

# The Holistic Versus Conventional Medicine



*Health Care Tug-of-War*

# **The Holistic Versus Conventional Medicine: Health Care Tug-of-War**

How many of us would rather do yoga than take an aspirin tablet for migraine?  
Would anyone settle for acupuncture than undergo medical procedures?

Well, let's face it. There may be arguments on the efficiency of alternative medicines but more and more people are actually giving up on the traditional way of treating illnesses and embracing those holistic approaches. Herbal remedies, thoughts controlling the mind and body, and the chi or energy flowing through one's self are all becoming much more believable. But are they all what they claim to be?

## **The philosophy of the holistic approach**

Holism, or going holistic, doesn't suggest one to be "holy" or free from sins and misdoings. The terms actually mean "wholeness, as the word holism was derived from the Greek word "holos", which means entire, total, or all.

Alternative medicine enthusiasts use the phrase "holistic approach" to signify the type of medical attention that closely connects the spiritual, mental and physical aspects of one's life. The holistic medicine advocates generally use of various practices as forms of therapy or treatments. The most popular are yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, aromatherapy, Tai Chi, homeopathy, herbal medicines, and Siddha, among others.

Since holistic medicine is a type of alternative medicine, it follows that those who are supporters of the holistic approach are also supporters of alternative medicine. It is a common misconception that holistic practices are out to eradicate conventional medicines and therapies from the medical scene. Let it be

made clear that the holistic approach simply tries to incorporate the conventional and alternative remedies for the treatment and prevention of disease, and for the achievement of optimal health.

Holistic medicine embraces the safest and most suitable types of a patient's diagnosis and treatment. There are various elements that are scrutinized which include the person's physical, environmental, nutritional, spiritual, lifestyle, and emotional aspects. Furthermore, the holistic approach is geared towards the education of the patient during the treatment process.

Those who are well-versed with holistic medicine will know that this is not only used to treat diseases. In fact, this type of approach in medicine is widely-used to promote well-being, not just to heal, but as an approach to good health as well.

Although the various holistic therapies are different from one another, they are all driven by the same basic principles. All methods of holistic practice focus on the wholeness of an individual, and the prevention of any illnesses. The treatments used are adaptable, personalized, and are geared in finding out the reasons for the illnesses instead of the symptoms. Furthermore, with the holistic approach, the natural healing, rejuvenating and restorative capabilities of one's body are being stimulated.

### **The conventional medicine**

Pharmaceuticals have nothing to worry about. Even with the emergence of several holistic methods, most people are still relying on the "cures" that can be found on the shelves of drugstores. I mean, if you're suffering from asthma attack, would you be thinking about meditation instead of your reliable inhaler?

This is what holistic medicine has been insisting in the first place. It doesn't work to take the place of conventional medicine, rather, it wants to work alongside those traditional treatments that we know of.

Conventional medicine aims to treat a certain disease by finding out the symptoms associated with it. This type of healing approach links symptoms as the disease and does not entertain the fact that some illnesses may be due to some underlying causes like imbalance. For example, an individual who is suffering from joint pain, sinusitis, and stomachache may be asked to take different conventional medicines for each of the symptoms felt. In the holistic approach, it is an entirely different thing. It would look beyond the symptoms and will try to look at possible hidden reasons. So regardless of the therapy used, whether it is Chinese herbs, naturopathy, homeopathy, or acupuncture, all these will address the problem by working on the underlying causes.

Let's face it. No matter how holistic medicine insists on integrating with conventional medicine to treat diseases, people are still wary of trying out the natural methods. Who could blame them. There are methods that science doesn't have the time to make studies of, or simply doesn't have any means to conduct one on. And personally, who wants to risk it?

How many of us would rather go to a doctor, be interviewed for 5 minutes, diagnosed, given prescription, are told to come back in case the prescribed medicine doesn't work, and charged \$\$ for the visit? And just how many of us go back, are given another medicine to take, and charged another \$\$ for it? Whether we admit it or not, most of us have been through this "process". This doesn't mean that all doctors are more concerned about making money than they are about their patients. In fairness, doctors have been schooled and trained to look closely at the symptoms as exhibited or told to them by their patients. Misleading or false information could affect their diagnosis and treatment plans.

Conventional medicines work. Maybe they don't always do for some people, but science has taken the time to prove their efficiency. The sad thing about some conventional medicines though is the side effects that come with them. Some patients may be cured of a previous illness, but may be forced to contend with another one caused by the medications.

Most people are afraid to question or go against what science has laid out for us. But just because conventional medicines are backed by science doesn't mean that it's our only option. These may work to treat the symptoms of the disease, but is this all we need from them? Isn't it that solving the problem means getting rid of the cause?

### **Juggling both approaches**

They say we can't have the best of both worlds. But fortunately, that doesn't hold true in medicine.

There are endless arguments on which treatment approach is better – holistic or conventional. But is one specific choice really that necessary? Can't both be integrated in order for a person to attain the best treatment possible?

If the holistic approach will share the limelight currently enjoyed by the mainstream care, it still won't be enough to put doctors out of business. Actually, one can coexist with the other. People are not required to stay on one side of the fence and choose which treatment option to take. Likewise, medical doctors can be as accepting about holistic medicine as alternative medicine practitioners are to science. Everyone can just sit on the fence and weigh both practices evenly.

### **Of holistic practitioners**

Holistic practitioners are the professionals in holistic healing. They are the people that are endowed with the gift of healing. From hypnotherapists to homeopaths, holistic practitioner is a very challenging concept to define.

“Shopping” for a holistic practitioner is like “shopping” for a doctor. People are always looking out for the best. And like doctors, holistic practitioners can also deal with many areas of concern. However, as with doctors, there are several holistic practitioners who specialize in some methods of holistic practice. The

various specialization therapists are body, soul and spirit, energy, mind, emotional release, and counselors or coaches. Regardless of the area or method of holistic practice, all these professionals aim in helping their clients achieve lives of better quality. This goal is done through working on one's inner balance, physical ease, emotional confidence, and self-empowerment.

A lot of holistic practitioners do not limit themselves to one area of specialization. Most of them are capable of handling many areas or methods of holism. For example, a chakra therapist can also serve as a counselor, or a chiropractic can also be a hypnotherapist. Choosing the right holistic professional would depend on the type of holistic method you want to adopt.

Just because you have found the holistic practitioner who specializes in the particular method you want doesn't mean that he is the perfect choice. Like doctors, there are those that are better than the others. A research conducted revealed that therapists can either help us have better lives or cause our health to become worse.

This points out that there is a chance that your first choice of holistic practitioner may not be a good one. If you don't feel any improvement, find another one that can help you reach your goals.

The research further found out that the absence of progress does not have anything to do with the method of holistic practice. The success and failure of the practice is largely dependent on the holistic professional.

### **Of conventional doctors**

Just because your doctor charges the highest fee doesn't mean he is the best choice. Or just because there's always a long line of patients in his clinic all the time, doesn't mean that he can treat you any better than the others.

Finding the right doctor should be given more attention than finding the right plumber to fix the kitchen pipes. Flipping through the names on the yellow pages is like entrusting your life to the telephone company.

Most people base their choices on a recommendation of a relative or a close friend. Still, there are those who pick out doctors based on how renowned their names are, or where their office is located. Choosing well-known doctors is not a bad thing at all, but we must keep in mind that our lives depend on them and they should be able to offer us more than the prestige of being their clients.

Even if grandma says that her doctor is the best, we should not just take her word for it. The treatment or care that worked for grandma centuries back may not be the best option for you today. Check out factors like board certification, academic history, hospital affiliations, and continuing education.

The doctor's credentials aren't the only things that you need to consider. It is important that the doctor is someone that you can easily trust and communicate with. A great doctor-patient relationship is built on these two aspects.

### **Holistic M.D.**

If your doctor starts talking about mantras and herbal remedies, would you consider it a sign to go find another doctor?

Even if holistic medicine has caused a stir in the society, there are still a lot of people who are clueless about what the practice is really all about. There are those who associate some holistic methods with certain religions or discipline. Others would associate some holistic practices with voodoo or black magic. And people who are entirely ignorant of holism think that achieving inner balance and total equilibrium would mean living saintly lives, with halos and all.

There may be unresolved issues on holism surfacing into the medical scenario. Not all medical professionals, science experts, and the general public have accepted the emergence of holistic practice as a way to achieve wellness.

But even with this reluctance by some people, there is actually a growing number of holistic medicine advocates. In fact, there are medical doctors that are staunch supporters of this practice. So if you think your doctor has gone crazy when he talked to you about chanting mantras, you're being too judgmental. Be thankful that he is open to other methods that will help you attain your goals.

Holistic medical doctors are existent because they totally comprehend the principles of holistic practice. They do not mean to question science or what they have been taught in school about conventional medicine. Rather, they are living up to their vows of providing the best tools to help their patients achieve better health.

A holistic medical doctor doesn't sit on one side of the fence. He represents two areas of medicine – the conventional and holistic approaches. This type of doctor does favor any approach. In fact, he incorporates the two together in order to give the best treatment and care to his patient.

Most of the medical doctors who have adopted holistic medicine into their practice feel that they have a lot more to offer their patients. If conventional medicine can provide two methods such as drugs and medical procedures, the holistic approach can provide more methods of treatment and care.

The conventional approach is a fast-paced type of service, which is so unlike the holistic approach. Holistic medical doctors would attest that their practice is more relationship-based and more personalized. They don't just see their patients for as less as five minutes, but "talks" could last for hours.

## **Is one any better than the other?**

This is like asking, “Would you rather have cancer or AIDS?” Actually, none of us has to choose among the two approaches. Admittedly, even if drugs have side effects that we don’t want to deal with, they are still important to us. But let us not be tied to the traditional medicines that we have grown up knowing.

If both practices are meant help one attain a better quality of life, why force them to compete with each other? All arguments should be put to rest. Till then, people will fail to see that the best care may probably be right in front of their eyes.

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