

Book Review: Experimental Man
reviewed by Lois Schafer

Curiosity began David Ewing Duncan's quest for an answer to the environmental chemicals inside us. The science journalist for NPR, Discover, and National Geographic, reports on his human guinea pig experiment in *Experimental Man: What One Man's Body Reveals About his Future, Your Health, and Our Toxic World*. Duncan had 250 labs test 1.4 litres of his blood, spent 22 hours having MRIs, and had genetic marker studies to determine his body's levels of 320 of the most common environmental chemicals.

His aim is to explain and humanize a new wave of science that is likely to profoundly change our vision of health and who we are through personalized medicine - the tailoring of diagnostics and health care to individuals.

Duncan called this new science human enviromics, the fusing of environmental toxicology and genetics; the interplay of the two which makes us who we are and often determines whether we are healthy or sick. The ultimate goal is for enviromics to provide clues to a person's sensitivity to environmental toxins (such as mercury) and the potential for damage based on that person's genes in order to prevent harm and design medical treatments.

We live in a toxic soup of 82,000 environmental chemicals, primarily flame retardants, pesticides, plasticizers and metals. Duncan's \$150,000 tests found varying concentrations of 165 of the 320 toxins tested. DNA testing compared his DNA with other persons and groups to discover what makes one individual different genetically from another, and what variants are conferring protection from or susceptibility to chemical pollutants. He stresses that it is much too soon to make predictions for individuals. Right now we can only counter balance the toxins with common sense: don't smoke, drink, or get fat. Exercise. Wash your hands and veggies.

For more discussion visit these websites: KORA TV interview: http://fora.tv/2009/03/25/David_Ewing_Duncan_The_Experimental_Man#fullprogram, and <http://experimentalman.com>