



Medicine in the New Millennium (as predicted in 1974)

by Warren Krug

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Recently while looking through a file cabinet, I came across a clipping from the *Detroit Free Press* dated June 23, 1974. The article contained a number of predictions concerning what the state of medicine would be like in the year 2001. I found it interesting and somewhat amusing to compare these predictions with what really has transpired.

In 1974 some experts were claiming that most medical advances and discoveries had already been made. The "golden age of medicine" (the mid-third of the 20th century) was coming to an end, they said. After all, antibiotics, surgical invasion of the heart, kidney transplants, and the unmasking of viruses had already been discovered or invented. What more was left to uncover?

One expert disagreed. Dr. Louis D. Boshes, a clinical professor of neurology at the University of Illinois Medical School, boldly made a number of predictions in a lecture titled "Medicine: 2,001 A.D." As we shall see, when it came to predicting the future, Dr. Boshes showed he had no divine ability to look into the future, though he did get a few things right.

Some of Dr. Boshes's predictions for the new millennium:

Artificial Organs: All parts of the body, excepting the brain, will have been successfully transplanted. This includes colons, stomachs, and even urinary bladders.

Automation: "Memory banks" will commonly be used in doctors' offices. Doctors will make "house calls" via two-way television.

Body Farming: The transplantation of arms, legs, fingers, jaws, and joints from deceased donors will be common. Their tissues will be maintained in a viable state by mechanical means. A cautionary note was added though that possible ethical or moral objections to this concept would have to have been worked out.

Cancer: Almost every type of cancer will be controlled by chemicals, by radiation, or by surgery.

Common Cold: Immunology will control the common cold.

Community Medicine: Specialization will continue, but more family practitioners and generalists will again find a rewarding environment for their work.

Finances: Financial barriers to medical care will disappear. A premium will be placed on preventive medicine and health education.

Deafness: Hearing aids will be worn within the skull.

Dental disease: Scientists will discover that caries are caused by infections. Decay will be controlled by vaccines. When necessary, a tooth will be removed, repaired rapidly in the chair and reinserted. Missing teeth will be replaced by synthetic teeth.

Epilepsy: One or two drugs will replace the two dozen drugs now used (in 1974) to control epilepsy.

Gastrointestinal: Peptic ulcers will become rare as doctors discover it is an auto-immune disease.

Geriatrics: The aged will become a strong force as the proportion of the population made up of older people will increase. The conquest of cancer and heart disease will extend the length and quality of life.

Heart Disease: Drugs will control the hardening of the arteries and largely prevent heart attacks as well as strokes.

Heredity: Congenital defects due to heredity or abnormal development will be treated in the uterus before the infant is born.

Hospitals: Hospitals will be built for specific illnesses and staffed by specialists. They will be decorated in bright colors and have movable walls to adapt to changing needs. Costs of construction will gradually increase to \$75,000 a bed.

Immunology: Asthma, colitis, and arthritis will be some of the diseases controlled by immunological means.

Mental illness: Schizophrenia will not likely be overcome by 2001, but drugs will handle most other mental illness.

Neurology and neurosurgery: The implantation of electrodes on those brain cells concerned with vision will give the blind some degree of sight.

Paralysis: Paraplegics will walk again because a way will be found to regenerate growth and unite the gap in the spinal cord responsible for paralysis.

Multiple Sclerosis: Dr. Boshes in 1974 felt the cause for this disease as well as a cure would soon be discovered.

Nutrition: A method of recycling foods will be developed as well as better synthetic products. This should eliminate hunger.

Obstetrics: Babies will be available from a laboratory. Fertilized eggs will be incubated for 260 days. Computerized records containing the characteristics of each fertilized egg will be maintained. Visiting parent(s) will be able to watch their fetus develop. Of course, many people will still prefer "nature's way."

Plastic surgery: Gross deformities will be corrected by literally taking the skeleton apart and rebuilding it.

Sexual attitudes: A liberalization of attitudes toward sex will continue, and communal living will be popular. However, this will lead to an increase in venereal disease and genital cancer. (Nothing was said in this 1974 article about AIDS.)

Readers will certainly see a few predictions made by Dr. Boshes that did pan out. For instance, he saw that the community of senior citizens would continue to grow in numbers and political power. He was correct in seeing that specialization in medicine would continue but with a return (somewhat) of the family practitioner.

However, he was way off in foreseeing that heart disease, cancer, and the common cold would largely be conquered. Also, his prediction that just about every body part could be transplanted is, of course, a long way from reality.

Some of his predictions were scary, in particular the ones relating to body farming and obstetrics. Thankfully, these remain generally unfulfilled, at least for the time being.

The fact remains that the only predictions which are 100% accurate are those God has made in His Word. One such prophecy—believers will enjoy perfect health in heaven, forever. *LSI*