



WHAT IS INTEGRATIVE HEALTHCARE?

Blending the Best of
Conventional and
Complementary Medicine

As research continues to confirm the important role of a comprehensive, holistic approach to disease prevention and healing, an awakening is occurring across healthcare. Practitioners are expanding their minds and their toolkits, embracing a broader range of healing practices to provide the most individualized, effective care possible.

**Integrative
healthcare has
arrived.**



WHAT IS INTEGRATIVE HEALTHCARE?

Integrative healthcare involves **using the best of conventional medical treatments (e.g. pharmaceuticals, surgery) along with complementary approaches (e.g. acupuncture, massage)** to most effectively meet the needs of each individual patient.

Conventional or “mainstream” medicine focuses largely on treating illness after it has occurred, and tends to be practiced in a fairly top-down manner through which the healthcare practitioner drives most treatment decisions. By contrast, integrative medicine places a **greater emphasis on *prevention* and on *partnership* between the practitioner and the patient.**

Research has shown that an integrative approach **can significantly improve patient outcomes, particularly for chronic conditions like pain, stress-related disorders, mental health conditions, and even cancer.** It has also been shown to significantly increase patient satisfaction while reducing long-term healthcare costs.



WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Terms like Alternative, Complementary, and Integrative medicine are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct concepts. As the name implies, “alternative” medicine refers to practices like massage or chiropractic care when they are used *instead* of conventional medical treatments. When those same practices are used alongside conventional treatments, they are known as “complementary.” An integrative healthcare plan includes the best combination of conventional, alternative, or complementary treatments to meet the needs and preferences of the individual.

Conventional Medicine	Alternative Medicine	Complementary Medicine	Integrative Healthcare
Pharmaceuticals, surgeries, and other diagnostic and medical procedures	Acupuncture, herbal medicine, meditation, etc. used <i>instead of</i> conventional medical treatments	Acupuncture, herbal medicine, meditation, etc. used <i>in addition to</i> conventional medical treatments	Any integration of conventional, alternative, and/or complementary treatments, customized to each individual
Body	Body, mind, and spirit	Body, mind, and spirit	Body, mind, and spirit
Primarily disease treatment	Disease treatment and prevention	Disease treatment and prevention	Disease treatment and prevention



“Imagine a world in which medicine was oriented toward healing rather than disease, where doctors believed in the natural healing capacity of human beings and emphasized prevention above treatment.

In such a world, doctors and patients would be partners working toward the same ends.

Andrew Weil, M.D.

