



The Gawler Foundation

An integrated approach to health
healing and wellbeing

Opinion piece

Integrated medicine and complementary therapies: A guide to getting started

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Good medicine has always taken into account the whole person - body, emotions, mind and spirit. In fact, medical history will probably regard it as a bit of an oddity that for a time towards the end of the last century, some doctors and members of the public approached health and healing in a mechanical way, focusing upon the body only, as if the emotions, mind and spirit were not involved.

Yet everyone knows that if you are feeling stressed, you are much more likely to pick up a cold or the flu. After a good holiday, when you are feeling at peace with yourself and the world, you are usually immune to just about everything!

So these days we talk of integrated medicine - medicine that consciously addresses the whole person. Just like good medicine has always done.

Integrated medicine has a broad view. It is interested in how our body is affected by our environmental and our emotional and mental state. It is concerned with matters of the heart and spirit, knowing that issues that affect our sense of purpose and meaning in life, can affect our health dramatically.

Integrated medicine is also interested in complementary therapies and self-help techniques. The widespread acceptance of acupuncture and meditation shows how much medicine has opened to new possibilities.

Complementary therapies often involve more natural methods. In fact recent research shows that both Americans and Australians spend more of their own money on complementary than orthodox medical therapies.

Many doctors, especially GPs, are responding to this by studying or practicing complementary medicine. Also, many of these therapies, such as naturopathy, traditional Chinese medicine, homeopathy, herbalism, acupuncture and many others, are offered by non-medical practitioners.

When choosing a practitioner to help you, it is always wise to consider their qualifications and experience. Personal recommendations are very helpful. Always regard your first visit to a new practitioner as an exploratory one. A chance to explain your history, be



assessed, and for you to assess the practitioner. Only proceed if you feel confident in the practitioner and their advice.

When it comes to self-help techniques there is a great deal you can do. What you eat makes a huge difference to your health; as does your state of mind, level of relaxation and degree of inner peace. An integrated practitioner can help you get started and there are many good self-help books available.

The best way to treat an illness is not to get sick in the first place. My own book *You Can Conquer Cancer* is largely about prevention and how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. It would be a good place to start.

For relaxation, stress management and meditation my book *Peace of Mind* gives a good overview of the possibilities and techniques while *Meditation Pure and Simple* goes into more detail. These and other resources are available from The Gawler Foundation bookshop via our website www.gawler.org or call (03) 5967 1730.

May the whole you, every part of you - body, emotions, mind and spirit - enjoy good health and a long life!

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