



## SYMBIOSIS

Greek syn, 'together',  
+ bios, 'life' literally  
'living together'

Symbiosis explores ecological principles of healing and medicine that support a healthy relationship with the living Earth. This educational forum offers relevant and timely information that promotes an ethic of sustainability for the Earth and its inhabitants.

## Letter from the Director

With this issue of *Symbiosis*, we at Teleosis are spreading our wings. While our essential focus continues to be on sustainability and environmental health care, this issue hinges on the premise that 'environmental health' or 'environmental medicine' includes all aspects of the environment, not just the natural world. After all, the environment also includes the built environment of urban landscapes, the indoor environments of offices, hospitals, schools and homes, and the behaviors that individuals and communities exhibit due to the environments in which we spend so much time. In other words, the green health care movement is not only about the natural world and our health, it is about all of the different environments we live in and how our lives are impacted by them.

This is an especially important topic when considering the major theme of this issue—health disparities and the social determinants of health. Several recent reports have shocked Americans about the vast differences in people's health status because of race and social class. Zip codes may tell us more than simply *where* an individual lives, they might also tell us what illnesses that person will most likely express and even what they might die from. As I write this, the World Health Organization has re-released yet another report, *Our cities, our health, our future* about this subject.

Throughout the world, there is growing evidence that poor people are not benefiting from modern medicine or public health initiatives at the same rate as people in higher social and economic classes. The primary reason is that where people live determines many aspects of environmental exposure and social behavior that significantly contribute to health status and outcomes. We examine these factors and the phenomenon of social determinants of health in several articles in this journal.

Of course, it would not truly be sustainable medicine if we simply passed along another viewpoint on health and environmental devastation. A cornerstone to sustainable medicine is *prevention* and so we offer a clear perspective on its value and purpose by highlighting the work of Prevention Institute and its visionary leader, Larry Cohen, MSW. We do this because it is prevention, more than delivery of medical services, that can and will bring about environmental justice and a closing of the social gradient and health gap. At Teleosis, our vision of healthcare is one that is both good for people and the planet and involves a just health care system which includes stewardship of the world that live in.

The importance and the value of understanding health disparities and prevention will help inform the dialogue necessary to shape the future of our healthcare system and help us flourish in the next century. Read on and find out more!

JOEL KREISBERG, DC, MA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR