



## **Alternative Medicine: Voodoo or Unrecognized Science?**

Alternative approaches to medicine are gaining popularity among both patients and physicians. The lecturer will describe alternative therapies such as mind/body interactions, homeopathy, acupuncture, nutrition, movement/exercise, and massage therapy and their application to the practice of emergency medicine. Recent medical literature supporting and refuting these alternative approaches will be reviewed.

- Discuss alternative approaches to standard medical care.
- Describe the scientific merit to many of the alternatives.
- List several nontraditional approaches to patient care.

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8:00 AM - 9:55 AM  
Room # N208  
Las Vegas Convention Center

## **FACULTY**

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## **Alternative Medicine - Voodoo or Unrecognized Science**

**Jay Kaplan, M.D., F.A.C.E.P.  
ACEP Scientific Assembly  
Las Vegas Nevada  
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### **I. Course Description:**

The existence of “alternative” approaches to “traditional” medicine is not a new phenomenon, dating back to ancient Greece. There is evidence that today many people are seeking unconventional therapies in the treatment of their illnesses. Knowledge of these different methods can aid the emergency physician in understanding and communicating with patients who may have sought or are seeking these nontraditional approaches to treatment and healing. These “alternative” therapies may be seen as “complementary” to “traditional” medicine and may be of use to the practicing emergency physician in terms of increasing the treatment modalities offered to patients and the referral sources given for follow-up. Given the large number of unconventional therapies in existence, it is difficult to know which ones have merit. This lecture will include an explanation of many of the different alternative therapies and will focus on scientific studies and research which attempt to evaluate the merit and value of those approaches. Potential utility to the practice of emergency medicine will be discussed. Categories which will be addressed include: mind/body interventions; alternative systems of medical practice; diet/nutrition/lifestyle modification; manual healing methods; herbal medicines; pharmacologic and biologic healing methods; and bioelectromagnetic applications.

### **II. Course Objectives:**

The participant will be able to:

1. Understand and explain alternatives approaches to traditional medical care.
2. Describe the scientific merit (or lack thereof) of many of the alternatives.
3. Understand the potential applicability of the alternatives to the practice of emergency medicine.
4. Understand the potential applicability of the alternatives to one’s own life and to the prevention of illness and promotion of health in oneself.

### **III. Target Audience**

Physicians, nurses, and other health care practitioners in the field of emergency medicine.

#### IV. Course Outline:

##### I. Alternative Medicine - Why talk about it?

##### II. Alternative Medicine - So what if everybody is talking about it, why learn about it?

##### III. Definitions

##### IV. “Traditional” Emergency Medicine

- A. Where we do well
- B. Where we don’t do so well
- C. Current modalities of treatment
- D. Can “nontraditional” approaches help us?
  - broaden the therapeutic modalities which we offer
  - utilize our current methods better

##### V. Ten Principles of Health and Illness (source: A. Weil, M.D.)

##### VI. Alternative/Complementary Medicine Categories

##### VII. Mind/Body Interventions

##### A. The mind-body connection

-**Selye’s general adaptation syndrome** - Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it and the general adaptation syndrome reflects the body’s attempt to deal with the stressor, through three phases: the alarm reaction, the stage of resistance, and the stage of exhaustion.

-**Endorphins** - any of three compounds found naturally in the brain that exert typical opiate-like effects, including analgesia.

**B. Placebo (response/effect)** - an inert substance designed to look like a real drug and given to satisfy the desire of a patient for medicine when no indication exists for a genuine prescription; an inert substance that is given to the control group of patients in a blinded trial, used to distinguish between the actual benefits of the medication and the benefits the patients think they are receiving; a procedure with no therapeutic value, performed for such purposes.

**C. Art therapy** - a means for patients to reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, and express unspoken and frequently unconscious concerns about their disease through painting, sculpture, drawing and other forms of art.

**D. Biofeedback** - the process of furnishing an individual with information, usually in an auditory or visual mode, on the state of one or more physiologic variables such as heart rate, blood pressure, or skin temperature; it often enables the individual to gain some voluntary control over the physiologic variable being sampled.

**E. Dance/Movement therapy** - Dance is a direct expression of the mind and body; the underlying assumption in DMT is that visible movement behavior is analogous to personality, so that the process of changing how one moves (e.g. from fragmented to integrated to graceful) can effect total functioning. Music, rhythm, and synchronous movement promote the healing processes by altering mood states, re-awakening stored memories and feelings, organizing thoughts and actions, reducing isolation, and establishing rapport.

**F. Humor therapy** - the use of laughter and mirth in the prevention and treatment of illness.

**G. Hypnosis** - a state of attentive and focused concentration in which people can be relatively unaware of, but not completely blind to, their surroundings; in this state people are highly responsive to suggestion; hypnosis has three major components: absorption, dissociation, and responsiveness.

**H. Imagery** - a therapeutic intervention based on the idea that images have either a direct or indirect effect on health - either patients are shown how to use their own flow of images about the healing process or, alternatively, they are guided through a series of images that are intended to soothe and distract them, reduce any sympathetic nervous system arousal, or generally enhance their relaxation.

**I. Meditation** - a self-directed practice for relaxing the body and calming the mind, by making a concentrated effort to focus on a single thought or physical experience or sound.

**J. Music therapy** - the use of music to address physical, psychological, cognitive, and social needs of individuals with disabilities and illnesses, including creating music, singing, moving to music, or just listening to it.

**K. Prayer and mental healing** - the use of prayer to facilitate healing - may be divided into two main types: type 1 - the healer enters a prayerful, altered state of consciousness in which he views himself and the patient as a single entity, with there being no need for physical contact and no attempt to “do anything”; type 2 - healers touch the patient and describe some flow of energy through their hands to the patient’s area of pathology.

**L. Relaxation response** - a technique to engender a constellation of psychological and physiological effects that appear common to many practices (including meditation, prayer, progressive relaxation, yoga)

**M. Self-help support groups** - e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous - a community based healing system for helping people whose lives are damaged by the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs to stop drinking or using.

**N. Yoga** - an ancient system of health with the goal of integration of physical, mental, and spiritual energies that enhance health and well-being; includes the practice of yogic postures (Asanas), breath control (Pranayama), and meditation.

## **VIII. Alternative Systems of Medical Practice**

**A. Acupuncture** - a therapy involving the placement of needles in the direct manipulation of the network of energetic meridians, which are believed to connect not only with the surface or structural body parts but also to influence the deeper internal organs.

**B. Anthroposophically Extended Medicine** - based upon the work of Rudolph Steiner, Ph.D., this system builds on three pre-existing movements and therapeutics, including naturopathy, homeopathy, and modern scientific medicine; a three-fold model of the “sense-nerve” system, the “rhythmic” system, and the “metabolic-limb” system gives the physician a diagnostic scheme for understanding an illness as a deviation from the harmonious internal balance of the functions of the bodily self and the spiritual self.

**C. Ayurvedic Medicine** - the traditional, natural system of medicine of India, which has been practiced for more than 5,000 years; it provides an integrated approach to the prevention and treatment of illness through lifestyle interventions and a wide range of natural therapies - describes all physical manifestations of disease as due to the imbalance of three basic physiological principles in the body, called “doshas”, which are believed to govern all bodily functions; therapies may include dietary changes, exercise, yoga, meditation, massage, herbal tonics, herbal sweat baths, medicated enemas, and medicated inhalations.

**D. Community-based systems** - an individual’s sickness is viewed as sickness of the entire community and therefore the treatment must address the whole community rather than just the patient; health care practitioners are expected to have expertise in dealing with relationships (between partners, between parents and children, etc.), mediating disputes and communicating with the spirit world.

- **Native American** - each Native American Indian community-based has its distinct characteristics, but all share the following rituals and practices: sweating and purging; herbal remedies; shamanic healing.

- **Latin American** - Curanderismo is a folk system which typically includes two distinct components: 1. a humoral model for classifying activity, food, drugs, and illness; and 2. a series of folk illnesses such as “evil eye,” “fright,” “blockage,” and “fallen fontanelle.”

**E. Homeopathy** - an alternative medical system that treats the symptoms of a disease with minute doses of a chemical; in larger doses the compound would produce the same symptoms as the disease or disorder that is being treated; based on three principles:

**F. Naturopathic medicine** - integrates traditional natural therapeutics - including botanical medicine, clinical nutrition, homeopathy, acupuncture, traditional oriental medicine, hydrotherapy, and naturopathic manipulative therapy - with modern scientific medical diagnostic science and standards of care.

**G. Shamanic healing** - distinguished by the practice of journeying to nonordinary reality to make contact with the world of the spirits, to ask their direction in bringing healing back to people and the community; involves the transformation of personal and cultural neuroses into creative action.

**H. Traditional Oriental medicine** - a system based on the philosophical and metaphysical worldviews of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism; includes a wide variety of therapeutic methods - acupuncture, herbal medicines, acupressure, qigong, and oriental massage techniques; most striking is its emphasis on diagnosing disturbances of “qi” or vital energy, in health and disease, and the concept of yin and yang harmony as vital to healthy balance and function.

## **IX. Diet/Nutrition/Lifestyle Modification**

### **A. Cultural diets**

**-Macrobiotics** - predominantly a vegan diet, minimizing consumption of all animal products except fish; the emphasis is on whole cereal grains and vegetables, preferably organically grown; tends to be low in fat and high in complex carbohydrates in comparison to the typical American diet.

**-Seventh Day Adventist diet** - diet of the Protestant sect that among other things preaches a clean, wholesome lifestyle and admonishes eating animal flesh; milk and eggs may be allowed; they abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine-containing beverages; total fat intake is not significantly lower than the typical American diet.

**-Mediterranean** - emphasis is on less refined complex carbohydrates (e.g. pasta) in place of sugar and the highly refined starches generally consumed in the USA; olive oil and garlic almost always consumed in abundance.

### **B. Diet Modification regimes**

**-Cancer diets** - Gerson therapy, Kelley regimen, Livingston/Wheeler regimen, Wigmore diet - all variations of diet with the aim of causing regression of diagnosed cancer.

**-Fat-modified diets** - Pritikin diet, Ornish diet - used for treatment of cardiovascular disease and diabetes; both are basically vegetarian (although Pritikin does allow 85 grams of chicken or fish per week), high in complex carbohydrates, high in fiber, low in cholesterol, and extremely low in fats (less than 10 percent of daily calories); Ornish program calls for stress reduction practices in addition to diet and emphasizes social support systems, while both mandate exercise.

**-Food Allergy diets** - elimination of specific foods in the treatment of illness such as rheumatoid arthritis, autoimmune disorders, and hyperactivity.

### **C. Supplemental therapies**

**-amino acids** - S-adenosylmethionine in the treatment of major depression, glycine in the treatment of schizophrenia

**-minerals** - includes the use of magnesium, selenium, calcium, and iron.

**-vitamins (megadose)** - includes the use of vitamin C and coenzyme Q in the treatment of cancer, vitamin E in the prevention of postoperative thromboembolism, folic acid in the treatment of psychiatric disorders, beta-carotene in immune-compromised individuals.

## **X. Manual Healing Methods**

### **A. Osteopathy** - one of the earliest systems of health care in the

United States to use manual healing methods; principles emphasize: 1. structure and function are interdependent; 2. the body has the ability to heal itself; 3. diseases and impairments arise from disruptions of the normal interactions of anatomy, physiology, and behavior; and 4. appropriate treatment is based on the ability to understand, diagnose and treat, including using manually applied procedures, and somatic dysfunction can be related to any visceral, neuromusculoskeletal, or behavioral dysfunction.

**B. Chiropractic** - a discipline concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of structural dysfunctions, based on the relationship between structure (primarily of the spine) and function (primarily of the nervous system); relies heavily on hands-on procedures using touch (palpation) to determine both structural and functional “dysrelationships.”

**C. Massage and Related Techniques**

**-Deep tissue massage/Rolfing** - used to release chronic patterns of muscular tension using slow strikes, direct pressure, or friction directed across the grains of muscles and fascia with the fingers, thumbs, or elbows; applied with greater pressure and to deeper layers of muscle than Swedish massage; also called “Structural Integration,” this is based on the idea that human function is improved when the segments of the body are properly alligned.

**-Neuromuscular therapy** - a form of deep massage and stretching that is applied to specific muscles, used to increase blood flow, release trigger points (intense knots of muscle tension that refer pain to other parts of the body), and release pressure on nerves caused by soft tissues.

**-Postural re-education therapies**

**\*Alexander technique** - a system of body dynamics, especially with respect to the head, neck and shoulders; the technique includes simple movements that improve balance, posture, and coordination and relieve pain.

**\*Feldenkrais method** - this method consists of two branches: 1. awareness through movement - consists of gentle exploratory movement sequences organized around a specific function with the intention of increasing awareness of multiple possibilities of action; 2. functional integration - involves the practitioner’s use of words and gentle, noninvasive touch to guide an individual student to an awareness of existing and alternative movement patterns.

**\*Trager integration** - this method uses light, rhythmic rocking and shaking movements to loosen joints, ease movement, and release chronic patterns of tension; in influencing deep-seated psychophysiological patterns in the patient’s mind and interrupting the projection of those patterns into body tissues, it has as its goal the creation of a feeling of pleasure in being able to move body parts more freely.

**-Pressure point therapies**

**\*Accupressure** - pressure is applied to meridian points to stimulate or sedate them, and amount of pressure and length of application vary according to the system, the ailment, and the intent.

**\*Reflexology** - also called zone therapy - states there are reflex areas in the hands and feet that correspond to every part of the body, including organs and glands, and that these parts can be affected by stimulating the appropriate reflex areas - used to relieve stress and tension, stimulate deep relaxation, and promote the unblocking of nerve impulses to normalize and balance the entire body.

**\*Shiatsu** - sequenced applications of pressure are applied from one end of each meridian to the other, and the meridians of the entire body are treated in an attempt to bring relaxation, harmony, and balance to the patient.

**D. Biofield Therapeutics** - often called energy healing or laying on of hands; based on the view that there is a “biofield” which may be directed, modified, or amplified by a practitioner to promote general health or to treat a specific dysfunction.

**1. Healing touch** - developed by the American Holistic Nurses Association, combines elements of therapeutic touch, healing science (incorporating chakras and psychic layers), and Brugh Joy’s and other work; hands are placed both on and off the body.

**2. Polarity therapy** - a natural health system based on the idea of a “human energy field;” asserts that well-being and health are conditions determined by the nature of the flow of this human energy field and that the flow can be affected by various natural methods

**3. Qigong** - the art and science of using breath, movement, and meditation to cleanse, strengthen, and circulate the blood and vital energy.

**4. Reiki** - developed in Japan in the 1800’s and introduced in the US in 1936; spiritual energy with innate intelligence is channeled through the practitioner - the spiritual body is healed and it in turn is expected to heal the physical; uses rituals, symbols, and spirit guides

**5. SHEN Physioemotional release therapy** - the biofield conforms to natural laws of physics, with a discernable flux pattern through the body; conventional medical and psychotherapy instruments with questions are designed to discover repressed emotional states, and the intent is treat primarily emotional and somatopsychic dysfunctions.

**6. Therapeutic touch** - a contemporary interpretation of several ancient healing practices in which practitioners consciously direct or sensitively modulate human energies; generally there is no physical contact between the patient and practitioner, as the practitioner’s hands are two to six inches away from the patient assessing the blockages in the patient’s energy field lie..

## **XI. Herbal Medicines**

### **A. European botanical medicines**

- Bilberry extract-believed to help prevent or treat fragile capillaries.
- Ginkgo biloba extract-used mainly against symptoms of aging.
- Echinacea-stimulates the immune system nonspecifically.
- Saw palmetto-used to treat benign prostatic hypertrophy.
- Hypericum-used to treat depression.

### **B. Indian herbal remedies**

- Eclipta alba-used to treat liver cirrhosis and infectious hepatitis.
- Articulon-F-used to treat osteoarthritis.
- Trikatu-contains black pepper, long pepper, and ginger, used to restore the imbalance of the body’s three humors in Ayurvedic medicine.

### **C. Native American herbal agents**

- Rabbit tobacco-used to treat colds, flu, neuritis, asthma, coughs, and pneumonia.
- Poke-used to treat asthma, boils, cramps, stomach ulcers.



-Sassafras-used as a “shotgun” heart remedy, a blood purifier, and a spring tonic.

**D. Oriental herbal agents**

-Ginseing-effects include antistress capabilities, alteration of circadian rhythms by modifying neurotransmitters, cardiac performance effects, inhibition of platelet aggregation, modulation of immune functions.

-Dryopteris root-used as a preventive measure in influenza epidemics.

-Chinese foxglove root-used to treat hepatitis

## **XII. Pharmacologic and Biologic Healing Methods**

**A. Antineoplastons** - peptide fractions originally derived from normal human blood and urine (although a method for synthesizing them was subsequently developed) that are depicted as a newly discovered natural form of anticancer protection, apart from the lymphocyte system.

**B. Bee products** - the medicinal use of various products of the honeybee, including raw honey, pollen, royal jelly, wax, propolis (bee glue), and venom.

**C. Cartilage products** - involves the use of cartilage products (from sharks, cattle, sheep, chicken) with a long list of reported effects, including accelerating wound healing, possessing topical anti-inflammatory capability, alleviating autoimmune diseases, relieving osteoarthritic pain, and inhibiting a wide variety of cancers.

**D. EDTA chelation therapy** - a treatment employing ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid, a material that readily binds to metallic ions, suggested in the treatment of heart disease and circulatory problems, including atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, angina pectoris, and occlusive vascular disease.

**E. Hoxsey method** - an alternative therapy for cancer using a mixture of powerful herbs; these remedies consist of an external salve and an herbal potion, the salve an escharotic and the internal medication made up of pokeweed root, burdock root, barbery, buckthorn bark, stillingia root, and prickly ash added to a base of potassium iodide and cascara.

**F. Immunoaugmentative therapy** - one of the most widely used unconventional cancer treatments, this is an experimental form of cancer immunotherapy consisting of daily injections of processed blood products.

**G. Oxidizing Agents** - involves the use of ozone in the treatment of HIV disease and its related manifestations.

## **XIII. Bioelectromagnetic Applications**

**A. Blue light treatment and artificial lighting** - based on the theory that poor light poses a serious threat to health and that the kind of light necessary for maintaining health must contain the full wavelength spectrum found in natural sunlight.

**B. Electroacupuncture** - electrical stimulation via acupuncture needles is used as an enhancement or replacement for manual needling.

**C. Electromagnetic fields** - applications used to enhance soft tissue wound healing, bone repair, and the treatment of osteoarthritis; may affect the immune system.

**D. Electrostimulation and neuromagnetic stimulation devices -**  
electrical stimulation as a medical application used in pain relief (TENS) or behavioral/psychological modification (TCES); magnetic pulse is applied noninvasively to a part of the patient's body to stimulate nerve activity, in the treatment of affective disorders and seizures

#### **XIV. Case Studies of Specific Illnesses – “Traditional” v. “Alternative”**

**A. Headache**

**B. Allergies – hayfever/asthma**

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## **XX. Bibliography - Internet Connections - Internet Medical and Health Care Resources: World Wide Web**

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Alternative Medicine Health Care Information Resources:<http://www-hsl.mcmaster.ca/tomflwm/altmed.html>

Alternative Medicine WWW Page: (The Alternative Medicine Homepage);  
<http://www.pitt.edu/~cbw/altm.html>

Health World On-line: Alternative and Complementary Medicine Center;  
<http://www.healthworld.com/clinic/therapy/index.html>

Hotwired's Health Clinic presents: Ask Dr. Weil: <http://cgi.pathfinder.com/drweil>

NCCAM Homepage: <http://nccam.nih.gov>

Rosenthal Center for Alternative/Complementary Medicine-Columbia University:  
<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/rosenthal>

Yahoo:Health:Alternative Medicine:  
[http://dir.yahoo.com/health/alternative\\_medicine](http://dir.yahoo.com/health/alternative_medicine)

### Additional Material Handouts:

APPENDIX A- NCCAM Web site

APPENDIX B – NCCAM -classification of alternative medical practices

APPENDIX C - Alternative Medicine Health Care Information Resources

APPENDIX D – Health World On-Line: Alternative and Complementary Medicine Center

APPENDIX E – Ask Dr. Weil

APPENDIX F - Internet Resources via “The Alternative Medicine Homepage”

APPENDIX G - Self Assessment Profiles

a: Ayurveda

b: Traditional Chinese Medicine

c: Life Stress Rating Scale