

## ***Becoming a Partner in the Healing Process Through Holistic Medicine***

The use of Holistic Medicine has been around for generations. Now, the questions becomes “Why are so many people are becoming avid supporters of holistic medicine?”

Could it be that people are becoming fed up with high tech, nonpersonal, authoritarian, and increasingly bureaucratic and commercialized use of allopathic (conventional) medicine in this country. People are increasingly looking for a more caring, humanistic approach to their medical needs. This is holistic medicine - encompassing mind, body, and spirit. People want to be treated with respect and given the information and power to take a more active role in helping themselves. They want to become a partner in the healing process.

Growing interest in holistic medicine has led to an increasing number of practicing holistic physicians and health care providers who have integrated these sought-after ideals into their practices. Holistic healthcare providers believe that safer, less costly, more effective and natural treatments, along with an emphasis on empowerment of the person, as a partner in their own health care and healing should be the norm, not the exception.

As more holistic treatment outcomes get reported in scientific literature showing efficacy, safety, and positive benefits, a greater degree of acceptance and acknowledgment by conventional medicine is being seen. There has been a great deal of reluctance by the conventional healthcare establishment to give any type of credence to holistic medicine. There are several reasons for this. One, holistic medicine has not been something that medical students are exposed to during their schooling. Two, technology rules, whether proven or unproven, in the medical profession. Three, commercialism and finance have set the tone in medicine for years. Hospitals, for example, invest heavily in a specific technology that costs millions of dollars. To recoup the investment, they must recruit and push the use of procedures that utilize that technology, whether warranted or not. Also, pharmaceutical companies are so heavily entrenched in the medical profession that they often appear to set the rules and the standards for medical care. Pharmaceutical companies contribute millions of dollars to medical schools each year. They also establish incentive programs for established health practices that tout their drugs.

There is evidence, however, showing that in many cases more conservative management-- especially holistic oriented approaches – work just as well but with added safety factors. A heart research study done by Dean Ornish, M.D demonstrates how he used a holistic approach to achieve reversal of coronary artery blockage with arteriography studies using a nutritional low fat diet, exercise, yoga, and a group support.

Because of several more recent factors, informed consumers of health care services have been seeking out and switching their health care to holistic health care providers in greater numbers than ever before. One has been the major shift in the health care system to corporate medicine, or managed care. Here, profits and cost saving are the motivational force.

The goal of these large sized businesses was to match good patient care with cost effectiveness, monitored clinical outcomes, and collaborative relationships between providers of care.

Some managed care providers, however, have degraded into what appear to be unethical businesses that lack clinical leadership. In their attempt to reduce cost, they try to keep out sicker patients, tangle medical care and clinical decision-making into a maze of bureaucratic red tape, and in some cases, provide incentives to clinicians to provide less care.

In addition, some large commercial drug companies that developed and marketed drugs which are less safe and less effective than the more natural alternatives, such as botanical, nutritional, or other holistic approaches used by holistic health care providers.

Are things changing for the better now? A recent positive trend has been in the medical schools, which are now beginning to invite holistic physicians to lecture or to develop programs in the schools to complement their more conventional curricula. If this trend continues, newly licensed doctors may be more open to using holistic medicine to help their patients.

The National Institute of Health has developed an office to support and research holistic and alternative medicine practices. Some states are now passing laws to protect and support the practices of holistic providers, as they have sometimes been the subject of harassment by their more conservative colleagues. With these current trends, the changing needs and perceptions by a more informed public, and the increasing scientific validation of holistic approaches, the holistic paradigm may be coming of age. The new frontier of healthcare and human awareness may well be the reverting back to age old use of holistic medicine.

Holistic medicine – addressing body, mind and spirit.