

Modern Health Perspectives Embrace Traditional Life Practices

Definitions: Alternative Medicine is often used by the general public and some healthcare practitioners to refer to medical techniques which are not known or accepted by the majority "conventional" or "allopathic" medical practitioners (usually M.D.'s). Such techniques could include non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques such as Medical Herbalism, Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Reiki, and many others. However, the term Alternative Medicine can also refer to any experimental drug or non-drug technique that is not currently accepted by "conventional" medical practitioners.

As non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques become popular and accepted by large number of "conventional" practitioners, these techniques will no longer be considered Alternative Medicine. What is currently accepted including the definition of "conventional practitioners" is quickly changing. Therefore, techniques that are now considered part of Alternative Medicine will soon be considered part of "conventional" medicine making the terms Holistic Health or Holistic Medicine more stable than Alternative Medicine.

Complementary Medicine is often used by "conventional" medical practitioners to refer to non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques used as a complement to "conventional" medical treatments such as drugs and surgery. The term implies that "conventional" medicine is used as a primary tool and the non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical techniques are used as a supplement when needed. In many cases, properly chosen non-invasive and non-pharmaceutical healing techniques plus properly chosen lifestyle changes can completely and safely heal both acute and chronic illnesses. In other cases, "conventional" medicine is only needed in emergencies or when the safer non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical methods fail. In some cases "conventional" medicine will be a major part of a Holistic Healing Plan, and in many cases it is unnecessary.

Natural Healing usually refers to the use of non-invasive and non-pharmaceuticals techniques that help heal by empowering patients' natural healing abilities.

Holistic Medicine as defined by the Canadian Holistic Medical Association:

Holistic medicine is a system of health care, which fosters a cooperative relationship among all those involved, leading towards optimal attainment of the physical, mental emotional, social and spiritual aspects of health.

Holistic Health emphasizes the need to look at the whole person, including analysis of physical, nutritional, environmental, emotional, social, spiritual and lifestyle values. It encompasses all stated modalities of diagnosis and treatment including drugs and surgery if no safe alternative exists. Holistic medicine focuses on education and responsibility for personal efforts to achieve balance and well - being.

Holistic Health is an approach to life. Rather than focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, this ancient approach to health considers the whole person and how he or she interacts with his or her environment. Holistic assessment, diagnosis, and treatment practices, emphasize the connection of mind, body and spirit.

The goal is to achieve maximum well - being, where all aspects of a person's health are functioning at their optimal capabilities. In applying Holistic Health principles and practices, people accept responsibility for their own level of well - being, and everyday choices are used to take charge of one's own health.

Holistic Health Practitioners educate, support and facilitate vital health with their clients. Explanations of a client's unique condition and suggestions to improve the state of one's sense of well - being are offered. Ultimately clients are encouraged to learn how they can best take "response ability" for their own lives.

How Holistic Health Developed

Records of ancient healing traditions, as far back as 5,000 years ago in India and China, emphasized a healthy way of living in harmony with nature. Socrates (4th century BC) warned against treating only one part of the body "for the part can never be well unless the whole is well." Although the term *holism* was introduced by Jan Christiaan Smuts in 1926 as a way of viewing living things as "entities greater than and different from the sum of their parts," it wasn't until the 1970s that *holistic* became a common adjective in our modern vocabulary.

Holistic concepts fell temporarily out of favor in Western societies during the 20th century. Scientific medical advances had created a dramatic shift in the concept of health. Germs were identified as outside sources causing disease. Gaining health became a process of killing microscopic invaders with synthesized drugs. People believed that they could get away with unhealthy lifestyle choices, and modern medicine would "fix" them as problems developed.

However, for some conditions medical cures have proven more harmful than the disease. On 7/26/00 JAMA reported that, according to Johns Hopkins, medication errors are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. ****(see foot note at bottom)**

In addition, many chronic conditions do not respond to scientific medical treatments. In looking for other options, people are turning back to the holistic approach to health and healing. The Holistic Health lifestyle is regaining popularity each year, as the holistic principles offer practical options to meet the growing desire for enjoying a high level of vitality and well being. Over 35% of Americans seek Holistic Health or alternative medical therapies annually.

The Basic Principles of Holistic Health- A Spiritual Perspective

Holistic Health is based on the law of nature that a whole is made up of interdependent parts. The earth is made up of systems, such as air, land, water, plants and animals. If life is to be sustained, they cannot be separated, for what is happening to one is also felt by all of the other systems. In the same way, an individual is a whole made up of interdependent parts, which are the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. When one part is not working at its best, it impacts all of the other parts of that person. Furthermore, this whole person, including all of the parts, is constantly interacting with everything in the surrounding environment. For example, when an individual is anxious about a history exam or a job interview, his or her nervousness may result in a physical reaction--such as a headache or a stomachache. When people suppress anger at a parent or a boss over a long period of time, they often develop a serious illness--such as migraine headaches, emphysema, or even arthritis.

Transforming our physical, mental, emotional or spiritual condition is an interdependent experience. Physical, emotional, mental or spiritual pain are one. From a Holistic perspective it is impossible to be physically tormented while feeling completely spiritually content or vice versa. Our mental, emotional or spiritual state is a reflection of our physical body. In the 100 or so years of our life span, the body is like a boat that takes us across the stream of consciousness transformation. The quality of our vessel is an essential factor in determining our ability to complete the journey.

This high level of vitality is very emphatic about achieving a state of Health that is more than the absence of dis-ease. Most traditional cultures speak of health as the one essential tool required to pursue the ultimate human dream to become enlightened, to unify with God or to feel a consistent sense of inner happiness, contentment, inspiration (in spirit) and peace.

After being born, we enter a new gestation period. Like the mother who paid attention to her life choices to best nurture the developing fetus, each one of us is perhaps best served by adopting a mother's attitude to ensure the health of our inner consciousness which fuels the healthy birth of our spirit when our physical body dies. Ancient Japanese tradition asserts that we are all pregnant gestating the higher or evolving consciousness within. Considering ourselves pregnant will alter the choices we make. Do my choices improve my health and the fulfilling of my Dream in Life or do they take me further away from my ultimate goal?

Transforming Our Health

No matter what their current status of health, people can improve their level of well being. Even when there are temporary setbacks, movement can always be headed toward wellness.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that the key factors influencing an individual's state of health have not changed significantly over the past 20 years. Quality of medical care is only 10%. Heredity accounts for 18% and environment is 19%. Everyday lifestyle choices are 53%. The decisions people make about their life and habits are, therefore, by far the largest factor in determining their state of wellness.

The most obvious choices people make each day is what they "consume"--both physically and mentally. The cells in a person's body are constantly being replaced. New cells are built from what is available. Harmful substances or lack of needed building blocks in the body can result in imperfect cells, unable to do what is required to keep that person healthy.. Most obvious are the well-known dangers connected with drugs, alcohol, nicotine, and unprotected sexual activity. Less recognized is the impact of excesses in things like sugar, caffeine, and negative attitudes. Similarly, on the non-physical level, a person's mental attitudes are "built" from what they see and hear. Combined with deficiencies in exercise, nutritious foods, and genuine self- awareness, these gradually accumulate harmful effects. With time they diminish the quality of the "environment" within that human being, and can set the stage for illness to take hold. Quality of life, now and in the future, is actually being determined by a multitude of overlooked yet ultimately critical choices made everyday.

The majority of illnesses and premature death can be traced back to lifestyle choices in which there are three categories to improve upon:
PHYSICAL (breathing/exercise, diet, sleep)
EMOTIONAL(Resolving emotional and mental states that drain our life force.
Resolution of our relationships lets emotions act as fuel. Instead of stressing us, resolving our relationship challenges empowers us.
SPIRITUAL making choices that bring us closer to the bigger picture of our life purpose our inner reason for being.

** Another study calculated that every year treatment-related complications result in 116 million additional physicians visits, 76 million prescriptions, 17 million emergency department visits, 8 million hospital admissions, 3 million long-term care facility admissions, and 200,000 additional deaths, for a cost of \$76.6 billion. These data indicate that the extent of injury caused by preventable errors occurring in health care settings is enormous, and the real dimension of the problem is largely unknown.