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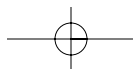
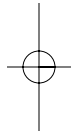
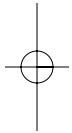
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Contents

FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	xi
INTRODUCTION	xv
CHAPTER ONE: Emergence of the Caveats	1
CHAPTER TWO: Virtual Reality	15
CHAPTER THREE: Vicious Cycle Disorder	35
CHAPTER FOUR: Anatomy of a Realm	61
CHAPTER FIVE: The River of Life	71
CHAPTER SIX: The Question of Digestion	85
CHAPTER SEVEN: New Horizons	105
CHAPTER EIGHT: A Day in the Realm	117
CHAPTER NINE: Ask Your Doctor	131

CHAPTER TEN: Doorway to Heaven	149
CHAPTER ELEVEN: Quantum Lifestyle Dynamics	165
APPENDIX:	211
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	215



Foreword

There is a revolution going on in American healthcare today. I am not talking about the technological advances that are bringing us more amazing treatments for illnesses, or the extraordinary new medical imaging devices that allow doctors to view inside virtually any area of our bodies. Neither am I referring to the explosive progress in the field of genetics that has cracked the human genome and soon promises cures for diseases for which no effective treatments exist.

I am talking about the revolution in *alternative health*. This term encompasses much more than alternative practices such as acupuncture and naturopathic medicine. It goes well beyond vitamins and herbs, visualization techniques, and aromatherapy. It fundamentally involves a profound change in the way Americans perceive their own health and the established medical healthcare system.

Americans no longer trust their healthcare system. They have come to question what their doctors and the medical establishment have been telling them all these years: things they have always accepted on faith without questioning. Increasingly, they see their physicians as being too busy to take a personal interest in their health. They recognize a medical establishment that has shown itself to be all too eager to sell them on the latest prescription drug or invasive diagnostic procedure, only to take their money and run. All too often, they find themselves left with no substantive

viii ■ Beyond Medicine

improvement in their health. Worse yet, they are plagued with the harmful side effects of medication or surgical complications, which lead to the necessity of greater reliance on a healthcare system that failed them in the first place. Ultimately, they find themselves left with a bewildering array of healthcare choices and no one they can trust to turn to for help in navigating this maze.

People are taking more responsibility for their health. They are becoming informed consumers when it comes to their healthcare choices. They are looking beyond conventional medicine for answers to their healthcare needs. This area, beyond medicine, is sometimes referred to as *alternative health*, or *complimentary medicine*. But it is much more than just that. It is the world of all things implied in these terms, to be sure. But more fundamentally, it is a world of choices, which give us far greater freedoms and almost frighteningly complex options to control our own health potential, and ultimately our own lives. Traversing this world leads to a new way of perceiving ourselves, our bodies, and our relationship with the world around us. The old models of living the American dream, getting regular check-ups with the family doctor, and growing old gracefully no longer seem to be relevant. People are seeking to redefine their relationship with this world of health choices, but they are finding it difficult to know where to begin, what it is that they really want, or what they truly need.

This book explores this world beyond medicine. The author, Dr. Richard DiCenso, begins by exploring the nature of reality and the *realms* that define our relationship with the world around and within us. You might wonder what a philosophical discussion like this has to do with illness and health. The answer is *everything*.

As Dr. DiCenso so carefully explains, reality *is* actually fluid and changeable. Within the virtual realm of our consciousness, reality *is* pretty much what you choose to make it. Not just your interpretation of reality, but *reality* itself. This means that with respect to the body-mind connection, what you think becomes what you feel and what you believe becomes who you are. We have all heard things like this coming from sources such as Dr. Norman Vincent Peale in *The Power of Positive Thinking*, as well as from the numerous self-help gurus and get-rich-quick hucksters. The end product is that we come away thinking that people can convince themselves of pretty much anything, if they want to. There is a thread of truth running through all of these diverse sources. The net effect has been to condition us

to believe that it is all just pretending, and that reality is really still just, well ... reality. Thus, we each stay within the static and unyielding versions of who we are and what we can and cannot feel. Comforted in this familiarity, we are isolated from change.

In this book, Dr. DiCenso opens the doorways to change. To do so, he gives us a guided tour of the virtual realm where reality is infinitely changeable. In many ways, Dr. DiCenso is the Carl Sagan of the human mind-body science-philosophy. In reading this work, I am at times reminded of sitting in a vast planetarium with the astronomer-guide leading me on a journey through the heavens as they unfold in splendor before my eyes.

I must confess that at times I had difficulty understanding some of what I was reading. I found myself rereading sentences, or even whole paragraphs, over and over until I was satisfied I understood what Dr. DiCenso was explaining. In fact, the harder I struggled to pin down what I was reading, the more elusive this understanding became. Finally I realized, I wasn't just reading the material, I was trying to change it to conform to my own perception of reality. Once I understood this, I relaxed and actually began enjoying what I was reading. To my amazement, I also understood it much better. I am reminded of the Beatles' lyric: "*Turn off your mind, relax and float down stream.*" So I urge the reader to enjoy the ride as Dr. DiCenso leads us on an amazing journey through the mind-body continuum and the collective mind we all seem to sense, but often have no words to describe. Dr. DiCenso gives us the words, the pictures and the road map to follow, while navigating this journey on our own.

Two key elements of this roadmap to personal change are Dr. DiCenso's *caveats* and his concept of *Vicious Cycle Disorders*. The caveats are the pearls of wisdom gleaned from his thirty years of experience in the clinical application of diverse disciplines. They are simple, but profound, truths that are held to be self-evident and which serve as signposts to guide us along our way.

Dr. DiCenso's concept of *Vicious Cycle Disorders* beautifully describes the self-perpetuating nature of many of the unrelenting burdens we carry in life. These burdens include the chronic diseases that are so often lifestyle-dependent, as well as the undiagnosed illnesses represented by vague symptoms. Like a scratch on the record album of our personal realities, the *Vicious Cycle Disorder* keeps skipping. It causes the recurrence of the same

x ■ Beyond Medicine

thoughts, behaviors, and physiologic responses that lead to the same negative outcomes over and over again. Vicious Cycle Disorders undercut the homeostatic processes that maintain balance in our lives, and sabotage the self-healing capabilities of our bodies. Dr. DiCenso shows us how to identify these processes and explains how we can effectively deal with them.

This is an important book for many reasons. It should be on the required reading list for all alternative and conventional healthcare providers who seek to help their patients unravel the mysteries of their symptoms and change their lives. By establishing the biophysical basis of the body-mind connection, Dr. DiCenso closes the gap that separates medical and naturopathic sciences. He creates a theoretical framework in which treatment approaches from both fields can be brought to bear on a particular health problem. This book is also important for those individuals who wish to better understand themselves and others around them. Dr. DiCenso has the unique gift of seeing clearly through the haze that separates each of us in our individual perceptions of reality. Not only is he able to see plainly into this realm of virtual reality, but he is also able to guide us through it and show us how to navigate this world on our own. I have read no other book of philosophy, Eastern mysticism or Western psychotherapeutics that comes close to such clarity of vision in explaining how consciousness works in directing the mind-body relationship.

David B. Holt, M.D.