

## Addendum

### The Evolution of Health Care

#### Health Care Reform and Integrative, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

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In a 1996 survey by Landmark Healthcare, more than 70% of HMO s reported an increase in requests for CAM by their members (1). This demand indicates a movement toward an integrative medicine system that incorporates the most useful therapies from the world's many healing traditions, offers a popular method of reducing health care costs, and should be considered as part of any health care reform. Adopting CAM as part of a statewide health care plan would make Colorado one of the first in innovative health care reform in the U.S.

**1. Cost effectiveness of integrating conventional and complementary medicine.** A systematic review of 14 studies on the cost effectiveness of Integrative Medicine (a.k.a. CAM) found these therapies to be cost effective compared to traditional care for various conditions: acupuncture for migraine, manual therapy for neck pain, spa therapy for Parkinson's, and self-administered stress management for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. Many other therapies studied to date have been shown to have good value, but need further evaluation (2).

According to former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, "80% of the world's people depend on these alternative approaches as their primary medical care.....I have doubts about how much longer we can afford it (conventional medicine) ourselves. It may be possible that in the new millennium, we may be more ready to ask the peoples of the world to share their wisdom with us"(3).

**2. Emphasis on prevention.** Integrative Medicine offers great promise in promoting healthy lifestyles and its role in health care reform is well justified. Integrative therapies like Tai Chi, Yoga and other practices that promote physical activity and healthy eating habits are essential to reducing the current epidemic of obesity and disease (4). Major diseases likely to improve include cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes myelitis, arthritis, osteoporosis, balance problems, and obesity (5).

**3. Movement toward Integrative Medicine.** Complementary and conventional medicine are increasingly becoming integrated in many hospitals in Colorado which offers patients and doctors a variety of choices and improves overall care of the whole person. Patients receive more in-depth evaluations than conventional practitioners can provide, examining social, psychological, spiritual, and physical contributors to health. Such meaningful interaction is satisfying to patients, in part explaining CAM's popularity. As of 1998, 64% of medical schools offer at least one course in CAM and 60 percent of doctors reported recommending CAM to their patients. Nearly half of the doctors who responded to the survey acknowledged that they used CAM themselves (6).

**4. Demand.** The movement toward integrative medicine in the United States has been prompted by a growing consumer demand for CAM services. More than one-third of Americans use CAM therapies, spending more than 13 billion dollars out-of-pocket for these visits. According to the World Health Organization, 80% of the world's population rely on herbal medicine. In the United States, use of herbal medicine quadrupled from between 1990 and 1997. 70% of Americans have used at least one form of CAM therapy in their lifetime, making this

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"unconventional" medical approach one of the fastest growing sectors of American healthcare (6).

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- **References**

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