

Color Therapy: An Old *New Age* Therapeutic Option

by

Darius Dinshah

It is said that everything that goes around comes around, or there is nothing new under the sun; this is certainly true of color therapy. While details may not exist, gem therapy, a form of color therapy which is still practiced, dates into antiquity. Using a particular colored gem would give an effect similar to using an inexpensive, comparably-colored, presently available filter.

Color therapy came into a more modern form in the mid-1800's through the efforts of several researchers. Notable among them were General Augustus Pleasanton, and two physicians, Seth Pancoast and Edwin D. Babbitt. Though the electric light was not yet invented, their utilization of sunlight and glass filters served as efficiently as any present-day therapeutic device.

The first edition of the classic reference volume, *Principles of Light and Color* by Dr. Babbitt, was published in 1878. It detailed many case histories that were successfully treated with color therapy using a rudimentary device: a colored glass bottle. It has been reprinted through the years in its original 56 - page format, as well as in edited versions. The book also covered his thoughts regarding the value of different colors in plant life, in clothing, etc.

A difficult point for many to understand: How can colored light possibly cause a physiologic effect inside a human (or animal) body? Several answers can be given, each may be correct for a particular case or health condition.

The first, and probably best known, is "blue-light" therapy for some types of neonatal jaundice. Light applied to the skin causes a chemical reaction (photo-oxidation) in blood circulating under the skin. This effectively lessens bilirubin levels with the aid of the liver.

The second physiologic effect of light is the production of vitamin D as a result of light absorption by the skin. In this example, light is generated by a higher frequency (ultra-violet) than visible light.

Third, is the effect that results from light energy entering the eyes. It is a common misconception that the eyes function solely in the capacity of visual imaging. Light exposure is well known to cause a beneficial change in "seasonal affective disorder" (SAD), a condition believed to be caused by insufficient light energization through the eyes to the hypothalamus/pituitary gland.

The fourth physiological effect of light is the author's hypothesis, derived from several sources. Each individual cell in a living organism has a specific function to perform. In so doing, it generates and radiates a specific energy; the cellular energy totality is often termed the "aura". The liver radiates the equivalent frequency (harmonic) of red light, the pituitary radiates green, the spleen violet, heart is magenta, lymphatic system is yellow, and so on. The philosophy behind color therapy is this: when a particular organ or system is underactive, its auric level decreases, so the appropriate activating color is projected on the affected area (sometimes the entire body). If over activity is present, such as in a fever, the obvious remedy is an opposite (depressant) color. Further, by energizing the natural reparative powers present within us rather than relying on drugs with their attendant and often dangerous side-effects, resistant bacteria are discouraged.

Another important development in color therapy (Spectro-Chrome, 1920) was the codifying of colors with their chemical/physiologic effects, as in the above paragraph, by Dinshah P. Ghadiali. He based his Spectro-Chrome System on Dr. Babbitt's writings, his own experiences as an eclectic medical practitioner in India, and spectroscopic discoveries by Joseph von Fraunhofer, Gustav Kirchhoff, and other scientists of that era.

Dinshah, as he preferred to be known, devised a method of combining filters to create colors that do not exist in the visible spectrum. These "artificial" multi-frequency colors considerably expanded the scope of health conditions amenable to color therapy. That important innovation separated Spectro-Chrome from color therapy in its usual sense.

At this time, commercial color instruments range in the thousands of dollars and offer little advantage compared to the simplest box/lamp/filter arrangement costing less than \$50. The light source can be almost any incandescent bulb (or sunlight), but the selection of filters is of utmost importance.

This article was written to enlighten many to the possibility of using one of the world's oldest, safest, most effective therapies, now in a form more easily applied than ever in a home setting. Alas, we enter an emancipated therapeutic *New Age*.