

# AMHERST BULLETIN

## The naturopathic approach

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A music teacher who sings in an all-women's a cappella group got laryngitis every winter, and so she went to see naturopathic physician Amy Rothenberg of Amherst.

She had a sore throat, swollen glands, an earache, and a sensation of swelling around her ears. She had taken antibiotics and decongestants without improvement, and developed postnasal drip and sinusitis that disrupted her ability to sing.

Rothenberg examined her and concluded that the antibiotics were making her more vulnerable to illness by eliminating healthy flora in her system. She recommended Vitamins C and E and zinc, plus a probiotic and a vitamin-herb supplement designed to fight infection. The patient later said she felt better right away.

Rothenberg has used this experience for the title of her new book, *"The A Cappella Singer Who Lost Her Voice and other Stories from Natural Medicine."* The book, published by B. Jain Archibel of Belgium, also offers personal tales of naturopathic approaches to hay fever, hives, poison ivy, heartburn, arthritis, cancer and many other conditions.

Practicing two days a week in Enfield, Conn., Rothenberg said she sees three types of patients.

"There are folks living a natural lifestyle and they want their medicine to match their lifestyle," she said. "The second group is people who have no idea what I do but know someone with the same complaint who was helped by seeing me. Then there are patients who do not feel well, yet there is nothing diagnostically wrong and no one else has helped them."

She has about 2,000 homeopathic remedies, mostly botanicals, that she can recommend to patients. She also helps patients manage stress and encourages them to exercise, eat healthful foods and get enough rest. She also listens to patients and gives them an extra dose of common sense.

"I seem to increasingly spend time with patients helping them strategize about ways to create more harmonious workplaces and to troubleshoot problems and issues at home related to partners, children, friends and patients," she wrote in her book.



Half the diagnostic process involves listening to patients and understanding what's going on in their lives, she said. Often that takes longer than typical physicians take for an examination, and she values the intellectual challenges and interpersonal relationships.

Most of her patients don't have health insurance that covers visiting with her and pay out of their own pockets, she said.

She sees a variety of patients: "young ones with genetic problems, teenagers with attitudinal issues, chronically sick patients in midlife and older patients hanging on for dear life," she wrote.

Although the case studies in Rothenberg's book deal mainly with her successes over the past 25 years, she also wrote, "I see now that sometimes the patient's illness is difficult to reverse or even entirely irreversible. I see now that not everyone wants to get better."

She's sometimes stumped, she said, and some conditions are hard to treat, such as alcohol and drug abuse, autoimmune diseases, and severe psychiatric symptoms. Sometimes she consults with her husband, Paul Herscu, who is also a naturopathic physician. "It is remarkable how a different person asking the same question often gets a totally different response," Rothenberg wrote. "We can help each other see things more clearly. I have strengths in understanding people and Paul has strengths in understanding remedies."

Rothenberg said she loves her work, but is careful to practice only two days a week to avoid burnout. She said she is calmer than when she started out, and has more of a sense of the stressors that are obstacles to patients getting well.

"I have a stronger faith in the healing power of the human body and nature," she said. "Given the right materials and time and rest, many illnesses can be helped."

For more information about Dr. Amy Rothenberg and her book see [www.amyrothenberg.com](http://www.amyrothenberg.com) and for her practice [www.nhemed.com](http://www.nhemed.com)

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