



Integrative Medicine: Hope or Hype? A Need and Necessity

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Mainstream of the progress of medical knowledge, which is based on different medical schools of thought, is such that one school of thought takes the priority during a certain period and presents itself as the dominant mainstream. In this way, other approaches are marginalized as alternative or complementary methods.

Over the last few 100 years, the conventional medicine has developed based on atomism and diagnostic approach on the ground of the pathogenic agent and physical reactions at the level of tissue, cells, molecules, and genes, where the treatment is based on chemical medications or controlling highly complex mechanisms inside the body.

Other schools of thought and methods in medicine, including Iranian, Indian and Ayurveda, and Chinese medicine, as well as chiropractic, homeopathy, and osteopathy are also considered as alternative and complementary approaches alongside the dominant mainstream of medicine.

However, today there is a progressive and scientific view that respects every approach which is both safe and effective regardless of the background, root, or authenticity of each of the medical schools of thought that is able to respond to part of hygiene and health services and needs of people by following ethical and cultural principles in a society.

A key principle in the concept of application of integrative medicine is its

effectiveness according to evidence so that we could be sure about its effectiveness by considering the safety of that therapeutic intervention. In this way, every safe and effective method belongs to medicine and regardless of all nonscientific prejudices; the pure term of medicine would not have any prefixes or suffixes.

However, one should note that medicine will teach us a kind of integration that attend to the entire existence of human beings as a continual body along with all living and humane dimensions including the environment, the spirit, mind, though, and body together with the genetics and molecular and cellular performance. In this way, we are facing a totally complex human with highly special known dimensions and aspects that we will know in the future necessitating us to know him or her more and more every day.

It seems that in today's world, the best way to serve patients both in diagnostic and therapeutic stages is the application of integrative medicine. By following ethical principles and having on-going attention to proper investigations, this approach should be institutionalized at universities and among medical students and researchers.

Iranian medicine is also one of the longest serving medical schools of thought in the world being taught in Europe until 200 years ago. It's most important approach is an emphasis on prevention and reformation of lifestyle and then therapy using natural and herbal medicines and some manual interventions. Great Iranian scientists such as Ibn-E Sina, Zakariya Razi, and Ali-Ibn Abbas

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Ahwazi have perpetuated this medical school of thought by writing important books including Al-Ghanoon, Al-Havi, and Kamil-o Assaneh. This school of thought itself has been an integration of traditional Iranian medical school, Greek medicine, and Indian medicine.

Today, by establishing the deputy of traditional medicine in the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education and formation of traditional medicine faculties particularly in Tehran's University of Medical Sciences –

as the largest medical science university in Iran – great hopes have been developed for development of the integrative medicine approach in Iran. Through novel diagnostic and therapeutic achievements accomplished in medicine and generation of scientific evidence-based on research in the Iranian medicine, this school would be recovered again. This type of medicine can also be benefited from for promotion of health and helping prevent and treat some diseases and to reform lifestyles.

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