

DANNY GALLAGHER is Ireland's best-known faith healer, who hit the headlines with stories of his 'miracle cures'. Danny believes his gift comes from God.

I KNEW from a very young age that I had a special gift. I am the seventh son of a seventh son and people would pat me on the head for luck when I was a boy.

When I was eight, I had a vision of a lady dying of cancer lying on a bed. There was a clergyman sitting beside her and a crucifix on the wall.

In the vision, I placed a candle in the woman's hand and laid my hands on her.

The clergyman told me a prayer which I now use every time I meet someone who wants to be cured.

I didn't use my gift of healing until I was 18. My life changed completely one day while I was travelling around housing estates, selling ice-cream.

There was a little girl who was paralysed and used to crawl out to my van. My heart went out to her and I used to give her a free cone.

One day I didn't see her and I was about to drive off when I spotted she was lying right up close to the van.

Our eyes met and it was like the light from a torch shining between us. I knew then that I had to help her.

I went to the girl's mother and told her I'd like to help. I blessed the girl with the crucifix I always carried with me and said the prayer



YES

I have made the blind see again

Danny Gallagher says his healing is a gift from God

from the vision. I left the house and didn't think anything more about it until I saw a headline in a local newspaper about the ice-cream man with healing hands.

The girl was cured and could walk again.

I was overwhelmed by what happened next - people from across Ireland contacted me for help, and I went to England and helped a man who was crippled with arthritis.

But the story which attracted the most publicity was about the English girl who had been blind for 22 years. I still have the white stick she used to get around.

After that I started travelling to places like Canada and America to help people who had heard about my gift.

I have cured people with skin rashes, nervous disorders, arthritis and even cancer.

I believe this is a gift from God. My faith is very strong and I

respect the talent He has given me.

Some people think I'm involved in a money-making scam. I have been approached by promoters who want to manage me but I have turned them down.

I refuse to allow the work of God to be commercialised, so I don't make money out of it.

SOMETIMES I visit people's homes and I'll stay as long as they need me. But I won't walk into a house and take money from people whose loved ones are sick.

I accept donations from people to cover the expense of travelling, but nothing more. I would be better off if I swept streets.

I try to heal people because I believe it is the right thing to do. So many have gained something from this so I can't understand those who say it is wrong.

When I lay my hands on

someone who wants to be cured, I feel a warm sensation surge from my body. They feel it too and many people have described it as a warm, soothing energy.

I've even had doctors come to me in the past for treatment for stress, skin disorders and arthritis. I've also received the support of many medical experts across the world.

And I've received the support of clergy of different denominations who understand the spiritual importance of my gift.

I am not hurting anyone or giving sick people false hope. I never tell people to stop taking medication prescribed to them by their doctors.

Those who don't believe in my power only need to read about the successes. I'd like them to speak to the people whose lives I have changed and ask them if they think it's a con.

They should try telling that to the mother of a Carrickfergus girl who spent hours writhing in agony because of a terrible skin rash. She was brought to me and I cured her. I don't think her mother sees that as a con.

I believe I have been given this gift to help others. That is why I devote my life to healing people and I don't expect anything in return - the joy I see on the faces of the people I have helped is enough payment for me.



NO

It's all a matter of positive thinking

Dr Nicola Duffy says medical evidence rules out 'miracles'

DR NICOLA DUFFY is a senior medical house officer at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry. She says those who believe in faith healers are misguided.

I DON'T know many doctors who would question the importance of positive thinking. If people want to improve their state of health then it is crucial they start by improving their state of mind.

Having the proper mental attitude is an important part of every aspect of life.

Most people know that being

negative can make an illness worse. In some cases it can even create an illness.

It's a well-known practice in medicine to use placebos in the treatment of some illnesses.

It involves giving a sick person something which they believe makes them feel better although the drug does not have any medical benefit.

The person feels better because they are being told they should.

I believe faith healing is an example of positive thinking, not a measure of faith or belief.

I really can't understand how faith healers claim to cure people who have been paralysed for years. It is medically impossible.

If someone has not been able to walk for years their legs muscles become weaker.

They would not be able to walk with just the touch of a faith healer. This notion goes completely

against all medical teaching.

I have treated people who have suffered minor strokes yet had to endure weeks or even months of intensive physiotherapy to build up muscle strength.

So it's physically impossible and a nonsense to claim that someone who has been sick for so long can be cured by the touch of a hand.

There are cases of people who can't walk and there is nothing wrong with them physically.

I know someone who has been in a wheelchair for years for no reason other than they don't want to walk. This is a psychological illness or the need to be sick.

Doctors placate these people by giving them a wheelchair and I have no problem believing these people could be cured by a faith healer.

But someone who has a proven physical disability just can't get up and walk - it doesn't make any sense.

MANY doctors believe prayer and meditation can speed recovery. Any method of dealing with an illness which is not detrimental to a patient is to be encouraged.

Faith healers in Ireland often work through their own belief in God and don't look for money in return.

That is commendable, but I do have some serious reservations.

There's no code of confidentiality to protect patients. While this may not yet be a problem in Ireland, it is much more serious in the US.

Healers there charge huge amounts to perform pseudo-scientific practices. They manipulate people

who are prepared to accept anything as long as it leads to a cure.

Sickness renders many people vulnerable and they will clutch at straws, trying anything as they come to terms with illness.

For many people in Ireland, the frequent response to a diagnosis of a terminal or chronic illness is to organise a trip to a religious shrine.

When someone is ill a community will pull together to raise money. This gives family and friends the chance to express sympathy and support by doing something positive like arranging a trip to Lourdes.

But these situations must be seen for what they are - a trip to a special place where the sick person and their family can accept whatever the future will bring.

I am concerned that many of the people who go on these trips or visit a faith healer believe they will find a miracle cure which is a gift from God in return for faith.

Disease and illness cannot be seen as a punishment from God which can only be taken away by prayer.

I have come across patients who have felt terribly guilty because of the effect their illness has had on their friends and family.

What happens if attending a faith healer or religious shrine doesn't result in a cure? Should that be interpreted as a lack of faith?

People should explore anything they think could provide relief or, more importantly, will lead to an acceptance of the illness.

But I don't believe faith healers or shrines provide cures.

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