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Homeopathy Naturopathy Osteopathy Chiropractic Ayurveda and “Conventional”

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Cruising the internet for health-related information, you will encounter all sorts of terms and claims. These terms are often used to imply superiority of method or approach by whoever is using them. For example, a site might claim that their remedies are homeopathic, or naturopathic, or "natural," claiming superior results. With no judgment regarding which is superior, here is a description of each.

What exactly do these terms mean? Here is a simple list of the terms with their brief definitions.

As always, greater curiosity should lead you to Wikipedia and a general web search will take you to other sites for a detailed history of each of these – it makes for fascinating reading. Also check out my blog for regular updates on tips for [integrative holistic care of the pediatric airway: allergies, rhinitis, sinusitis, otitis, asthma, and reflux – and all Pediatric ENT care.](#)

Homeopathy

A system of therapy based on the belief that “like heals like.” The belief is that disease can be treated with drugs (in minute doses) that produce the same symptoms in healthy people as the disease itself. According to homeopathy, symptoms are the body’s way of fighting disease.

Homeopathy teaches that symptoms are to be encouraged.

Homeopathy was developed by the German physician, Samuel Hahnemann in the late 18th century. It was further developed and popularized by the American physician James Tyler Kent. Hahnemann and his followers approached treatments in a holistic way, meaning that they treated the whole body and spirit, not simply focus on the local disease process.

Naturopathy

A system of therapy based on preventive care, on the use of heat, water, light, air, and massage as primary therapies for disease. Some Naturopaths use no medications of any kind; some use herbal remedies only. A few are licensed to also prescribe medications.

Naturopathy is an American invention, founded at the turn of the 20th century. By the early 1900's more than 20 naturopathic medical schools existed, and naturopathic physicians were licensed in most states.

As practiced today, naturopathic medicine incorporates traditional natural remedies – herbal remedies, nutrition, homeopathy, acupuncture, traditional Asian medicine, hydrotherapy, and others. Naturopathic practices are increasingly supported by results from clinical trials supported by NIH. Bastyr University of Naturopathic Medicine was the first naturopathic institution with research to be funded by NIH.

Overall, naturopathy focuses on the use of nontoxic, natural therapies. The tenets of Naturopathy seem worthy:

- First, do no harm
- Use the healing power of nature
- Treat the cause of the disease, not just the symptoms
- Treat the whole person
- Educate the patient about their health
- Focus on preventing disease

Osteopathy

A system of therapy that emphasizes the role of the musculoskeletal system in health and disease. Osteopathy began in the United States in 1874; the term “osteopathy” was coined by Andrew Taylor Still. Still founded the American School of Osteopathy in Missouri in 1892. The state of Missouri offered to allow his school to grant the MD degree, but Still insisted on retaining the DO (Doctor of Osteopathy) degree and declined that offer.

Osteopaths combine the ability to prescribe medications with *manipulative medicine*. The goal is resolution of *somatic dysfunction* in an attempt to aid the body's own recuperative ability. This involves manual treatment, or manipulation, of the musculoskeletal system. Throughout the 20th century however, osteopathy in the United States has moved closer to mainstream medicine in its practice. Recent surveys reveal that the majority of Doctors of Osteopathic medicine (DO's) practice medicine without manual manipulation, and are essentially indistinguishable from MD's in their practice.

Osteopathy is practiced around the world, including the entire European Union, Israel, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

Chiropractic

Chiropractic is a system of healthcare that focuses on diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system, especially the spine. The underlying tenet is that disorders of the spine affect overall health through the nervous system. The principal therapy involves manual manipulation of the spine and joints.

Chiropractic was founded in the United States in the late 1890's by D. Palmer, and was further developed into the 20th century by his son. Chiropractors faced heavy opposition by organized, conventional medicine in the US. Thousands of chiropractors were prosecuted for practicing medicine without a license, some were even jailed. Persecution continued until a landmark legal case against the American Medical Association (Wilk v AMA), that found that the AMA had engaged in restraint of trade.

Whereas Chiropractic has gradually gained acceptance and legitimacy over the last couple decades, the growth of evidence-based medicine poses a challenge to practices that have little research to back up their methods. Further, competition has grown from other alternative practitioners. As a result, many Chiropractors have supplemented their chiropractic practices with additional, *alternative medicine* methods.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda, or Ayurvedic medicine, is a system of traditional medicine native to the Indian subcontinent. Historically, the development of Ayurveda was influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism. It is now practiced in the rest of the world as a form of *alternative or complementary medicine*.

Translation from Sanskrit, Ayurveda means *life science or life knowledge*. Ayurvedic medicine includes the use of herbal remedies, massage, dietary routines, and yoga.

As with Naturopathy, Homeopathy, and Chiropractic, the safety and efficacy of many of the postulates of Ayurveda have yet to be proven through clinical trials.

NIH, through its National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, currently funds ongoing research into Ayurvedic practices.

Conventional Medicine

Conventional, or “Western” medicine, was labeled “Allopathy” by Hahnemann in the 18th century. As you see above, he coined the term *Homeopathy*. He meant the term Allopathy in a pejorative or derogatory

way, implying that Homeopathy was superior to Allopathy. Due to this history, conventional medical doctors (MD's) rarely use the term allopathic medicine.

We all recognize *conventional medicine* here in the United States as the practice of medicine that is most widely practiced. We also all recognize that there are many challenges with the modern conventional practice of medicine, from crazy costs, to "cures" that are worse than the disease, and many of us are painfully familiar with the specialist who treats only the disease but fails to treat the patient as a whole person.

As people have become more familiar with the limitations of "conventional medicine," we have turned to alternatives. Many of these are listed above. It has been estimated that upwards of 60% of us now see a practitioner who practices some form of alternative medicine, from Ayurveda to Chiropractic and beyond.

Evolution

It is an unfortunate human trait that the practitioners of these various medical philosophies consider *their own* to be superior to the others. Moreover, many look on the other systems of therapy with disdain, with contempt, and they can be dismissive of patients who mention having seen a practitioner of another philosophy.

How many of us have seen our doctor roll their eyes when we mention seeing a Chiropractor, or mention taking an herbal remedy, or some other alternative therapy?

Some of us (physicians) are fortunate enough to evolve. Me? I'm still an alternative Neanderthal, but I am slowly evolving, slowly integrating.

Integration

Look around: As the practice of medicine evolves into the 21st century, the most successful practitioners are those who integrate the best of these philosophies for the benefit of their patients.

These practitioners have been around for years, perhaps decades, but as patients take greater ownership of their health, these practitioners are in greater and greater demand. As it should be.

Thus, [integrative holistic medical practices](#) aspire to bring together the best of “conventional” and “alternative” medicine, to bring their patients to their very best possible health.

- To prevent disease
- To eliminate disease
- To maintain health
- To control disease when necessary
- To treat the whole person
- To educate the patient, to empower them in their healthcare decisions

So, what pathway to health does YOUR healer follow?

I know, I haven't mentioned many other healing philosophies, traditional Chinese Medicine for example. Perhaps I'll devote a future post to that sometime soon ...

Thanks for visiting, and see you here again. I appreciate your comments and questions. Keep 'em coming. Please, "be excellent to one another."

Best of health and success to you and your families.

Until next time, remember ... you can pick your friends, and you can pick your nose, but you can't pick your friend's nose (unless you're a boogor doctor :~D)

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