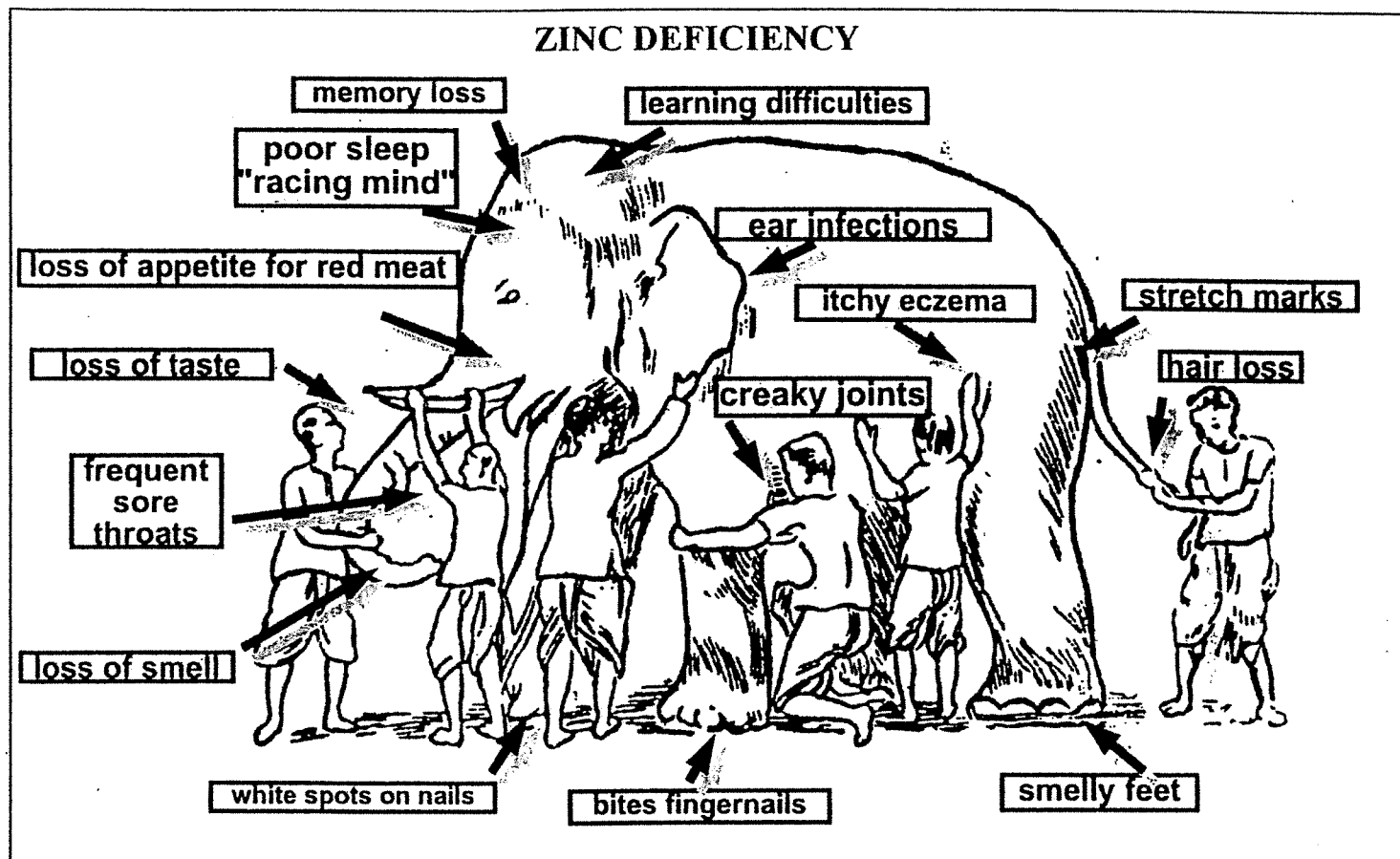


This delightful contemporary version of the old story of the elephant and blind men is rather where we find ourselves with the health system and alternative medicine today. Everyone seems to be looking at different parts of the puzzle in isolation and not seeing the "Big Picture".

We make no claims to have the finished prize. We never finish learning more - but perhaps this booklet will help you see more of your elephant.

For example, if we look at the elephant of zinc deficiency we can see that there are many signs and symptoms but that part of the picture displayed by our body may be different to that of someone else. So learning to recognise our own signposts will show us the way to solve some of the health problems we encounter now and later.

We need to follow where the trail leads us.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The simple version taught to us as nurses, was that a sign is something you can see, hear, smell or palpate and a symptom is something that is experienced or of which the patient complains. So in the zinc example above, *white spots on fingernails* and *smelly feet* are signs and *memory loss* and *creaky joints* are symptoms.

The difference is that a sign can be verified and often symptoms we have to take the person's word for. In the following pages are deficiency profiles for Vitamins and Minerals that contain both signs and symptoms that we will recognise in ourselves and in others. On their own they may appear insignificant and not worth mentioning to the doctor but they have a clear message for us if we can recognise what they mean. The doctor is not interested in the fact that when my B12 levels are getting low I need to wash my hair more often and become more disorganised at home.

He will only be interested when I complain of severe fatigue and shortness of breath and the blood test he has done for iron levels and thyroid are OK. Then he might do a blood test for B12. By the time it registers low in the blood, my body will have been struggling for some time, my nerves becoming demyelinated, brain deteriorating as in Alzheimer's, nutrients not reaching fingers and toes because of circulatory problems causing pins and needles and possibly painful spurs presenting. My homocysteine levels will be dangerously elevated from low B12 and I will be at risk of heart attack, stroke, cancer, diabetes and arthritis.

If we can use these simple tests to work out our problems while they are still small ones, we can avoid larger more serious health problems further down the track. Be on the look out for these simple signposts to get us back on track to better health. A healthy future is in our own hands. The responsibility is ours to correct it now.

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived six blind men. Each of them was very wise. Each of them had gone to school and read lots of books in braille.

They knew so much about so many things that people would often come from miles around to get their advice. They were happy to share whatever they knew with the people who asked them thoughtful questions.

One day these six wise blind men went for a walk in the zoo. That day the zoo-keeper was worrying about all of her many troubles. The night before she had had an argument with her husband, and her children had been misbehaving all day long. She had so much on her mind that she forgot to lock the gate of the elephant cage as she was leaving it.

Now, elephants are naturally very curious animals. They quickly tried to push the gate to the cage to see if it might open. To their great surprise, the gate swung freely on its hinge. Two of the more daring elephants walked over to the gate. They looked left and right, and then quietly tip-toed out of the cage.

Just at that moment the six blind men walked by. One of them heard a twig snap, and went over to see what it was that was walking by.

"Hi there !" said the first blind man to the first elephant. "Could you please tell us the way to the Zoo Restaurant?"

The elephant couldn't think of anything intelligent to say, so he sort of shifted his weight from left to right to right to left.

The first blind man walked over to see if this big silent person needed any help. Then, with a big bump, he walked right into the side of the elephant. He put out his arms to either side, but all he could feel was the big body of the elephant.

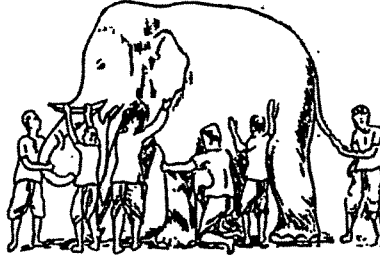
Boy," said the first blind man. "I think I must have walked into a wall. "

The second blind man was becoming more and more curious about what was happening. He walked over to the front of the elephant and grabbed hold of the animal's trunk.

He quickly let go and shouted, "This isn't a wall. This is a snake! We should step back in case it's poisonous."

The third man quickly decided to find out what was going on, and to tell his friends what they had walked into. He walked over to the back of the elephant and touched the animal's tail. "This is no wall, and this is no snake. You are both wrong once again. I know for sure that this is a rope."

The fourth man sighed as he knew how stubborn his friends could be. He decided that someone should really get to the bottom of this thing. So he crouched down on all fours and felt around the elephant's legs. (Luckily for the fourth man, this elephant was very tame and wouldn't think of stepping on a human being.)



"My dear friends," explained the fourth man. "This is no wall and this is no snake. This is no rope either. What we have here, gentlemen, is four tree trunks. That's it. Case closed."

The fifth blind man was not so quick to jump to conclusions. He walked up to the front of the elephant and felt the animal's two long tusks. "It seems to me that this object is made up of two swords," said the fifth man. "What I am holding is long and curved and sharp at the end. I am not sure what this could be, but maybe our sixth friend could help us."

The sixth blind man scratched his head and thought and thought. He was the one who really was the wisest of all of them. He was the one who really knew what he knew, and knew what he didn't know.

Just then the worried zoo-keeper walked by. "Hi there ! How are you enjoying the zoo today ?" she asked them all.

"The zoo is very nice," replied the sixth blind man. "Perhaps you could help us figure out the answer to a question that's been puzzling us."

"Sure thing," said the zoo-keeper, as she firmly grabbed the elephant's collar.

"My friends and I can't seem to figure out what this thing in front of us is. One of us thinks it's a wall; one thinks it's a snake; one thinks it's a rope, and one thinks it's four tree trunks. How can one thing seem so different to five different people?"

"Well," said the zoo-keeper. "You are all right. This elephant seems like something different to each one of you. And the only way to know what this thing really is is to do exactly what you have done. Only by sharing what each of you knows can you possibly reach a true understanding."

The six wise men had to agree with the wisdom of the zoo-keeper. The first five of them had been too quick to form an opinion without listening to what the others had to say.

So they all went off to the Zoo Restaurant and had a really hearty lunch.