerous books, including recent ones, and a scholarly critique.[3–5] A PhD was awarded by the University of Chicago for a dissertation concerning his life and work.

Starting in 1923 and continuing until 1944, these readings were taken down in shorthand and transcribed. Roughly two-thirds of the 14,000 recorded readings concerned health and related topics. Dietary suggestions were given to almost all of those who had physical readings.[6] However, the sentence structure of most of the readings is cumbersome, garbled, and sometimes difficult to comprehend and interpret.

Methods

Excerpts of the ECR that are related to food and nutrition have been compiled, edited, and arranged by Bolton in his 500-page book titled *An Edgar Cayce Encyclopedia of Foods for Health and Healing*. First published in 1969 by Avon Books, this book was subsequently reprinted by the A.R.E. Press in 1997.[7] William McGarey, MD, of Phoenix,