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Conventional Allopathic vs. “Alternative” Holistic Healthcare

It irks me to no end when conventional (allopathic) healthcare providers dismiss traditional therapies by attaching the moniker “alternative” to describe where they fit into the healthcare spectrum. Alternative to what? The word implies that conventional allopathic medicine is the gold standard and traditional therapies run second, third or last. This is the attitude that says, “OK we’ll let it slide because so many people use them but we don’t really believe they work.” Traditional approaches to restoring and maintaining health predate allopathic medicine by thousands of years.

The vitalist healing doctrine “man assists, but nature heals” permeates the philosophies of Hippocrates, Aristotle and most physicians and healers up to the rise of positivism and the scientific method. It hearkens from the notion that life exists as the result of an ineffable force that animates the otherwise inanimate material world. “There is some feature,” reports S. Blackburn in the Oxford History of Philosophy, “of living bodies that prevents their nature being entirely explained in physical or chemical terms. This feature may be the presence of a further ‘thing’ (such as a soul), but it may also be simply the emergence of special relations or principles of organization arising from the complexity of the biological organism.”

Fortunately, Hippocrates’ original philosophy is alive and well, in a more mature form,



Photo Courtesy of Sarah McKay Photography

in the practice of naturopathic, functional medicine.

This healing discipline embraces the best that science has garnered from its pokings and proddings into the microscopic world of human anatomy and physiology while maintaining a larger view of the human as a living system.

Hippocrates’ discomfort with the prevailing belief of his day, that supernatural possession causes disease, made him an adamant proponent of the natural cause of disease states. He was most comfortable with the notion that within man resides an innate healing capacity. This he observed and endeavored to promote in his method and system of disease prevention and cure.

Establishing and Advancing the Chiropractic Family Wellness Lifestyle

Hippocrates is considered the father of western medicine; his view has informed the practices of physicians for over two millennia and still informs the philosophies of most healing systems of our day, with the exception of modern western medicine, the main driving force behind the allopathic model.

Practiced in its current form, allopathic medicine remains in its infancy compared to more traditional approaches: It's hundreds of years, rather than thousands of years, in the making. Its political power in the healthcare industry is therefore somewhat hard to understand, and yet

its philosophy of practice (or lack thereof) holds sway.

We must put the allopathic model in its proper place as one modality along a continuum of modalities, removing it from its position as the one and only way to a cure. It should be subsumed into a model that is inclusive of all therapies. Then and only then will what some call "alternative" medicine once again take its rightful place in the pantheon of healthcare modalities that support health and render a true cure.

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