

Modern Medicine vs Alternative Medicine: Different Levels of Evidence

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Description

Modern medicine has done much in the fields of infectious diseases and emergencies to aid cure. In most other fields, it is mostly control that it aims for, which is another name for palliation. Pharmacology, psychopharmacology included, is mostly directed towards such control and palliation too. The thrust, both of clinicians and research, must now turn decisively towards prevention and cure. Also, longevity with well-being is modern medicine's other big challenge. Advances in vaccines for hypertension, diabetes, cancers etc., deserve attention; as also, the role of meditation, yoga, spirituality etc. in preventing disease at various levels. Studies on longevity, lifestyle changes and healthy centenarians deserve special scrutiny to find what aids longevity with wellbeing. A close look at complementary and alternative medicine is needed to find any suitable models they may have, cutting aside their big talk and/or hostility towards mainstream medical care. Medicine is a manifestation of the human eros and should not become a means of its thanatos. It must realize its true potential, so that eros prevails, and thanatos prevails only ultimately, not prematurely [1-5].

The goal is to cure diseases if he lands up in a hospital/clinic, so the patient does not land with the same disease/s again. Or with related ones. And lands up lesser in hospitals and more at workplaces and homes. For this, the emphasis must shift from control to cure, even if we know it is a distant goal today. Distant does not make it unachievable. In fact, distant must make clear how much more need be done, and in which direction. I would have loved to add a list of references here but am sorry to find very little of any consequence.

Pharmacology is a very potent tool, but most of it is directed towards palliation and control at present. It must be marshaled towards cure and prevention. This is its big challenge, if it can transcend economic compulsions and awaken to its true role in medicine. Psychopharmacology is similar, but, additionally, it needs greater help from clinical and investigative diagnostics to help psychiatry become a full-fledged medical discipline from its interim status at present. Although it has mainly developed newer drugs that are more tolerable rather than better in efficacy, it has also helped reduce stigma and made primary care physicians more comfortable in treating mental disorders.

Alternative medicine is the term for medical products and practices that are not part of standard care. Standard care is what medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, and allied health professionals, such as nurses and physical therapists, practice. Alternative medicine is used in place of standard medical care. An example is treating heart disease with chelation therapy (which seeks to remove excess metals from the blood) instead of using a standard approach. Examples of alternative practices include homeopathy, traditional medicine, chiropractic, and acupuncture. Complementary medicine is different from alternative medicine. Whereas complementary medicine is used together with conventional medicine, alternative medicine is used in place of

conventional medicine. See also complementary medicine, conventional medicine.

Some alternative practices are based on theories that contradict the science of how the human body works; others resort to the supernatural or superstitious to explain their effect. In others, the practice is plausibly effective but has too many side effects.

Much of the perceived effect of an alternative practice arises from a belief that it will be effective (the placebo effect), or from the treated condition resolving on its own (the natural course of disease). This is further exacerbated by the tendency to turn to alternative therapies upon the failure of medicine, at which point the condition will be at its worst and most likely to spontaneously improve. In the absence of this bias, especially for diseases that are not expected to get better by themselves such as cancer or HIV infection, multiple studies have shown significantly worse outcomes if patients turn to alternative therapies. While this may be because these patients avoid effective treatment, some alternative therapies are actively harmful (e.g., cyanide poisoning from amygdalin, or the intentional ingestion of hydrogen peroxide) or actively interfere with effective treatments.

The alternative sector is a highly profitable industry with a strong lobby and faces far less regulation over the use and marketing of unproven treatments. Its marketing often advertises the treatments as being "natural" or "holistic", in comparison to those offered by "big pharma". Billions of dollars have been spent studying alternative medicine, with few or no positive results. Some of the successful practices are only considered alternative under very specific definitions, such as those which include all physical activity under the umbrella of "Alternative Medicine".

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