



Holism, and what it means

What is natural healing, homeopathic, holistic and alternative medicine? How do we use them? How are we implementing these concepts into dentistry and dental hygiene?

The *Oxford/American Dictionary* defines holism as the treating of the whole person, including mental and social factors rather than just the symptoms of the disease.

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According to Suzan Walter, MBA, president of the American Holistic Health Association, there are no accepted standard definitions for holistic, holistic health, or holistic medicine. She states that most usage falls within two definitions:

■ Holistic as a whole made up of interdependent parts. You are most likely to hear these parts referred to as:

- the mind/body connection
- mind/body/spirit
- physical/mental/emotional/spiritual aspects.

When this is applied to illness, it is called holistic medicine and includes a number of factors, such as 1) dealing with the root cause of an illness, 2) increasing patient involvement, and 3) considering both conventional

(allopathic) and complementary (alternative) therapies.

■ Holistic as a synonym for alternative therapies. By this definition, “going holistic” means turning away from conventional medical options and using alternative treatments exclusively. This relates mainly to illnesses, and is sometimes used for controversial therapies.

Dental hygiene has always been holistic. In 2000, this was acknowledged to the United States and the world when the U.S. Surgeon General confirmed that oral health and total body health and wellness are one and the same. With this official and powerful acknowledgment, we have

“come out of the closet” to be recognized as pioneers in prevention.

Alternative medicine is what it says — an alternative medical substitute for conventional treatment. Consumer demand has put pressure on the medical community and insurance industry to meet their needs. The public is searching for the acceptance of ancient health philosophies such as Asian, Greek, and Egyptian that existed thousands of years before modern pharmaceuticals. Multi-billion dollar industries produce what may or may not be best for the human body, dominating western medicine.

I credit laypeople and health-care workers for their passionate belief in alternative therapies. I credit the millions of mothers who choose a less popular route to help heal their children through their research into alternatives, mothers who only want what is best for their youngsters.

Dentistry is no different. What types of alternative treatments are some of you practicing in your offices and public health?

Homeopathy has a “whole” different meaning than what many of us think we know, and it is rather controversial. Homeopathy is the treatment of disease by minute doses of drugs that in a healthy person would produce symptoms of the disease.

For example, as stated by the National Homeopathic Institute, “If your child accidentally ingests certain poisons, you may be advised to administer Syrup of Ipecac to induce vomiting. Ipecac is derived from the root of a South American plant called Ipecacuanha. The name, in the native language, means “the plant by the road which makes you throw up.” Eating the plant causes vomiting.

When a group of healthy volunteers took this substance to determine the effects of this drug, they found that the drug induced other symptoms as well. The mouth retained much saliva. The tongue was very clean. There was a cough

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so severe that it led to gagging and vomiting. There was incessant nausea. While it is expected that vomiting would relieve the nausea, this was not the case.

Such an experiment, using healthy volunteers, is called a proving, and it is the homeopath's source of information about the action of a drug.

Of what use could this plant be? If a person were suffering from a gagging cough after a cold, or a woman were experiencing morning sickness with incessant nausea that is not relieved by vomiting, then Ipecacuanha, administered in a minute dose, especially prepared by a homeopathic pharmacy in accordance with FDA approved guidelines, can allay the "similar suffering." This philosophy is also not new; it has been around for 200 years.

This brought me to a thought I had while flying from Vegas to Chicago following the ever-grueling ADHA annual session. I had loads of time to relax in first class following the "brain cell dissecting" that's done when we vote on the various proposed resolutions and bylaws at the ADHA House of Delegates. Thankfully, I travel with my essential oils to aid in relaxation. I'm not sure if the gentleman next to me enjoyed the scent of "Eau de Debra," but he did fall asleep before me.

I came across an article in the airline magazine about the top ten spas in the United States voted on by readers. This gave me an idea that I thought would be of interest to *RDH* readers. I would love to hear from you, the readers of *RDH*, on what you are doing in your dental offices that offer spa amenities. What are you doing to add to the comfort and relaxation of your patients? I would like to feature the top 10 dental spas in the country in a future issue of *RDH*. Show off your state-of-the-art office and how you are alternatively treating your patients! Share your ideas with me via e-mail at perioromatherapy@aol.com.