

COMPARISON OF MEDICAL PARADIGMS

CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

DEFINITION

Medical care based on training from a U.S. medical school and conventional residency program.

The majority of U.S. medical doctors practice Conventional Medicine

Medical care that integrates conventional medicine with alternative medicine.

Integrative Medicine physicians are those that have completed a conventional medical education but then take the initiative to continue to educate themselves either through a professional integrative medicine organization (see below for examples) or through personal study of research outside of Big Pharma. Personal study can include evaluation of research funded by supplement companies or by medical device manufacturers, or conducted internationally where natural remedies are preferred.

Minority of physician workforce.

Numbers are growing as society evolves, and patient-consumers become more sophisticated.

Medical care utilizing treatment modalities not taught in a conventional medical school or residency.

EXAMPLES IN MEDICINE

[American Medical Association](#)

[American Holistic Medical Association](#)

[Institute for Functional Medicine](#)

[American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine](#)

[American College for the Advancement of Medicine](#)

[American Association of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine](#)

[American Botanical Council](#)

EXAMPLES IN PSYCHIATRY

[American Psychiatric Association](#)

[American Psychiatric Association Caucus on Complementary & Alternative Medicine](#)

[Safe Harbor](#) (online community)

[True Hope](#) (multisupplement retailer)

[Pfeiffer Medical Center](#)

TREATMENT GOAL

Treatment of disease

EXAMPLE:

Attainment of optimal health

EXAMPLE:

[same as Integrative Medicine]

A physician checks a patient's Vitamin B12 level only if the patient complains of poor memory. Goal is for Vitamin B12 level to be >200. This value of >200 corresponds to the minimum acceptable Vitamin B12 level necessary to avoid memory loss and peripheral neuropathy (i.e. numbness or abnormal sensations in the fingers & toes).

Reactive medicine.

A physician checks a patient's Vitamin B12 level as part of routine screening. Goal is for Vitamin B12 level to be >500. A value of >500 has been shown clinically to maximize a patient's energy physically and psychologically, while minimizing the likelihood of later development of dementia, heart disease, and other preventable chronic conditions.

Preventative medicine.

VIEW OF THE BODY

The body is something that can be "made to behave" via aggressive treatments of medications & surgery.

The body has innate healing power. Treatment should assist the body in healing itself.

[same as Integrative Medicine]

The body is conceptualized as being comprised of distinct "systems", such as the neurological, endocrine, and immune systems.

The body's various systems are conceptualized as inter-related. For example, the distinctions between a neurotransmitter (i.e. a chemical that affects the brain), a hormone, and an inflammatory cytokine (i.e. a chemical released by immune cells) are considered blurry and somewhat arbitrary.

STRENGTHS

Best for acute traumas and illnesses, where the body's ability to heal itself has been superseded by the severity of the trauma.

Best for chronic illnesses and conditions. Chronic illnesses usually have a multifactorial etiology.

Best for illnesses, whether acute or chronic, where conventional and integrative medicine approaches have failed, and/or offered a prognosis of "poor".

EXAMPLES:

- Motor vehicle accident resulting in hemorrhaging requiring life-saving surgery.
- An isolated case of acute pneumonia requiring antibiotics.

EXAMPLES:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Diabetes
- Psychiatric conditions
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic sinusitis

EXAMPLE:

- Stage IV pancreatic cancer for which "there is no cure".

BIASES

Supplements are "scary". Since supplements are not strictly regulated by the FDA, one cannot be certain of a given supplement's potency (irregardless of the manufacturer's claims) nor its purity from fillers or adulterants.

Ideally, none. Aware of the biases (or concerns) of both sides. Takes the initiative to personally investigate these concerns in detail. Maintains an attitude of humble open-mindedness combined with critical thinking.

Medications are "scary" because they are artificial and ignore the body's natural healing mechanisms. Medications can cause more harm than good. The long-term effects of medications are unknown since drug- company-sponsored trials last usually for only 6 weeks, or at most one year.