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## **SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE – THE NEW PARADIGM – LAUNCHED IN SWEDEN**

Sustainability is an oft-used buzz word for anyone who cares about our planet. More and more of us are rejecting non-sustainable energy, agriculture, construction and even tourism and substituting for sustainable equivalents. But the term 'sustainability' has been conspicuously absent adjacent to the word 'healthcare' despite increasing evidence of lack of efficacy, side effects and spiralling costs in mainstream, orthodox healthcare. On 22nd January 2008 in Stockholm, Sweden, Dr Robert Verkerk of the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH), launched its sustainable healthcare campaign to a meeting of innovative, leading-edge companies, as well as government representatives.

Dr Verkerk argued that a kind of stalemate had developed between the orthodox and alternative health interests and much effort was currently being wasted on mud-throwing between the parties, rather than moving the agenda forward in an attempt to find more viable, safe and cost-effective approaches to healthcare.

The ANH has highlighted various parameters that define sustainability in healthcare including the need for an ecological base, long-term social, environmental and economic viability, and the avoidance of negative feedbacks within the system, which may otherwise give rise to unfair or disproportionate impacts.

Sustainable healthcare, as a concept, provides a framework which either accepts or rejects particular approaches, modalities of treatment or regimens in healthcare. Each regimen requires evaluation according to stipulated criteria before acceptance and inevitably much greater emphasis is placed on preventative rather than curative approaches.

Dr Verkerk told Caduceus, "Sustainable healthcare is the new paradigm in healthcare. By being much more holistic in the analysis of different approaches to healthcare, we'll find that long-standing traditions of healthcare from the East and preventative and even curative regimens based on natural products will tend to be much more compatible with this new paradigm than expensive, patented, symptom-targeted drugs well-known for their side effects.

It's all about having a level playing field which takes into account a much wider range of factors than have yet to be considered by orthodox healthcare protagonists. Mainstream medicine is running towards a brick wall at a hundred miles an hour and, just like with global warming and rainforest deforestation, unless we make the hard, sustainability-orientated decisions now, spiralling costs, human suffering and environmental contamination caused by prevailing healthcare systems will only get worse."