

# Public Discussion on Alternative and Complementary Medicine

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## Introduction

Integrated medicine is the practise of medicine that incorporates elements of complementary and alternative medicine into comprehensive treatment plans, in addition to employing firmly traditional procedures of diagnosis and therapy. Although the concept is more commonly acknowledged in the US than the UK, a conference planned by the Royal College of Physicians and the US National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in London the next week may help to raise awareness of it in the UK.

## Description

Integrative medicine and complementary medicine are distinct concepts. Complementary medicine refers to treatments that can be used in conjunction with traditional therapy but are typically not taught in medical school. Integrative medicine has a greater purpose and significance because it places more emphasis on health and healing than on illness and treatment. It treats patients as whole, complete beings with bodies, minds and spirits and it takes these aspects into account when diagnosing and treating them. In order to maintain health, patients and doctors must collaborate on lifestyle factors like nutrition, exercise, quality of sleep and rest and interpersonal interactions.

Costly technology solutions to health problems have become a staple of conventional medicine, even when they are ineffective. It has abandoned holistic approaches and straightforward intervention techniques like dietary modification and relaxation training, which are common in alternative care systems and frequently beneficial, in its passion for technology. When traditional methods are largely harmful and ineffective, patients need guides to help them navigate the complicated maze of therapy options.

The majority of people become frustrated and take additional medications. Research shows that the comprehensive approach and consultation process used by practitioners of complementary medicine give patients a greater sense of control over their illnesses. Unfortunately, there aren't many doctors with the right attitudes, skills and training, so this option isn't often available. However, in order for patients to distinguish among the numerous options for supplementary therapy, which range from the reasonable and beneficial to the absurd and even harmful, they need doctors with a biological understanding.

Conventional medicine can no longer ignore complementary and alternative medicine. Between 1990 and 2007, annual spending on complementary medicine in the United States increased from \$13 billion to \$38 billion and practitioners of alternative medicine were consulted twice as

frequently as traditional family doctors. Australia is also following this trend and a recent poll in Southampton, England—a city of two million people—showed that the UK spends approximately £4 million annually on alternative medicine outside of the NHS.

A new study from the House of Lords select committee on science and technology reveals that complementary therapies are becoming increasingly popular in Britain. At least 40% of medical practices in the UK offer some supplementary medicine services, despite the fact that the evidence in support of the use of complementary medicine is patchy at best and nonexistent at worst. According to the select committee, which divided therapies into three groups, the most organized and controlled treatments—acupuncture, chiropractic, herbal medicine, homoeopathy and osteopathy—have a research foundation and are accessible in some areas of the NHS. Although aromatherapy and hypnosis are examples of group 2 treatments that supplement conventional medicine and are offered by the NHS, this category requires stringent regulation and a solid research foundation. Crystal therapy and dowsing are two examples of therapies in Group 3 that do not have any study evidence for them, but there are also therapies that are well-established and reasonable in some cultures.

In addition, qualified healthcare providers who want to incorporate complementary therapies into their practices do not have to meet any specific regulations or educational requirements. In medical schools and other higher education establishments, complementary therapies must be introduced. In spite of the fact that awareness is growing and that some schools currently offer some instruction, this availability is uneven in Britain. Online distance learning courses are being used by many practitioners in the United States and medical education is also being reorganized. According to the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine, within the next five years, integrated medicine programs are anticipated to be offered by 25% of the 125 US medical schools [1-5].

## Conclusion

Because integrated medicine is more than just teaching doctors to use herbs instead of pharmaceuticals, these programs will fundamentally change how doctors are educated. It involves reestablishing fundamental principles that have been damaged by social and economic forces. As evidence that integrated medicine is effective, the adjective will be removed. As it is now, integrated medicine should be the medicine of the next millennium.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this manuscript.

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