

## Arnold Ehret (1866-1922)

Sussanna Czeranko, ND

The writings of Arnold Ehret (1866-1922) immortalized his ideas and have become intrinsic to Naturopathic practice right up into our own era. He introduced cleansing diets of fruits and vegetables, and correctly managed fasting, directly addressing the dangers of mucus forming foods. From his perspective over a century ago, refined foods were the culprit and “the fundamental cause and main factor in the nature of all diseases, symptoms of age, obesity, falling out of the hair, wrinkles, weakness of nerves and memory, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

It seemed in the beginning that his destiny was to follow in his father’s footsteps and die of tuberculosis. By the time he was 31, he was overweight, had Bright’s disease [nephritis], and inclined with consumptive symptomology, so much so that he needed to take several breaks from his work to recuperate.<sup>2</sup> In his own words, Ehret described the ordeals of restoring his health: “Then for five years, I suffered much from many physicians (24 in total) and part of this suffering was to pay the bills of about \$6000 [more than \$170 000 in 2019], but with the result pronounced *incurable*.”<sup>2</sup> Not seeing a way out of his predicament with debts, and with no hope for recovery, Ehret contemplated suicide. By chance, though, he overheard stories of Naturopathy and the Kneipp cures.

Ehret never claimed to be the one who invented fasting or a fruit diet. His particular contribution to the Naturopathic repertoire is having combined these two elements together into a comprehensive system that transformed the lives of patients who consulted him. He called his diet, “the Mucusless Diet Healing System” after [his] ‘mucus theory’ had become a well established as a substantial explanation for what he contended to be the largest factor in and fundamental cause of every diseased condition.”<sup>3</sup> He developed a whole foods diet consisting of fruits and vegetables which were consumed before fasting. From Ehret’s perspective, the fastest way to recover health was by doing a fast. Ehret saw the seat of disease within the body causally connected to the food eaten. Bear in mind, he often said, that mucus in the body begins in childhood and accumulates into a problem later in life.

Ehret’s Mucusless Diet Healing System helped dissolve and loosen up any stored mucus. He writes, “As soon as you fast—decrease the quantity of your food—or eat natural, cleansing mucusless foods, (fruits and starchless vegetables), the body is afforded an opportunity to loosen and eliminate mucus, which is in fact the healing process.”<sup>4</sup>

The diet that Ehret introduced in America in the early 20th century was, from our perspective today, an early

version of the ‘Anti-Inflammatory Diet’. The early Naturopaths talked about morbid matter and had a host of ways of describing toxins or undesirable elements in the body. The notion of dietary indiscretions was central to the morbid matter theory. The essence of the Ehret’s work aligned with the findings of Louis Kuhne, who had earlier introduced the concept of “one disease”. Kuhne labeled foreign substances as morbid matter, which was a result of over-eating, poor food choices, or breathing poor, unhealthy air. Kuhne stated in his seminal work in 1891: “All forms of disease are to be traced back to encumbrance of the system with foreign matter; in other words: There is only one disease, appearing in the most various forms ... and only one method of treatment is necessary.”<sup>5</sup> Ehret, himself, recognized that many of his predecessors had similar views on diet, readily acknowledging and commending their work: “The discoveries and methods of the pioneers, Schroth, Priessnitz, Kuhne, Kneipp, Lahmann, Just, Engelhardt and others are based more or less on restricted diet.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Ehret established mucus-causing foods and over eating as the chief culprits in disease. His conclusion: “[Superb health] is only possible by a mucusless diet and rightly conducted fasting. We now know that wrong and too much food are the CAUSES of all disease, and its ONLY complete cure is by right diet and fasting.”<sup>3</sup> Tragically, Ehret’s life was cut short by a haphazard accident, yet his writings continued to be published by Benedict Lust and continue to be found in health stores across North America even today.

The legacy of these six courageous and shining stars gives them front row status in our hall of fame. They left behind pearls and tools for our armamentarium. Their writings are tangible and accessible as we reach back into rich history to access their teachings and their truths.

### References

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