In 1831 Joseph Smith received the following revelation regarding health care: “And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy. . . . And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed” (D&C 42:43, 48). Many Latter-day Saints from that era recorded remarkable healing experiences following priesthood blessings.

Against this background, Brigham Young, who succeeded Joseph Smith, cautioned Church members against heroic medical care and emphasized reliance on common sense, safe and conservative treatments, and blessings by the priesthood. While critical of both the medical profession and individual practitioners on occasion, he acknowledged their value with fractures and some other conditions.

Medical science advanced rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and Brigham Young began to rely on physicians for more of his own medical care. During the decade beginning in 1867, he was responsible for sending several of the most gifted young men and women in the Church, among them his nephew Seymour Young, to medical schools in the East. Brigham Young died in 1877 of what his nephew later concluded must have been appendicitis.

Today, many LDS women and men are involved in health care practice and research. Church members, who are advised to seek medical assistance from competent licensed physicians, generally believe that advances in medical science and health care have come though the inspiration of the Lord. They also continue to seek priesthood blessings together with appropriate medical care.

[See also Hospitals; Maternity and Child Health Care.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY


CECIL O. SAMUELSON, JR.