Varieties of Healing. 2: A Taxonomy of Unconventional Healing Practices

Abstract

The first of two essays in this issue demonstrated that the United States has had a rich history of medical pluralism. This essay seeks to present an overview of contemporary unconventional medical practices in the United States. No clear definition of “alternative medicine” is offered because it is a residual category composed of heterogeneous healing methods. A descriptive taxonomy of contemporary unconventional healing could be more helpful. Two broad categories of unconventional medicine are described here: a more prominent, “mainstream” complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and a more culture-bound, “parochial” unconventional medicine. The CAM component can be divided into professional groups, layperson-initiated popular health reform movements, New Age healing, alternative psychological therapies, and non–normative scientific enterprises. The parochial category can be divided into ethno-medicine, religious healing, and folk medicine. A topologic examination of U.S. health care can provide an important conceptual framework through which health care providers can understand the current situation in U.S. medical pluralism.
Review: Dietary or supplemental calcium increase BMD by ≤ 1.8% in persons > 50 years of age
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 164 (2): JC5

Review: Diet and exercise counseling improve intermediate health outcomes in persons with CV risk factors
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 161 (12): JC7

Low Back Pain
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 160 (11): ITC6-1

Obesity
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 149 (7): ITC4-1

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**Thyroid ultrasonographic characteristics and Bethesda results after FNAB.**
*J BUON* 2018;23(7):139-143.

**The impact of minimal invasive surgery on early complications and mortality after radical cystectomy for muscle-invasive urothelial bladder cancer.**
*J BUON* 2018;23(7):104-110.