

Medicine in the 21st Century: An Integrative Approach

By Dean Shrock, Ph.D. © 2002

Ideally medicine in the 21st century will be an integrative approach and will emphasize preventative care. A good definition of health in general is the ability to adapt to physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and immune challenges. Most major diseases of humanity are controlled by the immune system, and one's lifestyle dramatically affects immune function. Therefore, lifestyle changes including nutrition, exercise, and stress management should be an integral part of public health, education, and practice.

The New Medicine will offer insurance reimbursement for medical freedom of choice. The most cited medical journal article in history reports that people are using "alternative" therapies more frequently than their visits to primary care physicians, and are paying out-of-pocket for these services. One explanation for this phenomenon is that the role of Tender Loving Care and the nurse-patient and doctor-patient relationship has begun to disappear.

Human factors and relationships are the greatest factors in healing. Whether we call it love or social support, connecting with someone emotionally and spiritually is the essence of life and health. Therefore, spiritual practices which develop our sense of oneness and compassion, that honor the God within, will become recognized as essential for health and healing. We will understand more fully the power of thoughts and beliefs and mind-body approaches to health. People have used prayer successfully to heal throughout history. And because prayer contains the element of compassion, it transmits the most harmonious energy of all: one that resonates with our sense of oneness.

Perhaps the greatest change and challenge of medicine and health care in the 21st Century will be one of self-responsibility. We must begin to respect and use our intuition to guide us in knowing what is right and best for our health. We have to acknowledge our unique differences and the understanding that what works for another may not be what we need to heal. Medicine must become more integrated. It needs to research and respect therapies and approaches which address the whole person: the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual.