

Practical Healing

An Introductory Guide to Trauma and Magic

The Nature of Healing

What does it mean to Heal? Healing can take many forms. For some it is merely Earth Magic used to repair immediate wounds while others have a much broader understanding encompassing the mental well-being of their subjects as well as the physical. Some who style themselves “Healers” rely solely on their powerful magic to affect a cure and some have barely any magic at all relying on herbs, alchemical potions and skill to cure their charges.

Different cultures, lands and organizations create their own definition of “Healer” and who qualifies to call themselves by that title. For the purposes of this treatise and to avoid unnecessary (and largely unrealistic) labeling arguments I will assume that you chose to read this document and therefore at least have a passing interest in being a Healer. That said there is a minimum level of training required to put most of the below information into effective use. Whether you read for this work from scholarly curiosity, professional interest or simply to gain a better understanding of the abilities of a Healer I wrote this treatise for you.

Training of a Healer

While methods and techniques vary at the heart all Healers receive the same basic lessons even before they move on to magic and other advanced treatment options- they learn to diagnose problems with the healing arts and to administer emergency first aid to stabilize those patients who are near death so that they may have the time necessary to Heal them.

Both of these skills are much more than they seem.

“First Aid” is known as such not only because it is the first skill most Healers learn but also because often before any other methods of healing can be employed it is necessary to stabilize the victim if only to ensure they survive long enough to receive treatment. Experienced healers will, when confronted with an unknown casualty who is unresponsive, immediately begin practicing first aid even before employing the Healing Arts to diagnose exactly what is wrong.

First Aid is nothing more or less than the treating of obvious symptoms. At first this is difficult for students to master but, as in all skills, it soon becomes second nature. With a cursory glance you become able to locate and staunch wounds, soothe bruising and detect broken or dislocated bones within the body. Often repairing or aiding these obvious symptoms is enough to prevent a patients’ death.

Unfortunately the only truly effective way to learn how to perform first aid is to work with a more experienced Healer and listen as they detail not only what they detect wrong with a subject but also how they react to it. Still below I have listed a short list of commonly seen ailments as well as treatment options which would work to alleviate the pain or immediacy of the symptoms allowing you to continue your work and Healing.

Cuts/bleeding- this is usually obviously a wound though occasionally it can be from the mouth, nose or appear in another manner that is difficult to detect (even, at times, simply seeping from the skin). If the wound is obvious you can use your hands or bandages to pull it closed again- this staunches the bleeding and allows the blood to clot naturally. If it is coming from another source try to elevate the area of bleeding above the heart- for example if the subject is bleeding from the mouth and nose try lifting the head and shoulders. This creates gravity the heart must pump against and will slow the bleeding.

Diseased or Ill- while diseases vary by land, race and age in almost all cases they are easily diagnosed and the patient will be able to communicate their symptoms. Occasionally someone is brought to the healers so far under the effects of a disease they are unconscious, fevered or unable to speak under their own power. In these cases it is often found to be beneficial move them into treatment immediately- first aid skills will have little effect. Nonetheless in an emergency a Healer needs to make sure that their breathing is clear and unobstructed (which may require propping the chest and head up, gently pounding the chest to release mucus in the lungs or sweeping the throat to ensure a clear esophagus). Patients being treated for a disease require so many different treatment types depending on which disease (and occasionally which variety of a disease) they have contracted that such a discussion goes beyond the scope of the document. Experience and research will allow a Healer to find teachers and materials to cover nearly any question they have.

Bruises and Blood Blisters- ranging from mild discolorations of the skin to immense body-spanning internal bleeding Bruises and Blisters can represent some of the most painful and persistent ailments. Indeed most other wounds will be accompanied by a Bruise or Blister.

These effects occur when blood or other internal fluid rushes to a point of trauma or damage and rather than bleeding externally will pool and clot within the skin. In most cases of minor bruising this is fine and serves to bolster the internal integrity of the skin. In cases of severe trauma, however, swelling may threaten to the life of the patient (the chest and head being noted for this).

Treatment for severe Bruising requires removing any object contact with the affected area and often relies on cold compresses or water to cool and soothe the area. Balms can be made from various herbs which have anti-inflammatory properties and this will aid the Bruise in healing quickly and often arrest future swelling. Blisters, however, need to have a poultice applied (a clean bandage with balm beneath) to draw out the toxins and protect the area from further damage. In almost all cases they should not be drained- the body will break down and re-absorb the damage either through natural healing or the application of magic. If the swelling is at such an alarming rate, however, that the patient is in danger of imminent death and magic cannot be secured puncturing the area (or re-opening the cause wound) will allow fluids to drain which should arrest if not reverse slightly the swelling. In such a severe case magical aid must be sought and applied as soon as possible.

Dislocations- A common injury among adventurers and farming folk alike Dislocations happen when the bones are separated forcefully either through blunt force trauma (they

were hit) or be torque (such as pulling or twisting). Dislocations are easily identified as unusual body twists or bends at the joints- for example an elbow bending the wrong way or the shoulder obviously pressed back.

Usually a Dislocation can be repaired by simply re-positioning the bones which will “snap” or “pop” back into place. Bones are grown with natural connections which lock together and it can be very painful if they are not aligned in this manner. Unfortunately it can also be very painful (often more so) to move them back to the correct location. New Healers should defer to more experienced Healers regarding the correct way to reposition Dislocated joints to prevent further injury to the patient (bone injuries are notoriously hard to heal and slow to mend naturally). If a re-location is not possible immobilize the bones of the patient through hard splints (armor, wooden sticks or otherwise) and bandages until magic can be applied.

Broken Bones or Bone Trauma- These are often the most serious of wounds and in almost all cases require magic to repair lest the patient suffer permanent reduced function from the areas supported by these bones. Breaks and dislocations appear with much swelling and often have “protrusions” under the skin signaling where a bone is pressing. Often severe breaks will have the body parts moved at an unusual angle where there is no join- such as a broken leg twisted unnaturally in the center of the femur.

Bone trauma first aid relies on immobilizing the patient completely and especially the area affected by the bones to prevent damage to the nerves, circulatory system and muscles of the victim as well as further damage to the bones themselves. Bones are exceptionally hard but will “bruise” if enough force is applied to them causing great pain and reduced mobility. Breaks which extend outside of the body (ripping out through the skin) will require first aid treatment for bleeding as well.

Long term treatment requires the bones to be re-aligned to their original positions (much like a dislocation) and the area to be firmly splinted so that there is no possibility of the bones shifting or moving as new bone material grows to bridge the wound.

Burns and Frostbite- Burns appear as reddened areas of skin often accompanied by white blisters and “peeling” skin around the area. Frost bite reacts much like a burn but the coloration is black with pale skin and blisters flaking up from the damage site. In both cases however you can treat them by immobilizing the affected area, washing it with mildly warm water and dressing it with balm and bandages. Frostbit areas will be lost as the tissue is dead and only magic can restore the vitality of such appendages. Burns are rarely deadly unless they cover a significant portion of the skin or are very deep (risking infection) but will leave surface scarring if not Magically Healed.

Poison and Infection- Both of these things represent foreign bodies invading the body but they cause very different reactions.

Poison can be either very easy to identify or very difficult depending on the physical changes it can cause (dilated pupils are a common sign as is discoloration around the mouth or wound site). Generally the symptoms vary for each individual poison and once you’ve ruled out disease or infection an Alchemist should be sent for to prepare a remedy and finalize the diagnosis. Nevertheless in a life-threatening first aid situation there are still things that can be done to help a victim survive. If the poison was

ingested feed the victim plain bread followed by as much water as they will hold. If they are not conscious skip the bread (as they cannot swallow and may choke) and pour the water into them. If the poison is introduced via a wound or contact poison carefully remove any remaining poison or liquids from the surface of the skin and put pressure on the arteries around the site of injection to try and slow the spread of the poison by slowing the flow of blood through the area. In both cases it is better to carry on your person a few alchemical Antidotes which cure most ailments or apply Magic which will take care of the rest.

Infections rarely crop up in a first aid situation as they are usually the end result of a previous injury which has gone septic due to lack of care. Infections appear as reddening of the skin with (usually) a white or yellow discharge of the wounds or contained under the skin in pustules. Infections inside are known as Diseases (see previous section above).

Nevertheless through Chaos the threat of an instantaneous infection does exist and to combat it you simply treat it as any long term infection would be treated- drain the wound (if applicable) and keep it clean and dressed and allow it to air-heal. If the infection is internal – an organ or the blood- herbs and alchemy can be used to treat it but there is little that can be done immediately. Magic is most often the only resort for severe infections.

“Healing Arts” represents the backbone of the, for lack of a better term, Healers’ Art. Much more than mere diagnosis (which some who have not the skill have likened it to) Healing Arts allows its practitioner to establish a near-magical link between a patient and Healer allowing diagnosis not only of the body but also of the mind for a mere moment of concentration.

Obviously this skill doesn’t seem necessary at all times-- after all many patients are conscious and can tell you what is wrong with them. Yet some injuries or diseases may remain unknown to them and the symptoms they describe may be presented poorly leading a Healer who does not verify to treat a non-existent condition or mistreat a patient through neglect. The skill is also limited in the degree of information it will gather for you though more often than not it’s the key information you need to tailor your magic or treatments to most effectively Heal your patient.

At all times you should practice using the “Healing Arts” for there will come a time when a patient will need your skill. Whether felled in battle and near death or in a fevered coma our ability to learn not only the exact status of our patient but also such difficult to define facts as how long they will be unconscious or un-paralyzed (if temporary) and exactly how much Healing they would need to receive to be brought to full health one again. If nothing else this skill gives you the most effective means of resource management.

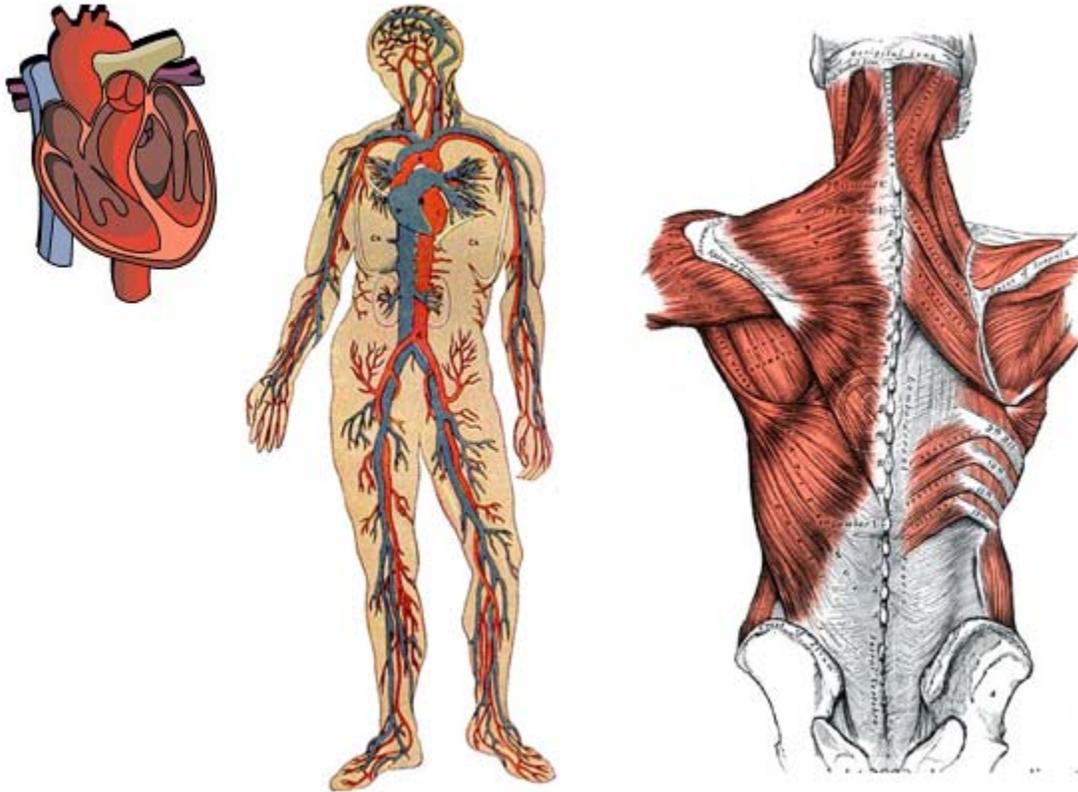
An Introduction to Anatomy

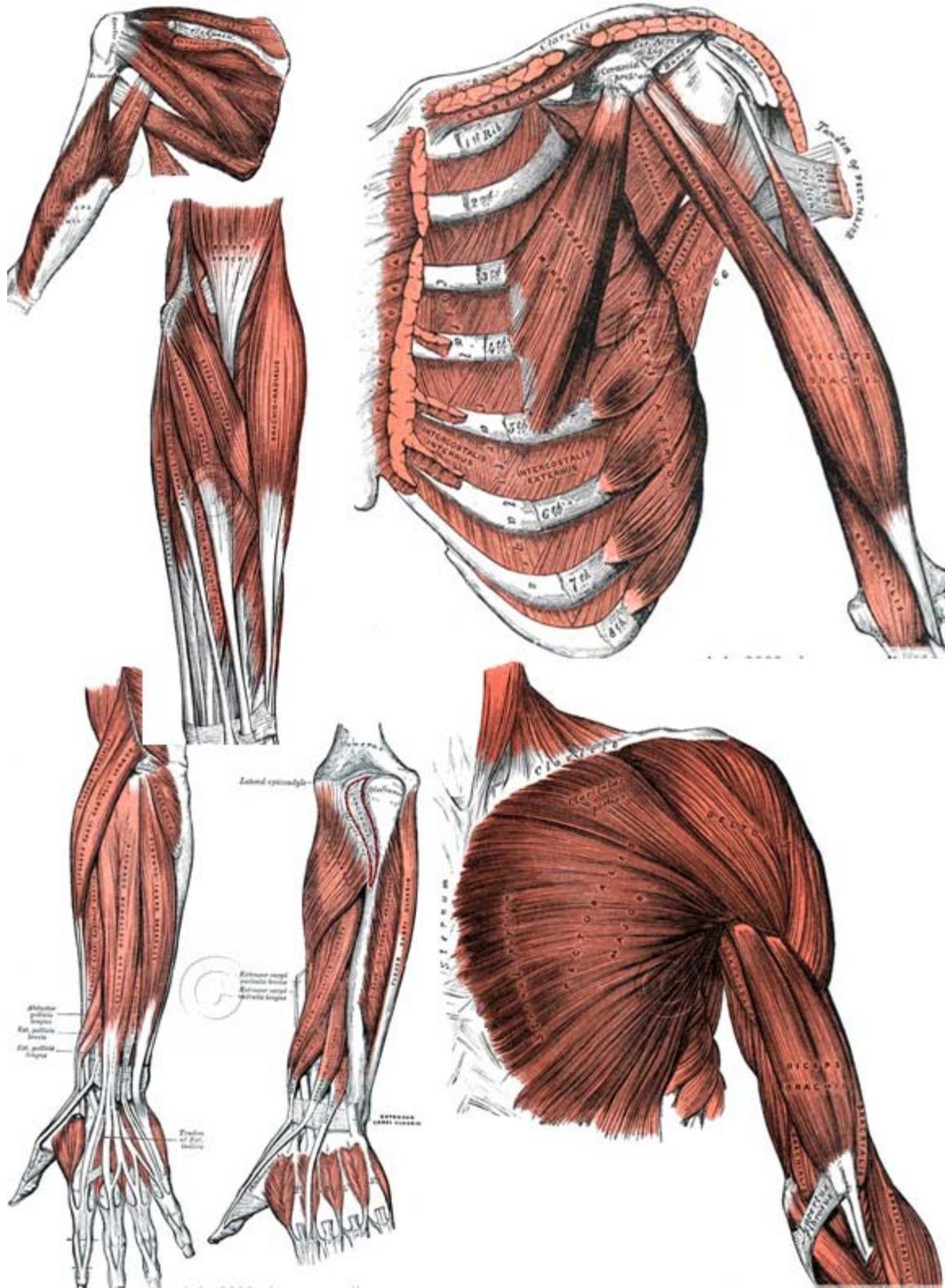
The fundamentals of Healing require a fundamental understanding of how the body functions. In our world, however, there are numerous races both mundane and magical which may require the touch of a Healer. To further complicate this magical spells, effects and abilities can all drastically alter the spirit and body of a patient. It is

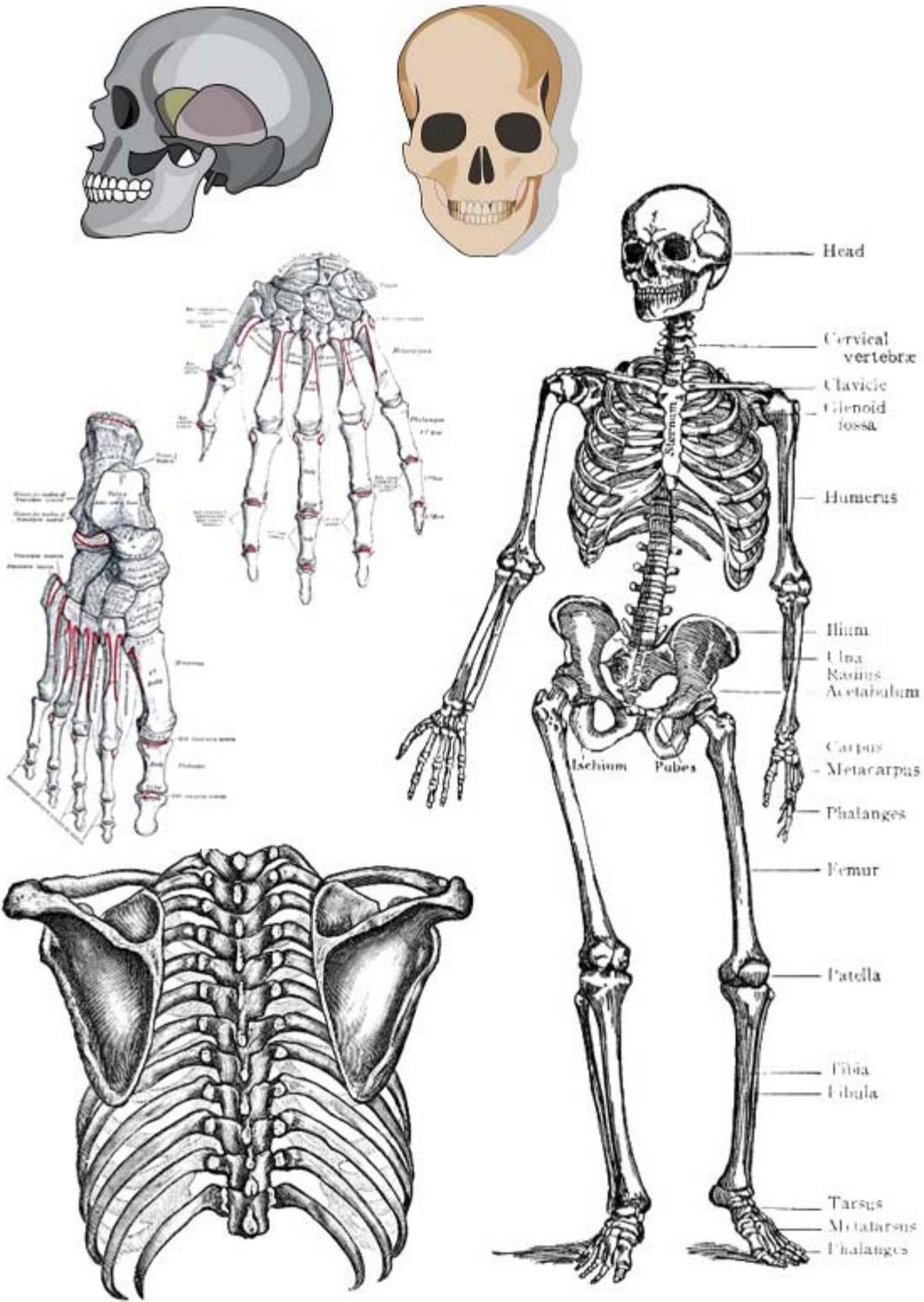
nearly impossible to detail all of the varied and strange things you may encounter as a Healer.

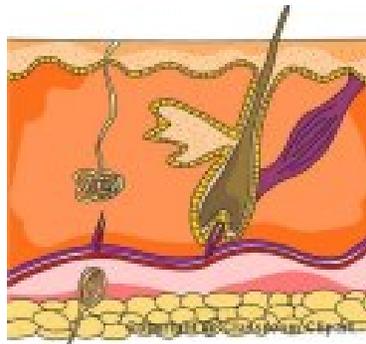
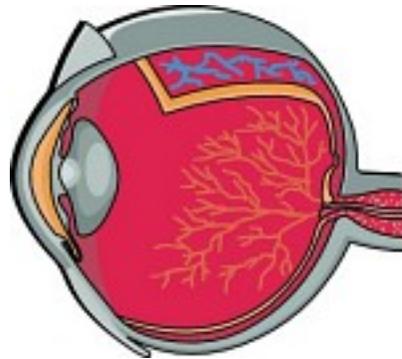
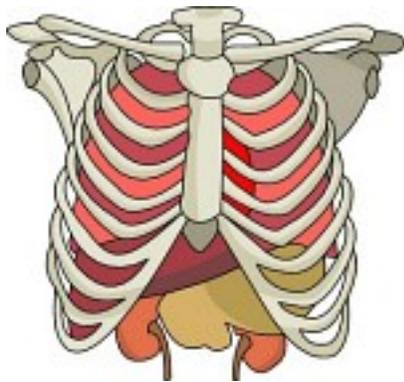
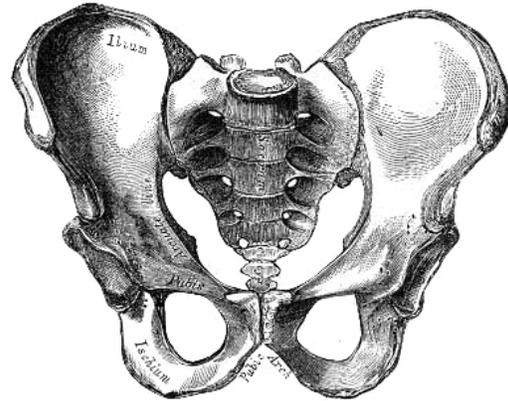
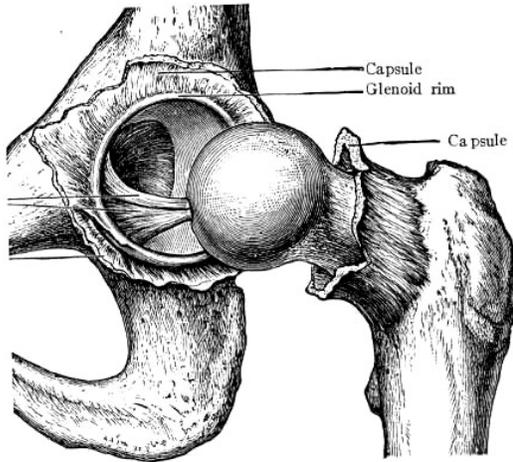
That said there are some generalizations which can be made. Most creatures share what, for lack of better terminology, we will call a “human-like” physiology. I do not use this term derogatorily but rather for the following reasons: humans are amongst the widest-spread race which documents their teachings and are egocentric enough to refer to all things in their own terminologies and most of the common races seem to share with little variation a basic comparative anatomy with humans. In a sense, from a Healing standpoint, humans can be considered a “base anatomy” which other races modified and “improved upon”. Who am I to judge? It is enough to know that Human anatomy resembles closely that of the other Races and, therefore, makes as good a reference as any other.

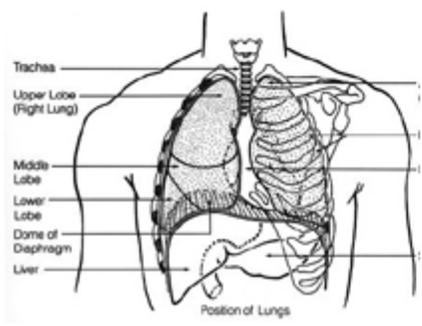
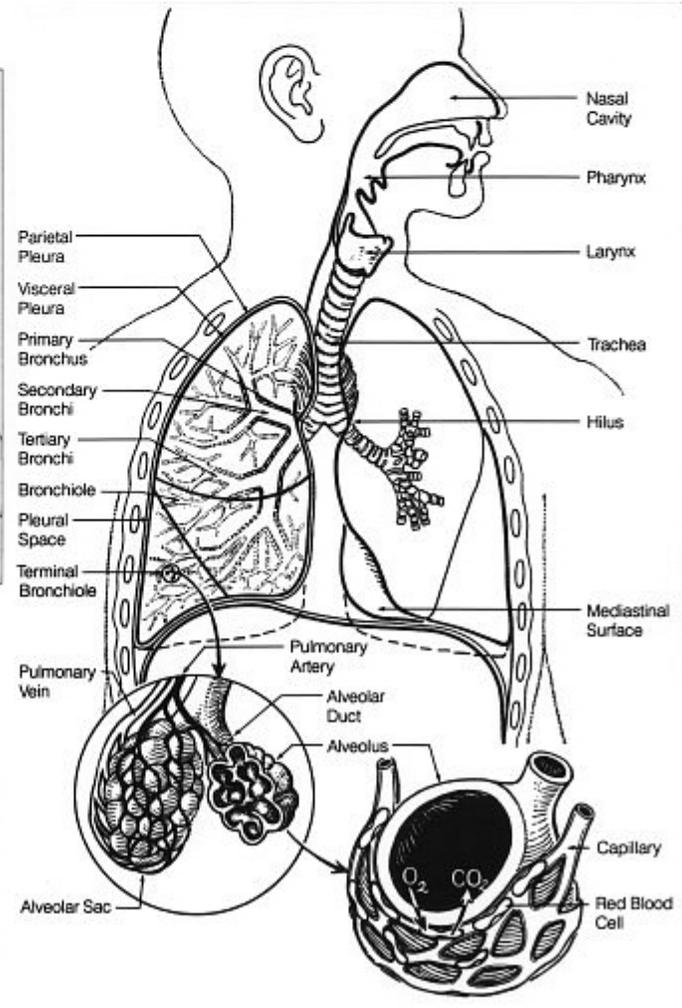
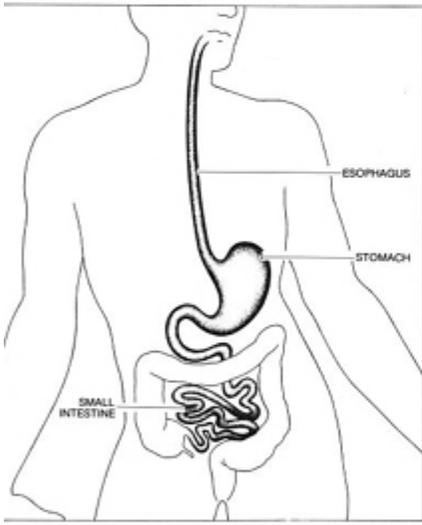
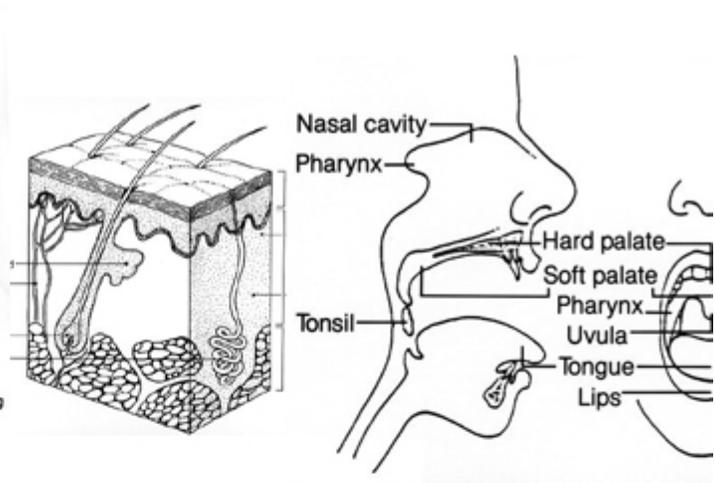
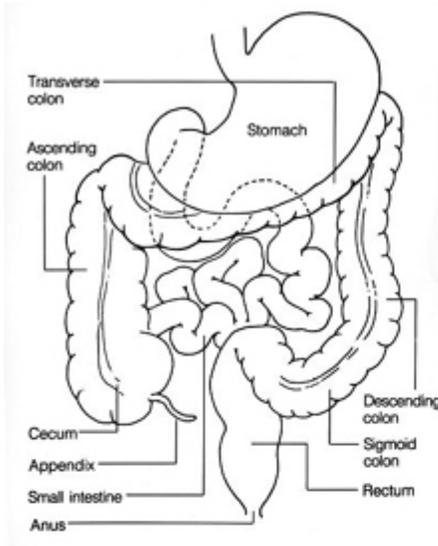
The Core Body











Battle Healers

One of the most difficult things to be is a Battle Healer- whether following an army and patching up the wounded or simply responding first to an ill-fated party of Adventurers who took one too many risks. Most of the unusual and most threatening states you will encounter will come from those who engage in combat (whether spell or physical) and while many Healers experience a patient with a life-threatening wound rarely those who specialize in Battle see them on nearly a daily basis.

Battle Healers face many obstacles that traditional Healers may not. Often they do not have the resources available for lengthy diagnostics or treatments. More often than not injuries sustained are of such severity that common treatments would produce little improvement (or offer little chance of survival). Finally those who Heal on the battlefield may themselves become targets or combatants and its not unheard of to target Healers as a way to ensure those fighters dropped stay so.

For all of these reason Battle Healers rely more heavily on spells and magic than most. Time, and resources, is often so short only Magic can realistically be applied. Yet the method that Healers approach this varies. Some use potions while others rely completely on their spells. Some are front-line combatants wielding weapon and spell with equal facility while others hang back and only seek to Heal once the battle is resolved.

Whatever methods chosen they all face the same challenge: Healing those who were hurt not by accident or chance but by another creature deliberately choosing to harm them. Some Healers refuse to Heal those who harm others but that is a moral discussion and I will not do more than touch on it here. It is enough, for the purposes of this document, that we acknowledge it as something that may be encountered from another Healer or patient.

Spells and Natural Healing

Under normal circumstances the body will heal itself slowly- cauterizing its own wounds or fighting off its infections. The role of a Healer is to weight the odds in favor the individual over the corruption in their body. In some cases this is not possible as the disease, wound or infection proves too great.

Spells provide, for the dedicated student, a means of restoring health, vitality and functionality without an investment of time on the part of the body or the resources it would normally consume (in terms of food). Magic cannot cure all maladies, however, and has a severe restriction: it can only cure a body up to the point it was after it last healed. Some wealthy or lucky folks have known the Healing power of magic since their birth and thus evidence no scars, limps or marks of any kind to impair their bodies. However others who were born without such luxury or who fell to misfortune and were only able to heal naturally may have missing limbs, permanent limps or severe body restrictions which no amount of magic can heal.

What this means is that Healing and Restorative magic should be applied as soon as possible after the wound was suffered. If the body is allowed to Heal naturally it will take time and energy on the part of the patient and the body/mind/spirit will “learn” this new shape as the “true form” of the patient and ever after no Healing will counteract the

changes which have taken place. For warriors, fighters and adventurers this is often unacceptable- their livelihoods rely on their ability to move and function and often more than their lives are preserved by healing them as they continue to protect the less-combat able from monstrosities, armies and (occasionally) each other.

Management of Resources

One of the most important things that a Battle Healer can do for themselves is train in readiness. They must know their spells, know what tools they have on hand and what tools they can acquire and also they must understand the “pacing” of their spell casting. In essence as they are limited to only their own magical power and what they can carry every resource becomes valuable and minor healing may be withheld from those barely injured in an effort to preserve resources for later when they may be much more pressing. For this reason many soldiers show minor scars- remains of superficial wounds which their Battle Healer did not spend effort to eradicate until some degree of Natural Healing had already taken place (often up to a day just before the Healer retires to study their magic and renew their spells for the next day).

Battle Healing can rely heavily on low level spells and minor potions- often the weakest spell a Healer can know is the most well used as a tiny amount of Healing on an unconscious or dying soldier will prevent the necessity for more powerful spells and revive them instantly to remove themselves from battle. More powerful Healing can repair their bodies instantly awakening them and readying them to continue the battle. Depending on the nature of the battle and urgency of the fight both Healing styles are valid. Often the same Healer (or group of Healers) will employ both strategies depending on the state of combat around them seeking to tailor their abilities and supplies to the situation they will encounter.

Fortunately for Healers and Soldiers alike it is relatively easy to learn the weakest Healing spells and minor curative potions and alchemy are often very inexpensive— carrying supplies of these items (rather than a more full first aid supply kit) is often more effective in encouraging mobility and speed. For the weaponless Healer on the battle field mobility, speed and intelligence are the most important weapons you have.

Resurrections

Sometimes, unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done for a victim and they will die. For many this is the end- their spirit is severed from the mortal plane and their bodies begin to decay. For others, however, their spirit remains strong and seeks to return to the world of the living. The Greater Earth Circles have the power to attract these “between the worlds” spirits and Healers who have been accepted into these Circles are able to magically “weave” a new body while leading the Spirit back to the mortal plane.

Exactly how does this occur? Magical researchers still disagree on the details. In essence, however, as with the bodies ability to “Heal” via magic to its last known state a Resurrection is the Spirits’ “memory” of its body. Surely many Healers do not understand the complexity and interrelation of the various bodily organs and systems (of which many have functions as yet unexplained by learned scholars as well) yet the bodies recreated are always remarkably similar (if not identical) the body they had prior to their death and the damage or disease which claimed their lives.

No spirit, however, is strong enough to survive many of these transitions though there have been recorded cases of patients surviving nearly a dozen such transitions. Ultimately, however, age or ill-luck will catch up with all patients and Death- permanent death- will claim them.

Resurrections do take considerable time and energy to accomplish and if the Healer does not remain with the Spirit the moment they regain consciousness will be a moment of pain, anger, confusion and rage. Some races are more susceptible to “poor resurrection experiences” than others and caution should be taken. If at all possible seek out friends or relations to the deceased and question them to gain a better understanding of the individual Spirits’ personality which will allow you to tailor the images you send and ensure you do not put yourself in danger when the Spirit returns.

Performing a resurrection, for all the power it represents, is relatively easy. It does not rely on the power of the Healer or even the Healers knowledge and experience. It seems that the Circle itself provides these things and creates a ‘common ground’ where those who possess the Healing Arts skill (to any degree) are able to take and gently guide the spirit back. The Healer uses the power of the Healers Arts to envision a “story” or scenario in the mindscape where they can encounter the Spirit and through imagery guide them back to the mortal plane where the Circle has reformed their body. Once again speaking with friends or relations of the Spirit can give the Healer much better understanding of the patient and guide their selection of imagery to better tailor their abilities and making it easier to “encourage” a Spirit to return.

Anyone “Invested” in the Circle is able to “grab” a free-floating Spirit and initiate the Resurrection. Unfortunately without such an individual Spirits cannot reform and must move on seeking a new Circle and Healer to restore them. Spirits seem to, however, retain some of their intelligence during this time as they are able to perceive “hostile” Circles which would prove dangerous to them (either by enemies or location) and they are able to refuse Healers waiting for another to come. Unfortunately Spirits (both “free” and in the process of Resurrection) are unable to communicate with Healers. Once the spirit has been allowed to Resurrect the Healer who initiated this process can either continue it guiding the spirit herself, transfer the spirit to another who knows the Healing Arts or allow the spirit to resurrect on its own which, as was previously discussed, is a very traumatic experience.

Resurrection removes almost all effects on the Patient including magical curses. Rarely does anything survive such a traumatic change though anything “Powerful” affecting their memories or Spirit remains intact. Such things usually include Rituals and powerful Alchemy but rarely “battle magic”.

Common Ailments

“Common Ailments” is a term usually used to describe medical conditions which cannot be treated by Magical means. Things such as the Cold, Flu and stomach upset do not respond to magical treatment in any way (though as with most issues they are removed by resurrection as the physical body has been replaced). Fortunately for these ailments non-magical cures often do exist.

Care for things such as Burns, Dislocations and Broken Bones are often simply extended First Aid treatments (which were previously discussed). Diseases and Infections, however, are the long-term Healers nemesis and below there is a list of herbs

which are known to treat various ailments. Most are able to be ingested as teas or dried powders and work as well as the fresh examples. Many Healers also create Infusions and Tonics by steeping their herbs in a diluted alcohol (such as wine). Finally some Healers also create Distillations and Concentrations of herbs by taking fresh supplies and making a strong tea which they boil until most of the water has evaporated leaving a thick syrup.

Of these the most effective by far in Poultice and Ingested would be the Distillation syrups. However these medicines are very fragile and will go bad quickly (turning, in many cases, to poison). Infusions will last the longest but have the unfortunate side effect of the alcohol which weakens most of the medicinal properties of the substances.

This is by no means definitive and represents merely a sampling of the herbs that are available both farm-grown and harvested. Some herbs below have more than one usage which varies depending on their preparation (leaves versus roots for instance) and how they are taken (internally versus externally).

A Brief Summary of Created Medicines:

Fresh- Herbs are gathered fresh and not dried or prepared in any lengthy manner

Dried- herbs are preserved by removing moisture. May be ground to a powder

Tea- a water-based drink created with dried or fresh herbs

Distillation- a concentrated tea made by boiling tea to remove excess water

Infusion- fresh or dried herbs soaked in a clear liquor or wine (of any color usually red)

Concentrations- a dried Distillation- much more potent than Dried Herbs

Tonic- a combination of an Infusion and fresh herbs

Incense- Dried herbs burned to release smoke which is to be inhaled

Poultice- a Distillation thickened to a pasty syrup or of dried herbs with honey applied externally to a wound

Herb	Uses	Preparations
Balsam Fir	Kidney, Liver	Tea, Distillation, Infusion, Poultice (tar)
Birch	Skin, Flu	Tea (strong), Distillation
Chickweed	Burns, Rashes	Poultice
Cleavers	Laxative	Tea
Coltsfoot	Lungs, Anti-Diarrhea	Tea, Incense, Distillation, Infusion
Comfrey	Accelerate Healing	Poultice
Dandelion	Blood, Circulation	Fresh, Dried, Tea
Dock	Anti-itch, Rash	Poultice
Elderberry	Fever, Antiseptic	Tea (antiseptic wash)
Jewelweed	Stings, Plant Rash	Poultice (rub into skin)
Mullein	Throat, Congestion	Tea (throat) Incense (nasal)
Nettles	Rheumatism	Tea
Passion Flower	Sedative	Tea, Infusion, Distillation
Pineapple Weed	Diuretic/Urinary	Tea, Distillation
Plantain	Bruises	Poultice
Roses	Minor Cuts	moisten petals and apply like bandage
Salal	Diarrhea, Burns, Cough	Tea (Diarrhea, Cough), Poultice
Sassafras	Astringent	Tea, Distillation, Infusion

Sheep Sorrel	Slow Bleeding	Distillation or Poultice (as applies)
Shepherds Purse	Bleeding, Diarrhea	Dried, Poultice, Tea, Distillation
Spruce Tree	Rash, Oral Sores	Poultice (rash), Tea (mouthwash)
Sumac	Sore Throat	Tea (gargle do not swallow)
Sweetfern	Diarrhea, Anti-itch	Tea (drink or wash)
Sweetgale	Colds	Tea, Infusion, Distillation, Dried
Violets	Colds, Scurvy	Fresh, Dried, Tea
Watercress	Scurvy, Vitamins	Fresh, Distillation, Infusion
Wild Onion	Anti-septic	Distillation
Willow	Pain, Fever	Tea, Distillation, Dried
Winter Cress	Stings, Skin	Poultice
Wintergreen	Swelling, Inflammation	Tea (internal), Poultice (external)
Yarrow	Tooth Ache	Dried (do not powder- chew whole)

The Basic “Healers Kit”

A brief list of ideas for things any Healer may need in their travel kits. With the correct supplies even the most difficult procedure can be attempted when facilities are not ideal.

Clean Bandages	Flint and Steel	Forceps
Clean Triangular	Tinder	Gut Thread (internal
Bandage (Sling)	Needle and Thread	sutures)
Vials of Purified Water	Glue	Various Curing Potions
Dried Herbs	Knife	Alchemical Light
Small Wooden Splints	Scalpel	Alchemical Antidotes

Applied Knowledge

When all is said and done there is no substitute for experience and study. To be a successful Healer one must truly want to Heal—regardless of motivations. Most find it easier to concentrate on a single method- magic, herbs, trauma and surgery or a combination where specialization is relaxed in favor of lesser skills in a wider range. Some choose sedentary lives stationed with a Healers Guild while others roam the lands with all manner of nomadic groups- from Barbarian tribes to trade caravans to detachments of the Royal Army itself.

Healers are one of the most ever-present professions in Vandlar. Earth Magic is one of the oldest and most respected traditions of most Races. However it should never be forgotten that with great Healing comes the power for great Chaos as well though those truly gifted with Healing, I would say, would not succumb to such destructive and counter-progressive desires. The power of Healers to combat such taint is also well known but that, unfortunately, is a topic for another manuscript.