



trends in  
alternative  
medicine

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# what's hot

There was no shortage of **remarkable developments** in alternative medicine last year. But only a few signify genuine trends—the kind of deep-seated changes that gather momentum over time and are destined to have a lasting effect on the way we take care of ourselves. Here we highlight eight of the most promising—from gene-driven diet plans to a surefire way to pursue happiness. Each in its own way can, and possibly will, **change your life.** —*the Editors*

## — **energy medicine: time to bring it home**

It heals arthritis and cancer and is government-approved—but not in this country. Why it should be, and *now.* **BY SIERRA SENYAK**

Many Americans, confident that they're enjoying the world's most cutting-edge health care, might be surprised to know that patients from Germany, Sweden, and other countries have something they don't: access to a group of scientifically evaluated, government-approved therapies that show promising results for conditions ranging from insomnia to arthritis.

Paul J. Rosch, clinical professor of medicine and psychiatry at New York Medical College and president of the American Institute of Stress, would like to bring those therapies here, specifically bioelectromagnetic medicine. Multiple studies have shown that bioelectromagnetic treatment, which uses

magnetic fields made stronger by electric currents running through them, is helpful against numerous illnesses.

It's safer than drugs and more cost-effective for osteoarthritis (in fact, the German equivalent of Medicare reimburses for it). It eases symptoms of macular degeneration, cancer, multiple sclerosis, insomnia, and Parkinson's disease—conditions for which sufferers would welcome any new option. And by using something called repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation to treat patients with drug-resistant depression, researchers are reporting improvements similar to what they see from shock therapy.

A handful of bioelectromagnetic devices *have* trickled through the FDA's approval process, and some treatments are being studied in U.S. hospitals and universities. In a study published in the *Journal of Rheumatology*, for instance, re-

searchers at Danbury Hospital in Connecticut found they could bring down pain in osteoarthritis patients with pulsed signal therapy, believed to spur healing by mimicking a signal generated by cartilage and connective tissue.



Rosch and his colleagues wonder why American patients still must travel abroad to get treatments like this, which are already approved in countries with strong regulatory agencies. The slow pace is especially frustrating given that the 1997 FDA Modernization Act mandated, in part, that drugs and devices given the stamp of approval by other countries be eased through the approval process here.

In 2003, Rosch and four others were slated to testify before a congressional committee set up to investigate why these devices still haven't been approved, but the hearing was shelved once the Iraq conflict broke out, and has yet to be rescheduled. Rosch thinks the foot-dragging may have to do with pressure from drug companies that don't want the competition, but simple inexperience may explain it as well.

"I don't think the regulatory agencies have personnel with the background to evaluate these treatments," he says. It doesn't help that many physicians are skeptical after watching

unproven electromagnetic devices flood the market, touted for their ability to heal every illness under the sun.

But there is an option for people without the means to travel abroad for treatment. Under the FDA's compassionate use policy, physicians may apply to import foreign devices to treat individual patients if no known alternative exists, or to treat patients with devices being used in the United States for clinical investigation only. However, this requires lots of leg-work (and paperwork) by the physician. Determining which therapies are actually effective requires even more work, because unbiased information is so difficult to come by.

**What you can do:** To see whether bioelectromagnetic medicine can help you, contact the American Institute of Stress ([stress.org](http://stress.org); 914.963.1200) and request an information pack (\$35 and up), or post a question at the Bioelectromagnetics Society chat forum ([groups.yahoo.com/group/bioelectromagnetics/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bioelectromagnetics/)).