



Bridging the Gap between Health and Care in Healthcare

By Elizabeth Bauer

Any modality that deals with the basic mysteries of energy, matter and life is, by its own complex nature, controversial. Experts in every discipline of the science of healing, be it orthodox medicine or complementary medicine, lay claims about the effectiveness of the modalities that they utilize to augment the healing process.

Traditional viewpoints should be respected. Emerging evidence of the value of treatments within the realm of complementary medicine should also be equally evaluated and respected.

The art of healing, regardless of the modality, should be valued for its therapeutic effect and low morbidity. The art of healing is only of value to the people that it serves if it is effective—offering relief from suffering or remission of the pathological process.

We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in medicine. This paradigm shift is a rapid integration of complementary medicine as the preferred choice of treatment by the people. The people's choice in health management has had a profound impact on orthodox medical practice. The number of people seeking treatment from alternative practitioners is staggering. Perhaps it is time that practitioners of orthodox medicine need ask why.

A national survey published in *JAMA* (Eisenberg et al, Nov. 11, 1998), documenting the high prevalence and increasing trends in alternative medicine use in the United States between 1990 and 1997, that the use of alternative medicine practitioners is on the rise and exceeding total visits to primary care physicians:

Alternative Medicine		Primary Care Physicians	
Year	Total visits	Year	Total visits
1990	427 million	1990	388 million
1997	629 million	1997	386 million

These figures are even more impressive because disclosure to primary physicians of the use of alternative therapies is only 39.8%. Estimated expenditures for alternative medicine professional services conservatively were estimated at \$21.2 billion in 1997. This exceeds the 1997 out-of-pocket expenditures for all U.S. hospitalizations. The total 1997 out-of-pocket expenditures relating to alternative therapies were conservatively estimated at \$27 billion, which is comparable with the projected 1997 out-of-pocket expenditures for all U.S. physician services. Conclusions: Alternative medicine use and expenditures increased substantially between 1990 and 1997, attributable primarily to an increase in the proportion of

the population seeking alternative therapies, rather than increased visits per patient.

It should be our goal as healers to establish and define the effectiveness of the available complementary medical treatments. The assimilation of those alternative modalities into our treatment venue provides a more holistic approach, augments the number of possible treatments available, and statistically increases the possibility of relief or remission.

Our goals as practitioners should be to strive for an “integrated medicine” where every effective therapeutic modality available is incorporated freely to benefit the people that it serves. Let us not allow close-minded prejudices or uninformed biases to prevail over our art or our science of healing. We must always ask ourselves: for the common good of humanity, what else can I offer to ease the suffering? For the art, as well as the science of healing, must be approached with an open mind, heart and spirit.

Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocre minds. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence.

— Albert Einstein

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