

From the Heart. . .

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Wellness . . . keeping up with the grandkids

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 3, 2015)

All this week my daughter and grandson are with us. Yippee! My grandson is 10 years old and has so much “rocket-take-off” energy, you could fuel a jet to go around the world! He loves running, soccer, karate, you name it. Anything where he can keep moving, until Papa and him watch Despicable Me 2 for the second time! Then it time for Nerf gun fighting throughout the house, particularly when it's too hot outside.

Then off to the pool for some water races. Oh, and did I forget...yesterday was trampoline park day. Fortunately, I was designated the camera person for taking pics and videos! We had to promise to take him back the next day, with pleading requests of “It was soooooooooo awesome!” How are two 70 year old Nanas and Papas supposed to keep up? Even grandson's momma, working 50 hours per week sit down job, is out of shape but determined to keep up.

We older folk must admit that we have all dropped the ball on staying fit through the years. Yet, there are a few things we can do to make time with grandkids not wear us out and bring out the painkillers. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), there are “5 Ways to Keep Up With Your Grandkids.” (source: <http://www.grandparents.com/>). APTA believes you can outlast them, even when “older bodies and grandchildren arrive together . . .” We grandparents all experience physical

changes of aging, including muscle loss, decreased bone density, slower mobility, and more.

The association recommends five strategies for keeping ahead or at least even with our younger kids and grandkids. The first one is BE REALISTIC. Before your kids and grandkids show up, get moving and improving your fitness and endurance levels with walking, stretching, and muscle strengthening exercises to help loosens joints and increase bone density. Remember to “Play with blocks or a board game, or take a stroll around the yard or in the neighborhood with frequent stops to look at the crickets, dandelions, and birds. Enjoy seeing the world through your grandchild's fresh eyes, and get some easy exercise along the way. And let your grandchildren in on your plan to exercise. They are some of the best ‘workout buddies.’”

Number 2 is GO EASY ON THE JOINTS. One of the great ways to make it easier on the joints is going to the pool and utilizing the shallow end to make it easier on those joints and “provides resistance for strengthening your muscles. Swimming or playing games in the pool is a great way for all ages to get fun exercise.”

The third tip is to CONSERVE YOUR ENERGY. Short bursts of aerobic or energetic activities between less physical activities works well. And, “don't exhaust yourself preparing for their arrival. Do your preparations well ahead of time so you can relax before they get to you. You can't enjoy them when you are already tired. While the children are visiting, alternate high-energy and low-energy activities. And plan a quiet day after their visit to recuperate.”

The fourth one is WATCH YOUR BACK! When you go out, don't be a “pack mule.” Let your kids carry age-appropriate stuff. “Backpacks should weigh no more than

10 to 15 percent of what the child weighs. Have kids use both straps to distribute the weight evenly; adjust the straps so the backpack is in the middle of the back; and place the heaviest items closer to the back.” Watch how you lift babies and small children by using “body mechanics.”

Number 5 tip is MAKE SURE YOU ARE WELL-GROUNDED. Wear appropriate shoes, not flip-flops or loose sandals. “Good walking shoes provide relief to your joints and firm footing for safe, fun activity.”

One way I took a break is actually writing this article while everyone else watched Despicable Me 2 for the third time! No matter how many times I hear the “hew-ho, hew-ho” in the movie from my office, I consider myself so blessed to have them with me. I know I will shed some tears after they leave. So, I need to start planning for their Christmas visit to stop the tears, that’s for sure!

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From the Heart. . .

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Wellness . . . Affordable Care Act Impact on Integrative Health Care

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 10, 2015)

According to a 2011 Consumer Reports survey, “More than 38 million adults make in excess of 300 million visits to acupuncturists, chiropractors, massage therapists, and other complementary and alternative practitioners each year in the United States.”

A June 11, 2013 American Journal of Medicine article, *The Future of Integrative Medicine*, by Victor S. Sierpina, MD, ABFM, ABIHM and James E. Dalen, MD, MPH reported “There is clear evidence that integrative medicine is becoming part of current mainstream medicine. Increasing numbers of fellowships in integrative medicine are being offered in our academic health centers. In 2013, there are fellowships in integrative medicine in 13 medical schools. . . A 200-hour curriculum for Integrative Medicine in Residency has been developed and is now in place in 30 family practice and 2 internal medicine residencies. The curriculum includes many of the topics that are not covered in the medical school curriculum, such as nutrition, mind–body therapies, nutritional and botanical supplements, alternative therapies (eg, acupuncture, massage, and chiropractic), and lifestyle medicine . . . The eventual goal is to include integrative medicine skills and competencies in all residency programs.”

So, now that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is in full swing, how does it fair for alternative and integrative medical practices? Section 2706 of the ACA states "group health plan and a health insurance issuer offering group or individual health insurance coverage shall not discriminate with respect to participation under the plan or coverage against any health care provider who is acting within the scope of that provider's license or certification under applicable state law."

This does not mean group plans and insurance issuers are required to contract with alternative and integrative practitioners. The ACA also doesn't prevent any group from establishing different reimbursement rates based on quality of care. Since the ACA law was signed into effect in 2010, the confusion and complaints have mounted, particularly related to the non-discrimination section related to alternative and integrative practices.

As of May 2015, the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) urged the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to clarify section 2706(a) that caused some states to improperly limit patient access to chiropractic physicians and other qualified non-MD/DO health care providers. This clarification has helped patients gain further access to covered services from licensed DCs and other non-MD/DO providers.

In reading some, not all, of the 1000 page law, it seems terms such as "interdisciplinary," "alternative" programs, "integrative health care practitioners," and "CAM" or Complementary/Alternative Medicine, are actually included in the law. This expands the possibilities of patients having access and coverage of a broader range of services, including home medical programs and alternative dental healthcare providers. These "alternative" and "integrative" terms are also included in the definition of "health

professionals” and “health care workforce.” You can cruise through the ACA law at <http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/rights/law/index.html>.

This broad, encompassing law may have any number of positives. Yet, there are still many challenges and problems to resolve for patient and practitioner alike.

According to Scott Gottlieb, MD. in his Forbes article (May 29, 2015), *New Estimate Of Obamacare's Fiscal Impact On Private Doctor Practices*, “Under Obamacare, doctors have been strained by costly new regulations, intricate payment ‘reforms’ that tie their Medicare reimbursement to complex federal reporting requirements, and mandates that they install and make ‘meaningful’ use of electronic health records.” Then add that there is a shift away from commercial insurance plans to Medicaid, reducing the practitioner’s bottom line because of much smaller reimbursement rates.

Practitioners are attempting to compensate for the loss by taking on more patients at 10 minute sessions a clip. A project, jointly funded with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and AthenaHealth reported in February “. . . people who are now ‘privately’ insured under Obamacare were previously insured in the individual or group market, and got bumped off their prior commercial coverage and forced into the ACA’s exchanges. That alone is going to lower provider revenue right at the very moment when their practice costs are escalating.”

With a very rough estimate and a number of assumptions, based on 40% of practicing doctors work in privately run medical offices, the combined hit could be \$18 billion less total revenue for private medical practices. So, we can definitely imagine how creative practices are becoming at trying to keep their doors open and hopefully providing satisfactory care for their patients. I have personally seen my own physicians

and non-MD practitioners adopt alternative and integrative treatments. Some were covered by insurance in part, others were not. MD and non-MD practitioners are both also selling nutraceuticals or supplements as part of their practice to bring in additional revenue to stay open.

Hopefully, in the long-run we may all benefit from easier access to a whole range of healthcare/wellness services that were not available or covered before. But I would keep a close eye on your family's health care bills and overall costs, including insurance. Costs are going up. Each of us will need to become more committed to staying healthy and work on achieving a higher level of wellness than ever before. May you then have no need to experience the more chronic and life-threatening ailments that tend to show up as the years fly by.

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From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
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Wellness Choices

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 17, 2015)

All of us need to become more committed to staying healthy and work on achieving a higher level of wellness than ever before. When you do, you are more likely to avoid the more chronic and life-threatening ailments that tend to show up as the years fly by. How do you start?

First, let's review what is Wellness. According to Wellness Workbook (2004) by John W. Travis, MD, MPH (modified with permission):

- Wellness is a choice.... a decision you make to move toward optimal health.
- Wellness is a way of life...a lifestyle you design to achieve your highest potential for wellbeing.
- Wellness is a process...a developing awareness that there is no end point, but that health and happiness are possible in each moment, here and now.
- Wellness is a balanced channeling of energy...energy received from the environment, transformed within you, and returned to affect the world around you.

- Wellness is the integration of the body, mind, and spirit.... the appreciation that everything you do, and think, and feel, and believe has an impact on your state of health.
- Wellness is the loving acceptance of yourself.
- Wellness is Relationships! Keep in mind that Illness starts with “I” and Wellness starts with “WE.” Again, Wellness is Relationships. As Travis always says, “CONNECTEDNESS IS THE CURRENCY OF WELLNESS.”

Wellness doesn't just mean your annual physical, taking supplements, exercising, and reducing stress. Your wellness goals need to reflect everything in your life, each day, month, and year. Wellness includes your choices in relationships, your core values, the way you use your time, choose a career, spend your money, keep records, buy and care for your possessions or “stuff,” even keeping your house and home clean enough for healthy but dirty enough for happy. Then incorporate all this into your lifestyle of wellness at the highest possible level.

But don't forget other basic lifeskills, such as your mealtime, taking care of your children, your recreation/entertainment or “how you play.” The last two lifeskills to remember are Reflection and Celebration, rounding out a life you have always dreamed about but didn't know how to seek, reach, and achieve it.

So, for this month's lifeskill, *Wellness*, let's grab some basics. Our 21st century focus is Prevention, Wellness, and Longevity. This 3-pronged focus basically targets its greatest efforts in three specific lifestyle targets. These targets are related to age, condition, gender factors, including simple hygiene and annual physicals as integral parts of these three lifestyle targets, whether at home, work, or around town. They are

- Movement/Exercise Routines (at home/work/community)
- High Quality Nutrition/Whole Foods/Supplementation
- Stress Management (responses to health conditions, life challenges & opportunities)

Are you ready to change? Let's find out. How do you score yourself (1 being "I definitely need help" and 5 the highest with "I'm doing great")?

- Simple Hygiene (at home/work/around town)
- Regular annual physical/metabolic checkups (what's included?)
- Movement/Exercise Routines (at home/work/community)
- High Quality Nutrition/Whole Foods (basic tenets of nutrition and food choices)
- Stress Management (responses to health conditions, life challenges and opportunities)

Were any score between 1 and 3? If so, how do you want to improve that score?

Choose a direction you want to take. With the lowest score, take one action next week to begin the change. Ask a family member or friend to help you stay accountable to your commitment and plan of action. Next article will offer a variety of resources you can check on to see which ones will help you seek, reach, and achieve lasting behavioral changes and your highest wellness potential.

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Wellness Resources

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 24, 2015)

After getting a glimpse of what Wellness means how did you score (1 lowest to 5 highest) yourself on those targeted areas of:

- Simple Hygiene (at home/work/around town)
- Regular annual physical/metabolic checkups (what's included?)
- Movement/Exercise Routines (at home/work/community)
- High Quality Nutrition/Whole Foods (basic tenets of nutrition and food choices)
- Stress Management (responses to health conditions, life challenges and opportunities)

What first steps are you working on to improve your lowest score? To help you find ways to seek, reach, and achieve your highest wellness potential and lasting behavioral changes, here are some helpful resources to consider.

- Healthy.net, <http://www.healthy.net/>
- National Wellness Institute, <http://www.nationalwellness.org/>
- Web MD, <http://www.webmd.com/>
- Integrative Medicine, A Clinician's Journal, <http://www.imjournal.com/>
- Public Health Corps, <http://publichealthcorps.org/>

21 Germiest Places You're Not Cleaning, <http://greatist.com/health/21-germiest-places-youre-not-cleaning>

Stopping the Spread of Germs at Home, Work, and School,

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm>

- Illness Prevention: The K-12 Cleanliness and Hygiene Lesson Plan Collection, <http://www.cleanitsupply.com/blog/illness-prevention-the-k-12-cleanliness-and-hygiene-lesson-plan-collection>
- Communicable Diseases, <http://www.globalhealth.gov/global-health-topics/communicable-diseases/>
- Foodborne Illnesses: What You Need to Know, <http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm103263.htm>
- Infection Prevention for Seniors in Nursing Homes, <http://www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/prevention/index.html>
- Healthy Heart Summit, <http://healthyheartsummit.com/>

When working on your wellness and life goals, there are five basic practices for both Wellness and Nutrition: 1. Commit to personal accountability for the responses to life's challenges and opportunities; 2. Take care of your body—hygiene, quality nutrition, exercise (age and condition appropriate); 3. Quiet time—rest and repose; 4. Wholesome fun and laughter with family and friends; 5. A vibrant spiritual-faith life.

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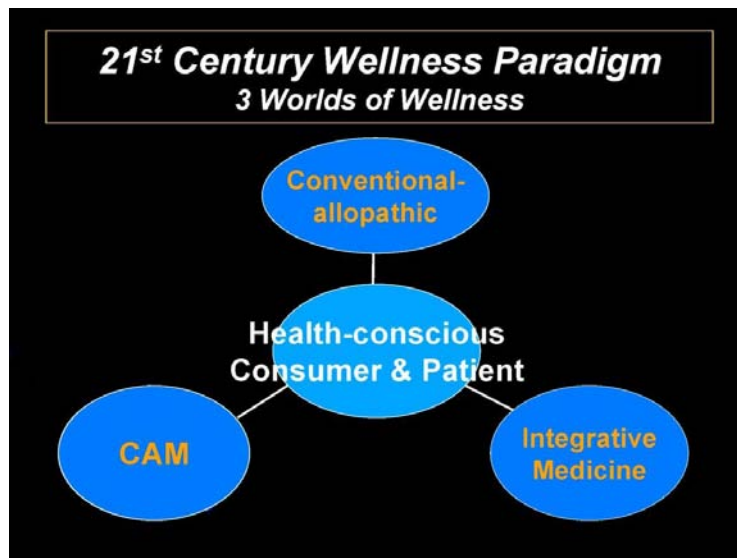


The Wellness World of Integrative Medicine

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 31, 2015)

Most of us are familiar with what is called conventional medicine and complementary/alternative medicine (CAM). Then you have the world of integrative medicine. Many are still not sure what that means. For at least the past 25 years, our healthcare system has been evolving with these three 21st century worlds of wellness with you in the middle trying to figure it all out.

This graphic gives you a glimpse of your evolving healthcare/wellness world.



For most of us, we know very well how conventional or allopathic medicine works. You walk in the primary doctor's office, they ask you for your insurance card, you fill out a patient history form, then you wait for some time to have your ten minutes with the

doctor. The doctor asks you why you are here, does a few physical observations, may do some blood or urine testing, and prescribe whatever medicine thought to be helpful with your symptoms. If warranted, you will be recommended to a specialist (e.g. urologist, rheumatologist, endocrinologist). You say goodbye and go home. Hopefully, you have insurance. Otherwise, you undoubtedly will not be visiting any specialist very soon.

With complementary/alternative medicine (CAM), the practitioner will focus on his special treatment modalities and use a particular language of the specialty, such as with traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda Indian medicine. There are basically three arenas of CAM focused on mind-body interventions, alternative medical systems (separate from conventional), and biological-based therapies. According to the National Institutes of Health CAM, complementary is just that. Alternative are a complement to conventional medicine. The term “alternative”, although often interchangeable with complementary, basically means you are using non-mainstream practices in place of conventional practices.

The most common CAM therapies are: Prayer, Natural Products, Deep Breathing, Meditation, Chiropractic, Yoga, Massage, Nutritional Supplementation, Homeopathic Therapies, Acupressure, and Diets. Although there are any number of additional alternatives, such as acupuncture, Disease or conditions most frequently treated with CAM are: back pain, Head cold, neck pain, joint pain, arthritis, anxiety/depression, stomach upset, headache, recurring pain, insomnia. A longer list is available at <https://nccih.nih.gov/> and <http://altmedicine.about.com/od/alternativemedicinebasics/a/therapies.htm>

You will notice on the federal National Institute of Health site that the terms and language prevalent now incorporates another term with complementary/alternative medicine. That word is “integrative.” Integrative medicine (IM) has actually been around for more than 25-35 years by a few brave physicians and practitioners who have had the title of M.D., DO, and more after their names. These pioneers have been instrumental in changing our healthcare system for the better.

Integrative medicine combines the best of both conventional and CAM worlds, usually under one roof—or at least with local & national conventional and CAM referrals and alliances. According to the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health (<http://imconsortium.org/>) IM is defined as “Integrative Medicine is the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.”

In addition, The Consortium IM philosophy foundation includes mind/body connection, spirituality & healthcare, beliefs and culture, the therapeutic relationship, prevention & wellness, community & environment, individual empowerment, using evidence-based therapies, treating the whole person, and strategically coordinating care. IM is basically more wholistic (spirit, soul, body) in their overall approach to health and wellness, with the patient center stage.

Yet, not all centers that call themselves “wellness or IM centers” embrace this more wholistic/21st century wellness model of care. This brings you to the often frustrating yet necessary journey of choosing your wellness team. This just doesn’t

mean you go to your primary physician or pick a name out of the yellow pages. By now, you have gleaned that Wellness is much more than your annual physical and taking your meds. You will need a wellness team, that is uniquely tailored for your healthcare/wellness needs and goals.

Let's see what qualities you may want to look for in your wellness team. Whether conventional, CAM, or integrative, you should be able to observe these qualities in each practitioner and their staff:

- **Focused on —"wholistic" wellness, health preservation**, not just disease.
- **Emphasis on prevention, longevity, and wellness**—starting with nutrition/eating pattern, exercise, and stress management—plus tobacco/alcohol/drug use. Keep in mind the means for addressing exercise, nutrition, and stress may be different between conventional and CAM.
- **Proactive advocates for their patients/clients**. Offering participating personal & workplace incentives in various wellness enhancement programs—offering the most comprehensive database for provider and patient education.
- **Collaborative skill and teamwork with conventional, CAM, & integrative resources**—under one roof or by referral (locally & nationally).
- **Easy access and connection between the patient, practitioner, lab, & staff** via phone & fax messaging, scanning, interfaced electronic

recordkeeping, email, website, the latest interactive communication technologies linking practitioner and patient to latest health & wellness information.

- **A streamlined office management team**, interactive, genuinely friendly and helpful.

These characteristics will hopefully be demonstrated by your wellness team. Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you put together your integrative wellness team. *What one thing do you really like about our healthcare system? What one thing would you definitely like to see change? Which CAM therapies have you used and/or your wellness team offers? What qualities/services would you like to see in your own doctor's office?*

As you travel your wellness journey, keep in mind your team may not only be local, but regional, even national. We do live in a “connected” world. The word “illness” starts with “I”, but the word “wellness” starts with “We.” So, be sure to get connected.

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