



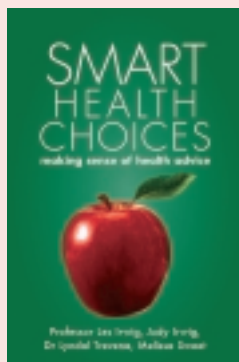
offered formally by the National Health Service. However it is inevitable, in my opinion, that only a handful of complementary therapies that have had their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness fully evaluated will be invited to join the club. Outside of the NHS, I can see more privately owned integrated health clinics opening that offer, for example, a holistically-informed GP (as a gatekeeper) working alongside a team of complementary therapists.

Providing access to a number of different options and therapies however is not integrated medicine, its integrated healthcare, integrated medicine is much more. If both are to advance my feeling is that we need to make clear this differentiation.

The following is my own perspective on what integrated medicine is. The two definitions that I shared earlier are great, but incomplete.

I define integrated medicine as a personalised, person-empowering approach to healthcare, one that is committed to helping individuals experience their fullest potential for health, healing and personal growth. Rather than exclusively focusing on recovery from disease and distress, it embraces a wider vision of health, one that seeks to help individuals thrive and flourish – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. To achieve this integrated medicine makes use of all of the appropriate self-help, conventional and complementary therapeutic assessments, tools and approaches available, and wherever possible does so according to the evidence of their effectiveness. Underpinning the integrated medicine approach is the unique relationship created between the practitioner and patient, the commitment of the patient to learning new skills, acquiring new knowledge and transforming perceptions, habits and attitudes, and the skills, awareness and presence of the practitioner.

Integrated medicine is not just about helping individuals recover from disease and distress, but helping them discover how to thrive and flourish as human beings.



Smart Health Choices - Professor Les Irwig, Judy Irwig, Dr Lyndal Trevena and Melissa Sweet Hammersmith Press, £12.99 www.hammersmithpress.co.uk

This is an essential guide to making sense of health advice. It arms the reader with a healthy scepticism as well as the tools for evaluating the messages they're confronted with on a regular basis whether those messages come from a specialist, general practitioner, naturopath, the media, the internet or a well-intentioned friend or family member. Smart Health Choices highlights why some health advice may be misleading and offers ways to identify meaningful health claims and research, and explains why it can sometimes be unwise to rely on the opinions of experts. It also shows the reader how to make the right health decisions by asking the right questions.

THE FUTURE

Do I see integrated holistic healthcare – conventional and complementary medical practitioners working more closely together to improve therapeutic outcomes and patient's quality of life as the future? I do. Do I see integrated medicine becoming widely practised and widely desired? The honest answer is no, not for the moment. Despite there being a considerable amount of interest in holistic ways of living, spiritual growth and CAM approaches very few people are actually willing to translate that knowledge or interest into action. It's easy to talk about change, to talk about treating mind, body and spirit, but who is really committed to changing habits, and learning new skills? The truth is, most people want quick fixes, and fortunately many conventional and complementary medical practices is set up to provide that. And as anyone who is committed to personal inner work knows, waking up, getting real and facing reality is hard work – it requires courage and a commitment to healing and personal growth.

Although not everyone is ready to wholeheartedly embrace integrated medicine, I do believe its time will come.

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