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Chapter 1: Is the Growing Use of Complementary and Alternative Therapies Beneficial?

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
The government agency charged with the scientific exploration of complementary and alternative medicine provides an overview of various therapies.

Yes: Complementary and Alternative Therapies Serve Needs Not Met by Conventional Medicine 30

Cost-Effective Alternative Therapies Are Being Employed by Integrative Medicine
Deepak Chopra, Dean Ornish, Rustum Roy, and Andrew Weil
Many alternative therapies have now been scientifically shown to be both medically effective and cost effective, and their emphasis on the role of lifestyle factors in health is important to the effort toward making affordable health care available to everyone. The benefits of integrative medicine, which includes the best of both conventional and alternative therapies, are becoming clear.

Alternative Therapies Do Good but Should Not Be Integrated with Conventional Medicine
Bruce G. Charlton
Alternative therapies help people feel better, even if such therapies are worthless in the scientific sense. They should be regarded as spiritual practices with psychological healing benefits, whereas conventional medicine cures disease without necessarily improving the patient’s subjective feelings. Both healing and curing are important, but they cannot and should not be integrated.

Complementary and Alternative Therapies Are Helpful Even if They Are Placebos

William Grassie

Physicians trained in scientific medicine often say complementary and alternative healing practices work no better than placebos, but even if this is true, it does not mean they are not useful. Placebo effects are involved in all forms of medicine and have been proven to cause physical changes in the body. CAM therapies are an effective means of providing relief from suffering.

No: Most Complementary and Alternative Therapies Are Unproven and Sometimes Harmful

Complementary and Alternative Therapies Are Based on Pseudoscience

Narendra Nayak

A professor in India describes how prevalent questionable alternative therapies are in that country and explains that all such treatments are based on pseudoscientific, unsupported theories. These therapies gain acceptance through advertising and often prove to be expensive. When these therapies work, it is usually because the patient has a self-limiting illness and would have recovered anyway.

Promotion of Complementary and Alternative Therapies Is Deceptive

Marilynn Marchione

Complementary and alternative medicine is gaining wide acceptance by doctors and major hospitals, and people turn to it because they want natural, safe remedies and personalized care. Yet it is not true that “natural” means harmless. Moreover, many therapies without scientific evidence of effectiveness are being promoted by commercial interests.
Chapter 2: Are the Major Alternatives to Conventional Medicine Safe and Effective?

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Acupuncture Is Suitable for Treating a Wide Range of Conditions 70

Douglas Dupler, Teresa G. Odle, and David Edward Newton

Acupuncture originated as a key component of traditional Chinese medicine, but it is now also employed in Western medicine and is offered by many health care institutions. It involves the insertion of needles into the body and is used to treat chronic pain, as well as to supplement conventional treatment for a wide variety of other disorders including alcoholism and cancer.

Acupuncture Produces No Greater Effect than a Placebo 79

Richard Saint Cyr

An American doctor who practices in China, and who would like to integrate treatments from traditional Chinese medicine into his practice, discusses scientific studies of acupuncture and concludes that despite extensive research, there is no evidence that it has more effect than a placebo. Although it may be better than nothing, using it may delay getting proper treatment.

Homeopathic Medicines Are Worthless and Should Not Be Sold as Drugs 85

Stephen Barrett

Homeopathic remedies can be legally sold as drugs, but they do not have to meet the same standards as other drugs and are not scientifically tested. They are based on the theory that the smaller the dose, the stronger the drug’s action, and are so diluted that according to the laws of chemistry they could not possibly have any effect.

Many Patients Are Being Helped by Chiropractic Care 92

Julie Deardorff
Chiropractors are now serving as primary health care providers and are covered by many insurance plans. Most treat mainly back and neck pain and often succeed in reducing it, though the claim of others that manipulating the spine can cure all kinds of illness is more controversial. Millions of patients choose chiropractic care and believe that they are helped by it.

**Chiropractic Spine Manipulation May Do More Harm than Good**

*J.D. Haines*

Chiropractors’ belief that illness can be cured by manipulation of the spine is not rational, and the risk of cervical and spinal manipulation always outweighs any real or perceived benefits. In the absence of a single scientific study in support of chiropractic, it should be considered a threat to public health.

**Ayurveda Is a Widely Used Traditional System of Healing**

*National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine*

Ayurveda, one of the world’s oldest medical systems, aims to balance the body, mind, and spirit. It is used in India by 80 percent of the population and in America by at least two hundred thousand people. Its treatment of illness emphasizes lifestyle changes, eliminating impurities in the body, increasing resistance to disease, and reducing worry. It relies on a wide range of traditional herbal remedies.

**The Effectiveness and Safety of Ayurvedic Drugs Has Not Been Tested**

*Meera Nanda*

A notorious case of a quack promoter of falsely labeled Ayurvedic drugs demonstrates that even if all Ayurvedic doctors abided by the laws regulating such drugs, this would not mean that the drugs are safe, since they have not been subjected to scientific research.

**Naturopathy Aims Not Only to Treat Disease but Also to Restore Health**

*American Association of Naturopathic Physicians*
Naturopathy’s goal is to remove the barriers to self-healing and to eliminate the cause of illness rather than suppress the symptoms. It uses low-risk, natural treatments and customizes advice to individual patients, treating the whole person, not merely the disease.

There Is No Evidence to Support the Claims of Naturopathy

Robert T. Carroll

Naturopathy is based on the belief that the body can heal itself and offers allegedly natural remedies intended to help it do so, especially for enhancing the immune system. Yet there is no evidence that most disease is caused by faulty immune systems.

Chapter 3: Should the Government Restrict the Use of Alternative Therapies?

Chapter Preface

Yes: The Government Should Favor Conventional Medicine and Judge Alternatives by Its Standards

Protecting Public Health Is the Responsibility of the Government

Brennen McKenzie

Americans are divided in their opinions about who should decide what medical therapies are acceptable. The health freedom lobby argues that consumers and market forces alone should regulate them, but advocates of science-based medicine consider it self-evident that it is the role of government to do so. Court decisions have affirmed the government’s power in this regard.

The Government Should Force Minors to Accept Conventional Medical Treatment

Steven Novella

Competent adults have a constitutional right to refuse medical treatment, but the government should protect minors from unconventional beliefs by forcing them to receive whatever treatment it deems necessary to save their lives.
Parents of Children Who Die from Reliance on Alternative Therapies Should Go to Prison

*Phil Plait*

When an infant girl died after her parents chose to use homeopathy instead of conventional treatment, they were convicted of manslaughter, even though their belief in the superiority of homeopathy was sincere. It was right to send them to prison because majority opinions about medical issues are based on reason and should be upheld by the law.

The Law Exempting Dietary Supplements from Regulation Should Be Repealed

*David H. Gorski*

Advocates of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) complain that there is a double standard in evaluation of CAM vs. scientific medicine, yet actually the double standard favors CAM because dietary supplements are exempt from regulation by the FDA under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA). These supplements are unsafe and the DSHEA should be repealed.

No: Government Interference with Health Care Choices Is a Violation of Personal Freedom

Access to Complementary and Alternative Therapies Must Be Protected

*Diane Miller*

The National Health Freedom Coalition argues that laws are needed to protect and expand the right of Americans to receive complementary and alternative therapies, and of doctors and other practitioners to offer them.

The 2010 Health Care Reform Law Hurts Users of Alternative Therapies

*Curt Levey and Jim Turner*
Most alternative therapies are not covered by Medicare or other insurance. People who use them in place of conventional medicine are accustomed to having to pay for them, but with the new law they will also have to pay for standard medical insurance that they do not use, so they may no longer be able to afford health care they find acceptable.

**Opponents of CAM Apply a Double Standard to Evidence of Its Effectiveness**

*Richard A. Jaffe*

Those who claim there is insufficient evidence for complementary and alternative therapies such as use of nutritional supplements ignore the fact that most conventional medical therapies are not supported by formal evidence either. The aim of some groups is to obtain a legal monopoly on health advice under the guise of consumer protection, thus restricting people’s freedom to choose.

**People Have a Right to Make Their Own Health Care Choices Even if They Are Wrong**

*Jon Rappoport*

Public agencies maintain that scientific evidence gives them the right to dictate what’s best for health, despite the many deaths caused by the use of prescription drugs. Whether their judgment is accurate is not the point—the real issue is individual freedom to make personal decisions even when individuals may be mistaken.

**Chapter 4: What Complementary Therapies Are Used with Conventional Medicine?**

**Chapter Preface**

**Tai Chi Has Many Health Benefits for People of All Ages and Conditions**

*HealthyWomen*
Tai chi is a form of low-impact exercise that began in China as a martial art but today is popular all over the world for its effect on health. It involves slow, controlled body movements that improve muscle tone, circulation, flexibility, and balance, among other benefits, making it especially suitable for older people and those recovering from illness.

Music Therapy Is Used in Many Ways to Help Patients Heal

Pam Mellskog

Music has been used as a healing agent since ancient times; current research shows what it can accomplish and how music therapy differs from entertainment. It is employed in many hospitals to reduce stress and depression, relieve pain, improve memory in elderly patients, and stimulate speech in children with communication disorders.

Creative Arts Are Often Used as Therapy by Health Care Institutions

Elaine Zablocki

About half of US health care institutions use nonclinical therapies such as art, music, poetry, dance, and drama to help patients heal. These therapies are particularly effective for psychiatric patients but are also used with people who are suffering from chronic pain or physical conditions that can be improved by relaxation.

Dog Therapy Helps People Recover from Emotional Illness

Jennifer Caprioli

Therapy dogs are used in many circumstances where people need help dealing with stress or depression. The US Army gives trained dogs to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has found that they are much more effective than medication or talk therapy. Therapy dogs can calm their owners, get them out of upsetting situations, or wake them from nightmares.

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