

Perspectives of Medical Professionals on the Nature of Integrative Medicine

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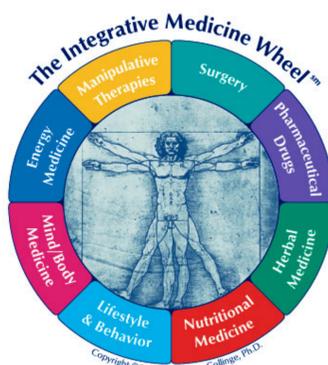
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Introduction

“Mainstream Medicine”: “Complementary and Alternative Medicine” (CAM):



“Integrative Medicine” (IM):



Research Questions:

- (1) How is the term “integrative medicine” currently defined amongst integrative practitioners?
- (2) Why is integrative medicine on the rise?
- (3) How does IM fit within the context of the US healthcare system?
- (4) What is the new standard of care as medicine evolves to a more integrative model of care?

(3) IM and US Healthcare System

1. Integrative medicine “is going to grow”
2. Clinical Trials on IM results in evidence basis for *change in policy and practice*
 1. *Healthcare insurance*
 2. *Best practices in medicine*
3. “The term *integrative medicine* will hopefully dissolve because it will become the basis for health care”; “it will become the new *mainstream*.”

(1) Definition of IM

The following quotations represent the polar ends of the spectra of definitions for IM amongst five participants. Some participants believed that “integrative medicine” is synonymous with “complementary” while others viewed IM as a holistic approach to health with the use of any evidence-based therapies no matter the origin.

Participant B: “The use of non-traditional methods of care which looks more holistically at a person’s experience. We include their social history, environmental history, occupational history, and we use methods to help them that may have evolved from Eastern medicine or other parts of the world.”

Participant C & E: “Integrative medicine is healing oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person [...] (mind, body and spirit). It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship between the practitioner and patient. It is informed by evidence and makes use of all appropriate therapies.”

(4) Organization & Standard of Care

Participant’s Assessment of Time with Patients:

Medical Modality	Time Spent with Patients
Mainstream	15 – 20 Minutes
Integrative	90 – 120 Minutes

Collaboration and Continuity of Care:

- No standardized coordination between physicians
- Some organizations emphasize all care under one roof
- While others are based on referrals to outside services

Services Offered: Traditional allopathic medicine, hypnosis, mindfulness training, heart variability biofeedback, guided imagery, healing touch, yoga, acupuncture, massage/bodywork/energy work, nutrition, diet, lifestyle changes, Reiki, Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, naturopathic medicines, and homeopathy.

(2) Reasons for the Rise in IM

1. *Chronic Disease:* IM is on the rise due partially to “the increase in chronic illness that cannot be ‘cured’ by medications, surgery, or a high tech medical approach.”
2. *Patient/Consumer Demand:* “IM has always been a consumer driven movement. If patients and consumers didn’t ask for or desire this approach to health and healthcare, we wouldn’t be anywhere [...] I don’t think you will find any arguments there.”
3. *Rising Costs of Medical Care:* “If money gets to really be a crunch issue, then [integrative interventions] should be more prominent.”
4. *Risk-Benefit Ratio:* “when we look at new therapies, we look at the risk-benefit ratio... So if we have something like a chemotherapy medication, you better use the right dose and the right frequency for the right condition and it’s important that you consult someone. But a breathing exercise or teaching someone how to eat better... what’s the danger in that?”

Conclusions/ Future Research

- ✧ Variability and lack of consensus on the definitions and concepts that define “integrative medicine” as practiced in these contexts
- ✧ Need for more research for the sake of standardization, coordination and patient safety
- ✧ Research must demonstrate that integrative medicine is more efficient and cost-effective than traditional medicine alone in order to become the “new mainstream”

