

What is integrative medicine?

Integrative medicine is a healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person (mind, body and spirit), including all aspects of lifestyle. It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship and makes use of all appropriate therapies, both conventional and alternative.

Defining Elements:

- Preventive
- Holistic
- Collaborative
- Conventional and Complementary
- Rational
- Relationship-based

How did it begin?

Driven by consumer demand, the need for the integrative medicine model stems from a growing dissatisfaction with the current medical system paradigm. From an overreliance on invasive technology and pharmaceuticals, to adverse drug reactions, long wait lists, and a rushed and fragmented approach to care, patients have been actively seeking a better alternative.

How does it differ?

Preventive

Integrative medicine is a preventive model, structured around the basic intent to protect and enhance the body's natural healing system, thus minimizing the conditions for disease to develop. This approach involves assessing the core components of nutrition, movement and fitness, education, and mind/body techniques, and utilizing these components in order to create optimal health.

Holistic

Integrative medicine takes a total care approach; an expansive view that encompasses the whole person (mind, body and spirit), and takes into account all factors such as environment and lifestyle, relationships, and knowledge. This view recognizes the need for harmony in all aspects of life. It is when one or more of these aspects becomes out of balance, often stemming from a series of underlying events, that illness eventually develops. Healing requires an expanded vision that addresses primary stressors and root causes in order to return the body to a state of health.

Collaborative

Collaboration is an important component to integrative medicine. A collaborative model strives to foster an atmosphere of open communication amongst practitioners, care team members, or outside organizations and health care providers, if necessary, in order to provide the best patient care.

Conventional and Complementary

Integrative medicine is a blend of the best practices from conventional medicine and complementary approaches, resulting in a complete and well-rounded health care paradigm.

Rational

Safety is a key component to patient care. Integrative medicine applies a rational framework at all times, offering treatment plans based on solid evidence of safety and effectiveness from both conventional and complementary approaches. The goal is to present the most appropriate care options, striving to employ natural and less invasive therapies whenever possible, while at the same time ensuring that important and proven conventional treatments are not excluded.

Relationship-based

The integrative medicine model seeks to build a relationship with the patient that is respectful and empowering, viewing them as the expert in their own health journey. The physician's role is to share wisdom and knowledge, while encouraging the patient, through artful questioning, to choose their own course of action. This approach, non-judgmental and based on empathy and trust, is essential in order to facilitate healing. Integrative medicine also promotes self-reflection, not only in patients but practitioners as well, attracting those who are on their own path of healing and wellness. This emphasis on positive relationships often results in deeper and more fulfilling connections with family, friends, community and, most importantly, the self.

Why is it needed?

Despite all the money and resources being spent in the current healthcare system, preventable diseases are increasingly more prevalent, and are occurring at alarming rates. Medicine is at a crossroads, and it's clear that the current system is not meeting the needs of a discerning public. Patients today want to be more involved in their care, seeking not so much to reject conventional medicine as to supplement it with well-researched holistic and less toxic therapies. The prevailing paradigm of scientific reductionism by itself is being questioned, and more people are being drawn to an integrative model; one in which the union of paradigms ultimately provides the best care.