The current healthcare debate has brought up basic questions about how medicine should work. On one hand we have the medical establishment, with its enormous cadre of M.D.s, medical schools, Big Pharma, and incredibly expensive hospital care. On the other, we have the semi-condoned field of alternative medicine that attracts millions of patients a year and embraces literally thousands of treatment modalities not taught in medical school.

One side, mainstream medicine, promotes the notion that it alone should be considered “real” medicine, but more and more this claim is being exposed as an officially sanctioned myth. When scientific minds turn to tackling the complex business of healing the sick, they simultaneously warn us that it’s dangerous and foolish to look at integrative medicine, complementary and alternative medicine, or—God forbid—indigenous medicine for answers. Because these other modalities are enormously popular, mainstream medicine has made a few grudging concessions to the placebo effect, natural herbal remedies, and acupuncture over the years. But M.D.s are still taught that other approaches are risky and inferior to their own training. They insist, year after year, that all we need are science-based procedures and the huge spectrum of drugs upon which modern medicine depends.
We are not suggesting that Americans adopt any and all alternative practices simply because they are alternative. These, too, must demonstrate their effectiveness through objective testing. Unnecessary procedures that have been shown to benefit no one absolutely, except corporate stockholders should not be dismissed out of hand in favor of expensive and risky or outright harmful. Obviously, every patient deserves medical care that is evidence-based, not just based on an illusory reputation that is promoted in contrast to conventional medical practice.

This is the central claim of Mythology of Science Based Medicine by Larry Dossey, MD, Deepak Chopra, MD, and Rustum Roy, PhD. The book is a scathing critique of the current medical establishment and its failure to provide effective and safe treatment for patients. The authors argue that the concept of evidence-based medicine is a myth and that much of what is considered conventional medicine is based on anecdotal evidence and corporate利益.

In their analysis, the authors cite numerous examples of medical treatments that have been shown to be ineffective or harmful. For example, they point out that antidepressants, which are the number-one prescribed medication, and their use has doubled in the last 10 years. You would think, therefore, that a remarkable endorsement is being offered for the efficacy of antidepressants. The theory behind standard antidepressant medication is that the disease is caused by low levels of key brain chemicals like serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine, and thus by manipulating those imbalanced neurotransmitters, a patient's depression will be reversed, or at least alleviated.

For those who have been paying attention, this is not news. Back in the late '70s, the American Medical Association estimated that 38 percent of completed Cochrane reviews of conventional medical practices indicated that the treatments were positive and 62 percent were either negative or showed "no evidence of effect." When you take your sick child to the hospital or clinic, there is only a 36 percent chance that he or she will receive a treatment that has been scientifically demonstrated to be either beneficial or likely to be beneficial. This is remarkably similar to the results Dr. Brian Berman found in his analysis of completed Cochrane reviews of conventional medical practice. Thirty percent of treatments were deemed effective, 23 percent were likely to be beneficial, 6 percent were unlikely to be beneficial, 2 percent were likely to be harmful or ineffective, and 13 percent were found to be beneficial.

The book is divided into eight sections that explore the Mythology of Science Based Medicine. The sections include:

1. Mythology of Evidence-Based Medicine
2. Mythology of Randomized Controlled Trials
3. Mythology of Placebo Effects
4. Mythology of Alternative Medicine
5. Mythology of Placebo Induction
6. Mythology of Corporate Medicine
7. Mythology of Corporate Control
8. Mythology of Corporate Fraud

The authors argue that much of what is considered conventional medicine is based on anecdotal evidence and corporate interests. They highlight the role of the pharmaceutical industry in influencing medical practice and the role of government regulation in allowing dangerous treatments to be approved.

The book is a must-read for anyone interested in alternative medicine and evidence-based medicine. It is a powerful critique of the current medical establishment and a call to action for patients to demand better care and for medical professionals to re-examine their practices.