

Tracy Kolenchuk, April 12, 2021
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To: Managing Editor
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Subject: Elementary Steps Towards a Theory of Cure

Please consider the attached paper for publication in The Journal of Philosophy of Medicine.

This paper is written based on the concepts published in the book: **A Theory of Cure, Kolenchuk, 2021.**

The theory is based on six years of study of the word “cure,” initiated after I discovered that cure is not defined scientifically or medically for most diseases. Over time, I gradually realized that we ignore and thus fail to understand the simplest cures and, as a result, cannot comprehend more complex cures even when they occur.

The resulting analysis is general. It might be effectively applied to any systemic problem – not just illnesses in living things. However, non-living systems rarely contain self-healing processes.

Respectfully, to your health,

Tracy D Kolenchuk

Dear Professor Kolenchuk, June 14, 2021

Thank you for your note. Your paper is indeed still out for review. Review times have been unusually long ever since the beginning of the pandemic; most of our reviewers are either academics or healthcare professionals, and the adjustments/increased workload that the pandemic and virtual teaching has generated greatly increased many reviewers' review times and rate of decline. Specifically in the case of your paper, we had several reviewers decline to review your paper, but we hope that the reviewers currently on deck will complete timely reviews.

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Abstract

Cure is not defined for most diseases. Medical references use the word treatment approximately ten times as often as cure. Although many organizations raise funds by claiming to *search for a cure*, most medical research studies do not contain a definition of cure and cannot document a case of cured when it occurs. Cures are out of scope. The paper presents an elementary definition of illness and cure based on cause. Cures address causes. Elementary cures address single causes. There are three elementary types of illnesses and three corresponding cures: injuries, attribute caused, and process caused illnesses are cured by healing, transformations, and preventative cures. All three cures are changes, transformations of present cause in diet, body, mind, spirit, community, or environment of the patient. These causal concepts are explored logically and expanded to cover compound and complex cases of illness and disease.

Introduction

Current medical theory has a limited scientific definition of cure. Cured is defined medically for an infectious disease when the infectious agent cause can be addressed by an antibacterial, antifungal, or other antiparasitic medicine or by surgical removal. Cured is not defined in a medically testable fashion for any non-infectious disease. We have no medical nor scientific test for cured in most disease cases, even though we use the word frequently in informal medical situations. The word cure does

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not appear in many current medical dictionaries (Merriam-Webster, 2008) (Black's, 1992) (Oxford, 2008) (Oxford, 2015). The London Medical Dictionary, published in 1809, uses the word cure over 500 times without defining it. No medical reference provides a definition of cure, much less an authoritative definition (Merck, 2011) (Harrison's, 2011) (Lange's, 2016) (Ferri, 2019) (DSM-5, 2013). These references use the word treatment approximately ten times as often as cure. Use of the word cure is inconsistent, perhaps because each of the many individual authors has their own concept of cure, which might change depending on the disease. Cure rate, a statistical measure of cancer disease-free survival, is one of the most common usages of the word cure. However, no individual case in any cancer cure rate group can be proven cured. A large percentage of usages of cure are negative: *incurable*, *cannot be cured*, *does not cure* or vague phrases like *may cure*, *apparent cure*, and *considered a cure*, all found in the most recent version of Merck. Phrases like *cure all*, *wonder drug*, *magic bullet*, and *miracle cure* are used to dismiss cure claims in many publications. The 21st Century Cures Act authorized \$6.3 billion in funding to find a cure for cancer but does not contain nor reference a definition of cure (US Congress, 2019).

Some medical dictionaries do not define incurable. Some define it using the word cure, even some that do not define cure (Merriam-Webster, 2008) (Barron's, 2013) (Keating, 1890). Conventional medicine defines incurable with respect to medical treatments, "*being such that a cure is impossible within the realm of known medical practice*" (Barron's, 2013).

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As a result, “*there is no cure for the common cold*” (WEBMD, 2018), and similar nonsense is commonplace. We cure colds with health and healing. When we are healthier, we get fewer colds and cure them faster.

Traditional medical practices, like Hippocrates medicine, Ayurveda, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) do not define cure and do not study cures scientifically. Use of the word cure is often trivial, inconsistent, and non-medical, as “*purgatives can completely cure the problem of excess pitta (bile)*” (Ayurveda.com, 2019). Homeopathy uses the mantra “*like cures like*” (School of Homeopathy, 2019), without a definition of cure, often referring to a cure of symptoms – also poorly defined.

Historically, the concept of cure is ignored, and references to cure are inconsistent. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, said: “*What cannot be cured by medicaments is cured by the knife, what the knife cannot cure is cured with the searing iron, and whatever this cannot cure must be considered incurable*” (Hippocrates, 1849). Hippocrates also recognized that cures come from cause and from health, contradicting the prior claim with “*Diseases which arise from repletion are cured by depletion; and those that arise from depletion are cured by repletion; and in general, diseases are cured by their contraries*” (Hippocrates, 1849). Hippocrates, and today’s medical theorists focus on disease. Simple cases like the trivial surgical cure for a hangnail, the consumption of food to cure malnutrition, and the healing of minor injuries are ignored. These illnesses and their cures are trivial - unimportant, therefore not studied scientifically.

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However, they can illustrate the foundation of a theory of cure.

The original 1899 version of Merck's Manual of Materia Medica contained many instances of the word cure without any definition. Many, like *rest cure*, *milk cure*, and *grape cure*, are simplistic nonsense. However, "*Iridectomy: the only cure*" (for glaucoma) (Merck, 1899) is still in use today. "*A therapeutic iridectomy is the surgical removal of a portion of the iris for the cure or prevention of an ocular disease.*" (Cline, 1997), although there is no medical test for glaucoma cured.

"Epidemiology is more interested in prevention and control of diseases than secondary and tertiary curative approaches" (Timmreck, 1998). Although epidemiology studies past causes of disease extensively, dictionaries of epidemiology do not contain the word cure (Last, 2001) (Porta, 2008). Usage of cure is rare and without consistency, as in the above quote where the phrase "*secondary and tertiary curative approaches*" is about prevention, not cure. Epidemiologists study diseases statistically, ignoring cures – in theory, and in practice. Cures are single cases, anecdotes, generally ignored in statistical science-based medicine.

Alternative medical practitioners use the word cure more often, although without a scientific definition. There is little consistency in usage even when a cure occurs. The terms curing, healing, and transformation are often mixed and confused. Transformation is often used without a clear definition or target. Is the patient transformed, or the disease, or perhaps

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“*our relationship to the disease is transformed*” (Nunn, 1994)? Alternative practitioners often claim to use holistic treatments. Which cures are holistic? “*What is holistic for one individual is frequently perceived as reductionist to another*” (Christopher Lawrence, George Weisz).

We have no medical philosophy of cure and no scientific nor medical distinction between curable diseases, conditions, disorders, disabilities, and incurable conditions. Although standard dictionaries define cure, definitions are vague and vary widely. Weak and varied definitions of *disease* also contribute to confusion around the word cure. Patients who are bitten by a rabid animal, for example, can be *prevented* (Mayo Clinic, 2019) from developing rabies with a vaccine. The Mayo Clinic does not use the word *cure*. Is it because the action occurs before the disease can be diagnosed, or perhaps because we don’t expect vaccines cure?

We might wish to believe that when a medical condition judged to be incurable is subsequently cured, the cure success has changed it to a curable disease, and the cure is documented. However, all such cases are simply ignored or actively dismissed. There are many claims of cures of arthritis, autism, back pain, diabetes, even cancer. None can be validated without a definition of cured. Neither can they be disproven – a detail often missed.

Disease

Disease is poorly defined in general. Mental disorders, defined in the

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Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM/5), have even weaker definitions. There are many philosophical debates about the meaning of the word disease. The World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases takes a pragmatic view for statistical purposes: a disease is what a doctor diagnoses. The recent emergence of COVID-19 and the responses of our medical systems illustrate many of the problems. Where does COVID-19, the disease, begin and end? Is disease present in asymptomatic cases? Is the infectious stage the disease? Is hospitalization due to ARDS (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) or organ failure a different disease or part of the same disease? Is pneumonia caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus part of COVID-19 or an independent disease? Is pneumonia caused by other infectious agents, which gain a hold due to COVID-19, a part of COVID-19 or a different disease? Is COVID-PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) caused by aggressive treatment of ARDS an independent disease or a part of COVID-19? Is the loss of smell a disability, or a disease, or a symptom of COVID? Without a clear definition of the diseases involved, we cannot define COVID-19 cured. As a result, no cures can be found, and if encountered, none can be proven, much less documented medically.

The disease concept is designed for diagnosis, preparation of a prognosis and treatment, and for statistical studies, but not to be cured. To cure and know that a cure has occurred, we must limit our view to curable elements of illness or disease.

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Judgement

Disease, illness, cause, and cure do not exist without judgment. Illness and disease are negative judgements. Cured is a positive judgement. A cause is a judgement validated by a cure.

It's useful to consider a non-living example, a roadway and a pothole. A roadway is a functional system, which – when we examine it closely – has many holes. When does a pothole exist? It exists when a hole is big enough to require our attention through its negative consequences. A pothole is a judgement. A driver can make a judgement about a pothole and about the cure. The City Manager and the Road Repair Crew might each make different judgements. What is the cause of a pothole? Sometimes, it's in the past. Perhaps a hammer fell off a truck. Sometimes, the cause is present. Maybe a gopher is digging under the road. Sometimes, it's due to an ongoing excessive traffic loads or poor quality materials. Sometimes, it's a natural consequence of time, of wear and tear. Roads seldom heal naturally. Each cause is a judgement. Only present causes can be addressed to produce a cure. The hole is the main present cause. When is a pothole cured? The cured state is also a judgement. Is the cure perfect? No cure is perfect, even if the repaired portion is better than it was before the damage. The road is a whole. A pothole is a hole in the road.

Health is whole. An illness is a hole in our health.

Curable Illness

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This paper is about curable illnesses. References herein, to illness, refer to *curable illnesses*. A curable illness can be cured. Curable illnesses exist in the present because an illness must be present to be curable. Incurable conditions, disabilities, handicaps, natural or unnatural features which must be accepted, but cannot be cured, are out of scope. We might work to prevent future cases, but we cannot cure them until they occur. When a disease, a sickness, a disorder, or a medical condition can be fully or partially cured, the condition, its cause and cure can be mapped to a curable illness model.

Element of Illness

An element of illness has a single cause and multiple consequences. It is defined by its single cause. When the cause has been successfully addressed, when signs and symptoms have faded and gone, and when healing is completed, the illness element has been cured. No more medicines are needed for signs and symptoms of that illness element. An illness is a specific case: the intersection of a present cause and its negative consequences on an individual. When a disease, illness, sickness, or other medical condition has more than one present cause, it is a compound or complex illness consisting of several elements. Diseases usually consist of compound and complex illnesses, perhaps because most elementary illnesses are easily cured without medical assistance.

Element of Cause

An element of cause is judged to be the present-cause of an element of illness. An illness element is cured when the present cause is addressed by

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a natural or intentional transformation. The concept of present-cause is essential. Many medical references to disease causes refer to past causes, which we cannot access to cure, unless they are also present.

Element of Cure

A cure, or a curative, is an action that addresses causes of illness and resolves its curable consequences. An element of cure is an action that addresses a single present element of cause. A cure ends a case of illness.

Cause

An illness can be caused by the presence, absence, deficiency or excess of an attribute (a noun) or a process (a verb) of diet, body, mind, spirits, community, or environment. Illnesses can also be caused by deficiencies or excesses of injuries, growth, or healing processes. No cause of illness causes an illness every time.

An illness is cured when the present cause is successfully addressed. It does not *go away* and cannot *return*. A new case of illness can occur if the cause occurs again.

Attribute causes are nouns, causing illness by their presence, absence, deficiency or excess. An attribute caused illness, or attribute illness is cured by a transformation of the cause. Attribute cures are permanent from the perspective of the present case of illness. If the cause occurs again, a new case of illness might occur.

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Many attribute illnesses are boundary illnesses caused by a failure of a boundary of body, mind, spirits, or community.

Process causes are verbs, creating causal illnesses due to their presence, absence, deficiency or excess. A causal illness is cured by an ongoing preventative action. Preventative cure processes must be maintained, lest a new case of the illness occur.

Most deficiency diseases are causal illnesses caused by a failure of a process that must be maintained. After a deficiency illness is cured, if the same type of deficiency occurs again, a new case might occur.

Causal Chains

Only a causal illness, with a present causal process, has a present chain of causes. Causal chains end when they encounter a causal attribute because attribute causes are in the past. A causal illness might be cured by successfully addressing any link in the present chain of cause. When a causal chain splits in two, a curative action beyond the split might only provide a partial cure.

Attribute illnesses, including injury illnesses, have chains of cause in the past, which we might use to prevent illness, but cannot access to produce a cure. The attribute is the cause.

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Stress Causes

Stress is a general term essential to health. Individuals and communities use stress to their advantage. Life processes require stress to function and apply stress against specific attributes to accomplish life goals. Most of the time, stresses do not cause illness. When an individual is healthier, they can handle, even take advantage from stronger stresses without illness. Any illness might be viewed as caused by stress in the past, although this view can lead to misunderstandings with deficiencies causes. A deficiency of stress can also cause illness. We might cure a stress illness by addressing the stress cause or by increasing the healthiness of the individual – possibly by reducing many stresses, such that the cause is handled without illness.

Curing

Curing is the process of producing a cured state by addressing a present cause. Every cure is a transformation of cause. The present cause, not the patient, is transformed. Each cause of illness might be successfully addressed by many alternative curative actions.

There are three types of cure actions: healing, transforming, and preventing.

Healing: is the natural curative process responsible for most cures.

Healing cures injuries, the present cause of negative signs and symptoms. Improving healthiness improves healing. Healing

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cures, like all cures, are never perfect, even when the result is better than before.

Transforming: changing the attribute cause of an illness to produce a cure. Healing is a natural transformative process and many transformational cures also require healing. Transformation cures range from the trivial extraction of a thorn to a complex and risky heart transplant.

Preventing: the transformation of a process cause with an ongoing process that must be maintained to prevent an illness state. Preventative cures sometimes require healing. Nutritional deficiency illnesses are naturally causal, requiring ongoing preventative cure actions, viewed as simple preventatives when the patient has never had the illness. Sometimes, a preventative cure process is also a therapy that results in an attribute transformation cure over time such that the preventative cure process is no longer needed.

Compound Illness

A compound illness exists when two or more present causes create identical, similar, or overlapping illness elements. Compound illnesses are often diagnosed as a single disease, which is less likely to be cured naturally because multiple causes are present. Illnesses uncured can accumulate causes, leading to compound illnesses, which are then more

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difficult to analyze and cure. A compound illness is not limited to one type of cause. For example, a case of depression might have independent injury, attribute, and process causes, each sufficient to cause depression. A compound illness requires multiple curative actions by definition, one for each present cause. Correct sequencing of cure actions can be crucial. When each of two causes is insufficient to cause illness, addressing either will cure. When a single action cures, the illness was not compound. The cure defines the cause.

It can be challenging to determine or prove an individual element of a compound illness is cured. Signs and symptoms often remain, perhaps diminished, because some causes remain. Many illnesses wax and wane without intentional curative actions making evaluation problematical.

Secondary Illness

A secondary illness exists when one illness element causes another. An uncured illness might cause many secondary injury, attribute, or causal illnesses. The most common secondary illnesses are injuries. Many diseases cannot be diagnosed until injuries occur. The secondary illness is different from the first illness, with respect to causes, signs, symptoms, and consequences. Sometimes a primary illness is cured by intentional or natural healthy activities, leaving the secondary illness as the sole illness. In other cases, the primary illness persists, resulting in a complex illness.

Complex Illness

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A complex illness exists when a present illness is the cause of a secondary illness. Two or more illness elements are present. Therefore, two or more cures are necessary. Curing a secondary illness, when the primary illness is still present, often fails. The primary illness re-creates the secondary. Sometimes, curing the primary illness facilitates a natural cure of the secondary illness.

Repeating Illness

A repeating illness exists when a cause continually creates an illness that been addressed by an intentional or natural cure. Repeating illnesses are cured by addressing the repeating nature or attribute of the cause. Each individual case must also be cured. Although repeating illnesses are common, the concept of a repeating illness or disease being cured by addressing the repeating nature does not exist today's medical theory.

Chronic Illness

Conventional medicine views chronic diseases as incurable and curable diseases as non-chronic. We often define chronic diseases without reference to present causes. All mental disorders are currently viewed as chronic incurable diseases.

A chronic illness element has a chronic cause. Chronic causes, like all causes, are not necessarily negative. Healthy habits are chronic causes of healthiness. Often, a chronic illness cause is not sufficient to create an illness when not chronic. Most attribute illnesses are chronic unless the

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attribute cause can be healed. They are caused by the presence of an attribute that persists until it is transformed.

All chronic illnesses can be viewed as attribute illnesses, a consequence of the chronic attribute of the cause. A chronic illness is cured by transforming the chronic attribute of the cause. A chronic infection might be a result of the continued presence of infectious bacteria that repeatedly, chronically creates infections – an attribute of the environment, or by a chronic unhealthiness due to the patient’s poor diet – a process cause.

Partial and Temporary Cures

Partial cures are common, a necessary part of many curative processes. A partial cure can occur when the cause of an illness element is partially addressed. A partial cure is present but might not be provable when one or more but not all causes of a compound illness are addressed. A partial cure occurs when a primary or secondary illness is cured but the other illness is still present.

A partial cure might be temporary or permanent. Currently, conventional medicine views almost all cures as temporary, and individuals and physicians live in constant fear of recurrence.

A temporary cure occurs when a cause is temporarily addressed. A temporary cure is sometimes useful to understand the illness cause and guide a permanent cure. Sometimes, an illness cause is intentionally

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temporarily addressed, producing a temporary cure. Sometimes, a patient's healthiness is improved by intention or by other circumstances, producing a temporary cure. In some cases, a temporary cure might be the best alternative. Infantile scurvy is effectively cured with Vitamin C supplements because the child's diet will change over time, and the cured state persists. In other cases, supplements fail to cure. Attempting to cure adult scurvy with supplements, in addition to failing to provide a permanent cure, can easily miss other illnesses related to the dietary cause.

Alternative Cures

Every cure is an alternative. Each cause of an element of illness might be cured by many different transformations. Medicines and medical doctors, conventional and alternative, have little ability to cure most cases of illness. Injury cures come from healing, although medical care can assist. Process cures usually come from the actions of the patient, although medical advice can be important, even key. Only some transformation cures can be produced by medical intervention.

Holistic Cures

There are two fundamental paths to cure. We might address the cause directly, viewing it as external to the patient, or we can improve the health of the patient, such that the cause no longer causes illness. In some cases, addressing the cause is essential. In other cases, healthing the patient is more effective. In many cases, we can choose, and in many cases, choosing both provides healthier, more effective cures.

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Permanent Cures

Every successful cure is permanent. The cause has been successfully addressed, and the present case of illness has been cured. It disappears. Illness is a concept, not a thing – it was never there, and now it's gone.

No cure is permanent, in the sense that the illness will not occur again if the cause occurs again. We are living beings. Any cause we addressed in the past might occur again, creating a new case of illness with similar signs, symptoms, and consequences.

Cured

When an illness is cured, healing has been completed, signs and symptoms have faded and gone, and no more medicines are required for signs and symptoms. No cure is perfect. Life is about living, adjusting to reality and adjusting reality to our liking, not about perfection. It is important to choose the best cure for the case. We need to search for cures, judge cures, study cures, find and acknowledge cures to find better and best cures.

No cure is final. Life goes on. The end of an illness is the end of a specific case. Most illnesses are cured naturally, by healthy actions.

Conclusion:

There are three types of illnesses and three corresponding cures: injuries, attribute caused, and causal (process caused) illnesses are cured

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respectively by healing, transformations, and preventative cures. All three cures are changes, transformations of the present illness cause in diet, body, mind, spirit, community, or environment of the patient.

Healing cures injuries. Healing is a natural transformation progressing through the shedding and absorption of damage and regrowth. An illness cured by healing was an *injury illness*.

Transformation cures address attribute causes. Attributes are added, removed, or changed such that the illness is cured. An illness element cured by a transformation was an *attribute illness*.

Preventative cures address process causes with the ongoing addition, removal, or change of a process, which we must maintain to maintain the cure. An illness element cured by an ongoing change to a life process was a *causal illness*. A curative change to a process that does not require continual maintenance is a transformational cure, not a preventative cure.

The cure proves the cause. To cure is to change, to transform the cause providing a cured state.

With this framework, based on the concept of illness elements, we can combine elements, elementary causes, illnesses, and cures, to understand, create, and study cures for complex and compound illnesses and diseases.

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