

# Health's ANSWER PEOPLE

BY MIRKA KNASTER

**P**UT YOUR MONEY where your mouth is? For Joanie Minkler, fifty-two, of Sedona, Arizona, in 1988 doing so would have meant spending more than \$10,000 to have all of her teeth pulled and replaced with implants. Periodontitis (softening of the bone around the teeth) had already cost her two teeth and more than \$3,000 in surgery. What to do?

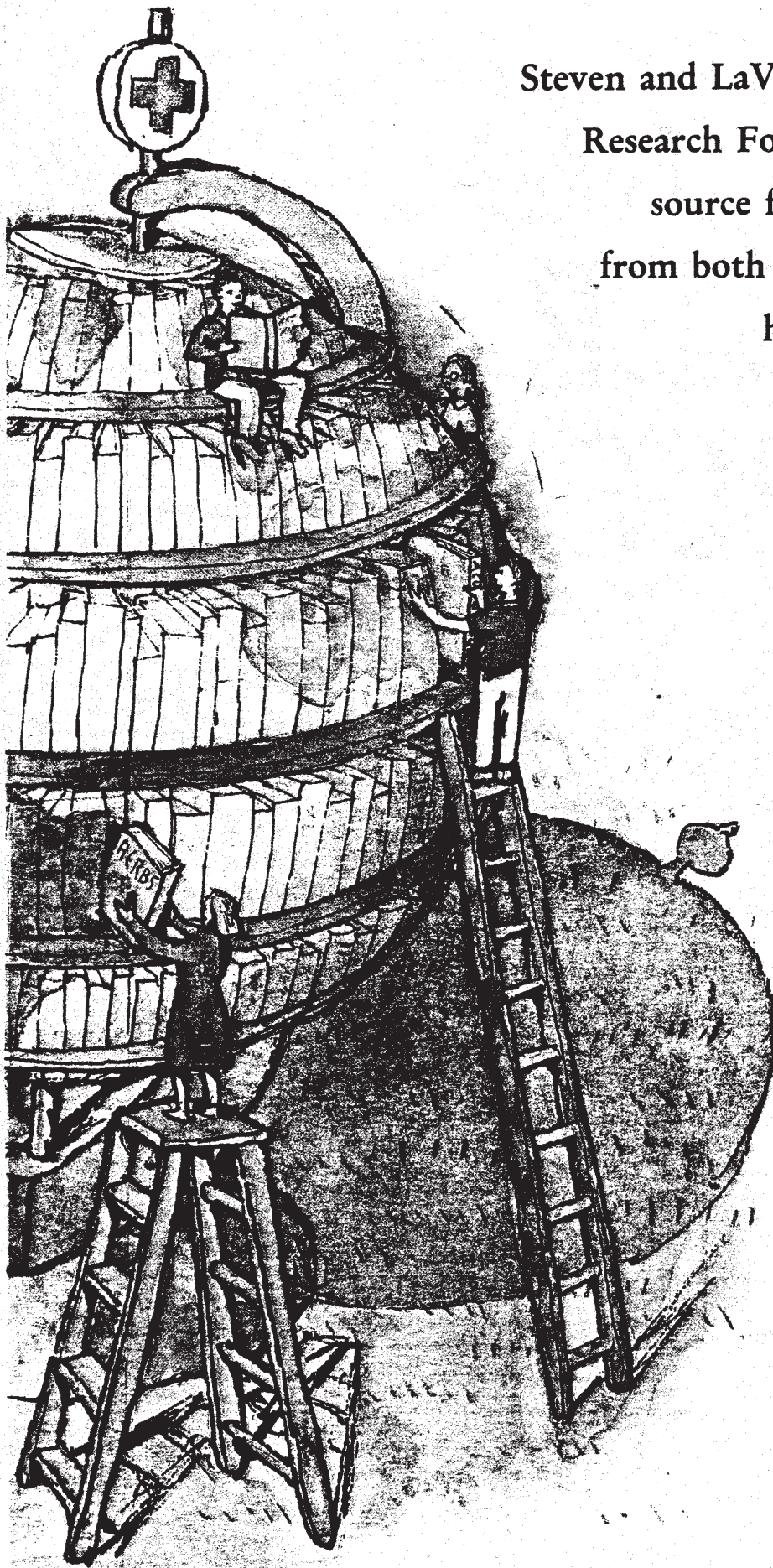
“Going the allopathic way was pretty radical,” Minkler recalls. “They say this could come with age, but I don’t buy that. I didn’t have any cavities and the other bones in my body weren’t deteriorating.”

On a hunch that her condition was a direct result of a bout with candidiasis, which had greatly weakened her immune system and landed her in the hospital in 1987, she decided to skip the conventional



## Steven and LaVerne Ross's World

Research Foundation is a unique  
source for information on health  
from both the conventional and  
holistic viewpoints.



medical route and investigate alternative approaches. Unlike many people at similar crossroads, she knew exactly where to go for help: the World Research Foundation.

The brainchild of Steven and LaVerne Ross, the WRF is a worldwide, nonprofit health and environmental information network headquartered in Sherman Oaks, California, and with regional offices in Sedona, Arizona; Stuttgart, Germany; and Hangzhou, People's Republic of China.

The Rosses founded WRF in 1984 on the belief that people should be informed of all available treatments for diseases and have the freedom to choose. As a result, in addition to allowing the public to use its extensive library facilities free of charge, WRF provides an information service for a modest fee. It taps into data from both conventional modern medicine and

alternative and complementary therapies, some of which is often overlooked, unavailable, or in limited use in the United States. No treatment is promoted as better or worse than the other.

"The World Research Foundation has no attachment to any particular medical philosophy," according to the Rosses' promotional literature. "The purpose of the foundation is to locate, gather, codify, evaluate, classify, and disseminate all information dealing with health and the environment . . . in an unbiased, neutral, and independent manner: . . . [having] no affiliation with political, religious, social, or special interest organizations."

If Minkler had wanted to learn about everything on periodontitis from the Western perspective, she could have ordered a computer search. As a member of 500 databases keyed into allopathic medicine, WRF is able to provide information from 5,000 medical journals in more than 100 countries. The information, however, tends to be highly technical and usually covers only surgery and drugs.

Minkler opted for WRF's other information service, a library search of books, periodicals, and research studies from foreign countries in alternative or complementary medicine. In response to a patron's request, a researcher goes through WRF's library materials on everything from acupuncture to bio-electricity, from color therapy to nutrition, then photocopies relevant pages and highlights with colored markers those sections pertinent to the person's problem. The title page of the book is also included for any follow-up.

"I got a packet about three inches thick," says Minkler. "I read through it and found what was comfortable for me. It was trial and error—what felt right, what was convenient—because there are many choices. A person has to find what works." While homeopathy had helped her in other areas Minkler found that it didn't do anything for her current condition. But a combination of diet, herbs, acupuncture, acupressure, mineral and vitamin supplementation, and reflexology did work.

"The problem isn't totally healed," she admits, "but my gums have tightened up and I still have my teeth."

To use WRF's service effectively, Minkler suggests keeping several things in mind. "Know what you're dealing with through diagnosis and several opinions,"

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WRF FOUNDERS STEVEN AND LAVERNE ROSS: GATHERING THE APPROPRIATE PIECES OF THE HEALTH PUZZLE.

she advises. "Know how much responsibility you're willing to take for your health, because if you go the alternative way then most of the burden is on you. You're not just going to a doctor who gives you a shot or cuts something out."

**T**HOUSANDS OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS have also availed themselves of WRF's services, more than 2,500 medical doctors among them.

"No allopathic doctor can know everything—there's just too much," says Robert Jaffe, M.D., who is licensed as an allopathic and homeopathic physician in the state of Arizona. When a female patient with adrenal insufficiency came to see him, he had WRF do a computer search.

"They came back with twenty sheets of the latest information on the topic," Jaffe recalls. "With that I was able to put her on a whole regimen of things that I had not learned about in medical school."

For a patient with herpes, Jaffe ordered a library search and received seventy-five pages on alternative treatments. Having obtained good value from the many requests he's made, Jaffe says categorically, "Anybody who has a disease ought to have a run done by the WRF. They will give you all the possibilities."

WRF is able to offer so many choices

because of its local and international ties. WRF's board of advisors is composed of more than ninety physicians, scientists, and other specialists in Africa, Europe, South America, and Asia. In addition to the 10,000 volumes located in the Sherman Oaks office, which includes reprints of books from as early as the 1600s, WRF has access to the personal library of a homeopathic physician down the street—2,500 publications on homeopathy in five languages. There are another 5,000 books in Sedona, 8,000 in Germany, and 40,000 in China, dating back to A.D. 200. A recent affiliation with an ayurvedic college in India has added some 4,000 volumes on ayurvedic medicine.

The Rosses' long-range plan is to set up more than two dozen WRF field offices worldwide, all equipped with fax machines to facilitate faster data transfer.

"We give people basic information," says Steven Ross. "But if they need more, we're able to go right to the source in other countries." For example, if a client reads through the information sent about multiple sclerosis and learns that a clinic in Europe has treated it successfully, he or she can ask whether the treatment is effective in cases of Grade 5 MS. WRF will wire its German office to contact the clinic.

"We'll even send a team of advisors—an M.D., a physicist, and a chemist—to check them out," explains the slender, bespectacled Ross, whose conservative

Photo courtesy of World Research Foundation

looks belie his passionate dedication and intense energy. "We want to know: Does it really work? Is it sound in its chemical composition? And is there some science behind what they're doing?" WRF will also give the address and phone number of a clinic so that a client can communicate with it directly.

In 1988 WRF offices handled approximately 16,000 inquiries. A year later, requests were up to 24,000, in part because the foundation supplied information on the health effects of malathion for Los Angeles City Council hearings on malathion spraying. WRF is also capable of researching more than 60,000 drugs.

Says Steven Ross, "We can handle every topic, but there may not be anything even in the alternative field that will work." As an example, Ross mentions structural or congenital problems, such as when infants are born without a particular organ or with a hole in the heart. "They need surgery," he admits. "Complementary medicine is not going to have anything for them. But if someone comes to us regarding cancer, diabetes, or ar-

thritis, then we have a tremendous amount."

In fact, it is for those three diseases, along with multiple sclerosis and immune deficiencies, that WRF receives the most frequent queries. An information packet on any of these conditions now runs to almost a ream of paper, for as the library expands, paid researchers or volunteers scan new publications for items they can add to the already substantial bundle.

Whether you request a computer or library search, the fee is the same—\$45 including shipping within the U.S. (plus tax for California residents). Considering the cost of labor, equipment, and materials, and compared to what a standard medical office visit costs, \$45 seems like an incredible bargain.

"We lose money on the library searches," Steven Ross says. "But I've been a stickler on that. If we raise prices higher and higher, how are people going to afford us?" However, because WRF exists primarily on donations, which vary from year to year, it is now considering raising its rate slightly to help offset the

loss. The foundation is also looking at how to make its operation more efficient by computerizing the complementary medicine information. Instead of a personal search, the computer would generate all the relevant data at the stroke of a key.

So why would Ross, who graduated college with a degree in finance and business and who later worked as a consultant, operate at a loss? "We had a dream... to build something that would make a contribution," the Rosses told the *Los Angeles Times* last October.

The Rosses believe that the pieces which will complete the "puzzle of health" are already in existence. "Unfortunately, many times these health solutions have not been shared, disbursed, or even understood by others outside the geographical area of discovery, because of language difficulties, communication problems, and the egos of those who do not accept any information that is foreign to their philosophy. Therefore, in order to see the picture of health, we must gather the appropriate pieces."

## In Search of LUPUS ALTERNATIVES

A REQUEST TO THE WORLD RESEARCH FOUNDATION for a library search on lupus yielded a hefty response. The package that arrived weighed nearly five pounds and contained forty-five items, along with a brochure on WRF, a form letter, a description of the differences between the computer and library searches, a copy of WRF's newsletter, a disclaimer of warranty on the information, and a questionnaire.

The packet consisted predominantly of excerpts from books, although there were also magazine and newspaper articles. Most specifically addressed lupus. A few were general, such as a survey of environmental health hazards and a brief guide to alternative methods of healing. For someone new to such methods, the latter serves as an introduction to the rest of the materials and describes treatment regimens in acupuncture, homeopathy, naturopathy, light therapy, herbs, color therapy, vitamin supplements, chelation therapy, nutrition, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, and Tibetan medicine.

There were also items that explained the disease—its causes and symptoms—from both Western and Eastern medical perspectives. A computer printout from a nutrition data bank provided a summary of information from books and articles by various authors. And one excerpt listed an American clinic that offers alternative therapy for lupus. But, surprisingly, there was no mention of Laura Chester's *Lupus Novice: Toward Self-Healing* (Station Hill Press, 1989).

For anyone interested in reviewing a wider array of options than that provided by allopathic medicine, the WRF library search seems a useful place to start.

—M.K.

TOWARD THAT END, THE ROSSSES have been gathering for a couple of decades. Unbeknown to each other, they had been collecting his-and-her libraries before they met on a blind date in 1983. When they married the following year, they combined their personal storehouses of information. What had begun as a hobby soon took over their lives. They pooled their life savings to start the WRF.

The Rosses operated out of their home for the first year, 1984-85, before moving to an office building in Sherman Oaks, a suburb of Los Angeles. Four stories above the busy intersection of Ventura and Sepulveda Boulevards, the atmosphere is professional yet homey. The earth-tone furnishings remind one of a family den rather than a slick L.A. office.

"We try to make it comfortable for people," says LaVerne Ross, whose face lights up when she smiles. "They've just been diagnosed and come in scared, so we welcome them like long-lost friends."

That's what Allegra Mars, a New York dancer, encountered when she happened upon the WRF on a trip to Sedona in 1989 and met Adele Ross (Steven's mother), who directs that field office. Mars had just been told that she had cervical cancer and an immediate hysterectomy was imperative. The doctors also admitted to her, however, that sur-

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gery probably wouldn't do any good.

"It's very shocking to get a diagnosis like that," says Mars. "Moral support is really important." She found great comfort not only in Adele Ross, who was "incredibly helpful emotionally," but also in the extensiveness of WRF's library and in the information search she requested. "It adds a lot of hope that there are so many alternatives to explore," says Mars. "It stops much of the panic you can be in [wondering], 'Oh God, what will I do?'"

In addition to considering the specific recommendations listed in the forty-page packet she received, Mars let her intuition guide her to various healers in the area, including one suggested by Adele Ross. A year later, the bleeding, infections, fifty-pound weight gain, and lumps in her abdomen gone, Mars says, "I'm convinced that if I'd gone the conventional way, I'd be dead now. I'm just so happy that World Research was there and that I was able to get a lot of information about alternatives."

Different personal journeys led the Rosses to set up places where both concrete information and emotional support assist people in locating the pieces of the health puzzle that will help heal them. Steven Ross got his first glimpse of such missing pieces during the late 1960s, when he was on a track-and-field scholarship at what is now called California State University at Northridge. He sustained an injury and was sent to see well-respected sports physicians in the Los Angeles area. They advised knee surgery. But while reading a popular magazine after his last medical examination, Ross learned about a technique used in Europe. Neither the doctors nor the trainers knew anything about it, so on his own he tried the therapy, which involved a continuous series of alternating heat with ice massage. He missed only three weeks of practice and ended up having a stellar year.

"For me the seed was planted," Steven Ross recalls. "Why was it that these so-called experts were not aware of this?" He kept on reading, this time in ancient philosophy, extracting the healing techniques described by Pythagoras, Plato, and Paracelsus, as well as in the ayurvedic and Buddhist traditions, among others. "The body hasn't changed for

thousands of years. Is it not possible that what Pythagoras spoke about is just as pertinent today as it was in 550 B.C.?" Ross asks. "Why is it that we accept him as a great mathematician but don't look at his medicine?"

LaVerne Ross had a different experience. In 1970, when she was only twenty-one, her gynecologist, who had been monitoring her health because of a family history of cancer, announced that she had developed tumors the size of golf balls in the two months since her last visit. Her option? A hysterectomy, or at the very least, removal of the tumors. According to the doctor remission seemed unlikely.

"Imagine, at that age, thinking of having everything taken out," says Ross, an attractive, blue-eyed blonde. Instead, she turned to visualization as well as vitamins and Chinese herbs to strengthen the female organs to resist or reduce tumors. Two months later her physician was incredulous that only indentations remained in the tissue where the tumors had grown. He gave her a clean bill of health.

"That planted the roots really deeply for me," says Ross. Although she had wanted to become a doctor since the age of five, she had to give up the idea when she realized that she didn't have the stomach for surgery. "It seemed barbaric to me," she remembers of the first surgeries she saw. "But I never lost my love for helping people to feel better." She studied reflexology, acupuncture, and herbs in her spare time from teaching elementary school.

When LaVerne and Steven Ross met, it was obvious how neatly their interests dovetailed and how much they felt compelled to do something that would reach far beyond themselves. They continued to accumulate data and make contacts, even traveling overseas to various medical and scientific institutes, colleges, and laboratories. The more they learned about successful treatments either unavailable or unknown at home, the more they wanted to share the information with others.

"We recognized that this is a pharmaceutically dominated country. We decided that we would act as a conduit, that our purpose would be to expose people to what is going on around the world," Steven Ross explains. He then qualifies. "But we never prescribe."

Among the many discoveries they made were certain therapies and products used in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. The work of Dinshah Ghadiali, in particular, later proved significant in unexpected ways. Originally from India, Ghadiali

taught a system of treating disease by exposing the human body to colored light.

According to Steven Ross, beginning in the early 1900s Ghadiali's students in America were medical practitioners as well as lay people. But in 1931 he was tried in the Supreme Court of New York. He was acquitted when doctor after doctor testified as to the positive results they had achieved using his method for treating cancer, diabetes, and syphilis. In 1945 he was charged with practicing medicine without a license. In response, he offered to return to India if the American Medical Association could demonstrate that his color therapy wasn't effective. The AMA never took up the challenge. More than two decades after Ghadiali's death in 1966, U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations continue to prevent the sale of the Spectro-Chrome color projectors he had invented, though his book *Let There Be Light* (Dinshah Health Society, 1985) informs readers about how to create their own and use them for hundreds of ailments.

Learning about Ghadiali and others became critical to Steven Ross's own family. Ross tells the story of how his father checked into a local hospital with back spasms that culminated in an infection in his spinal cord and neck that left him a quadriplegic. The doctors said that although they could operate, afterward nothing else could be done beyond quadriplegic training. Steven and LaVerne brought their slide projector into the hospital room and used yellow light to stimulate his father's motor-nervous system.

Six weeks later, says Steven Ross, the medical chart read, "The patient has made a tremendous recovery from quadriplegia. Major problem remains in neurogenic bladder; may need permanent catheter." Not willing to accept that either, the Rosses took him out of the hospital—he was now walking with a cane—and put him on an electromagnetic frequency wave machine that had been around in the 1940s. "Using this machine, not only did we bring back his bladder in one day, but he was walking normally, without a cane, six days after he left the hospital," says Steven Ross. "And Dad's therapy cost only three cents a day—alternating current out of the wall."

It is because of this incident and many others that WRF offers a wide variety of information options. The Rosses do not believe that we should submit to living with certain conditions for which Western medicine has no cure.

"Who says that the answer to a particular medical problem is chemical?" Steven Ross asks. "It would appear that the group telling you that there will be a chemical answer for your problem is the same [one] that will be selling you the solution. If there is not an immediate chemical answer, we are told that there is no solution for the medical problem. Just because someone tells you [that] does not mean [it's so]. It may only mean that the person or group speaking has no solution."

**I**N 1986 THE ROSSES DECIDED TO EXPAND WRF's activities by sponsoring congresses where the latest solutions could be reported and researchers from various countries could meet one another. The first one, held in Los Angeles that November, was a combination of lectures, seminars, and workshops on bioenergetic medicine, with professionals from six European countries and the United States. International speakers at the 1988 WRF congress reported on their work in fever therapy and cancer, African herbal remedies, allergy therapies, vibrational healing, acupuncture, and many other subjects.

At last fall's congress, more than 600 participants, nearly 200 of them M.D.'s and Ph.D.'s, heard from numerous noted healers. For instance, Bernard Marichal, M.D., reported on a Belgian study of AIDS patients in which homeopathic treatment boosted their immune systems and reduced complications related to the disease. Professors Sergei Sitko and Vladimir Zhukovsky from the Soviet Union discussed microwave resonance therapy, a high frequency, low intensity electromagnetic treatment that is said to influence the individual cell at the cell membrane level. Jean-Claude Darras, M.D., spoke about his work at Necker Hospital in Paris, in which he and an associate are making the Chinese acupuncture meridian system visible by injecting a radioactive solution into the body and tracking it with CAT scans. A congress highlight was the first showing in the United States of rare video footage taken through the new Ergonom 400, a high-tech microscope developed in West Germany that has been used to identify three AIDS viruses and to develop new cancer detection techniques.

Such presentations have attracted major corporations to WRF, firms that are trying to keep abreast of worldwide medical advances. For just that reason, Mutual Benefit Life, a Newark, New

Jersey-based insurance carrier, is a subscribing member that uses the foundation's services on a regular basis. WRF has even helped that company set up conferences with researchers involved in breakthrough projects.

"We consider the foundation a unique and invaluable resource," as Anthony Tarasenko, M.D., Mutual Benefit's medical director, told the *Los Angeles Times* just before the 1990 congress opened. Although Tarasenko acknowledged that some of the information is available elsewhere, he is impressed with the speed and economy with which WRF responds.

WRF also has established the World Research Foundation Fund "to raise and distribute funds for research in all aspects of health utilizing complementary techniques." (Steven Ross prefers the word "complementary" to "alternative" because what is alternative in the United States may be commonplace in another country where it has existed for thousands of years.)

"I for one am tired of hearing the phrases, 'the answer is right around the corner,' . . . [or] 'although the results are promising, it looks like the new therapy will be available in ten years,' " said Ross in a recent issue of *World Research News*, WRF's newsletter. He cited a host of doctors and government agencies that concluded that conventional cancer therapies generally are useless and unsafe. "I believe that it is time to re-evaluate the areas of research into which the citizens of the United States have poured billions of dollars . . . to stop the nonsense and begin to pursue venues that might lead to more effective solutions." The Rosses hope that eventually such treatments and cures will win U.S. government approval and thus finally become part of the health picture here too.

"We would like eventually to reach every corner of the world," states Steven Ross, "to increase viable options that might assist people with their problem. Then the choice is up to the individual and the medical professional. Only with knowledge can you decide the merits of any idea. Free choice is not free—it must be pursued, defended, and utilized." □

## RESOURCES

*To request a computer or library search, a copy of the newsletter, or information about the congresses, including audio cassettes, contact: The World Research Foundation,*

**www.WRF.org**