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# A Center for Holistic Health

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# A Center for Holistic Health

**Abstract**

Millions of people in the United States die each year from stress related disease and illness. Unfortunately the illnesses we develop through stress are treatable and most importantly preventable. My goal is to create a non-profit health center in the United States, called The Center for Holistic Health that does not focus on the mere treatment of disease but will instead promote prevention by teaching clients how to incorporate numerous different types of alternative medicine into their own lifestyles. In my project I will explain this complex process in detail since treatment programs can vary so much from client to client. The main types of alternative treatment I will focus on in my center are Ayurveda, message therapy, and aromatherapy.

Through much research I have found that for centuries Eastern cultures have embraced the concept that disease prevention is more crucial to our health than the disease treatment our western society focuses on, and I think that in order to be truly “healthy” one must lead a relaxed and nourishing lifestyle, and part of this nourishment can come from ongoing alternative medicine.

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A CENTER FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

By

Beth A. Doane

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## Senior Honor Thesis

### ABSTRACT

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A CENTER FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

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Millions of people in the United States die each year from stress related disease and illness. Unfortunately the illnesses we develop through stress are treatable and most importantly preventable. My goal is to create a non-profit holistic health center in the United States that does not focus on the mere treatment of disease but will instead promote prevention by teaching clients how to incorporate numerous different types of alternative medicine into their individual lifestyles. My treatment center will not practice any surgical or invasive procedures, so there will be no need for certified Medical Doctors. Rather, the center will focus on treatment prior to or after medical surgery and as a means to prevent the need for surgery or modern medical drug usage. In my project I will also explain the complex process of choosing a client treatment program in detail since treatment programs can vary greatly among a diverse clientele. The main types of alternative treatment I will focus on in my center are Ayurveda, massage therapy, and aromatherapy.

My center will be called "The Center for Holistic Medicine" and will be located in the Los Angeles area.

According to the *American Holistic Medical Association* holistic health is described as “The art and science of healing that addresses the whole person - body, mind, and spirit. The practice of holistic medicine integrates conventional and alternative therapies to prevent and treat disease, and most importantly, to promote optimal health. This condition of holistic health is defined as the unlimited and unimpeded free flow of life force energy through body, mind, and spirit (1).” The *American Holistic Medical Association for Holistic Health* also states that “Holistic medicine encompasses all safe and appropriate modalities of diagnosis and treatment. It includes analysis of physical, nutritional, environmental, emotional, spiritual, and lifestyle elements. Holistic medicine focuses upon patient education and participation in the healing process as well (1).”

There is a differentiation between alternative medicine and complementary medicine. According to *Cancer.gov*, the site for the National Cancer Institute, complementary medicine is: “Practices often used to enhance or *complement* standard treatments. They generally are not recognized by the medical community as standard or conventional medical approaches. Complementary medicine may include dietary supplements, mega dose vitamins, herbal

preparations, special teas, acupuncture, massage therapy, magnet therapy, spiritual healing, and meditation.”

Alternative medicine is defined by cancer.gov as treatments that are used instead of standard treatments, and where no standard treatment is used.

My health center will incorporate three main different types of therapeutic treatments and they are Ayurveda, massage therapy, and aromatherapy. My center will also treat patients who are in a positive state of physical health as well as those who suffer from a wide range of illness. There are literally hundreds of forms of alternative therapy, such as light therapy, nutritional therapy, acupuncture, meditative therapy, and even animal therapy; and treatments such as these have been used to help fight diseases such as HIV, arthritis, depression, heart disease and all forms of cancer. I have chosen my three particular forms of treatment from the growing range of alternative options for very specific reasons; mainly that they each have special qualities as treatments that make them largely suitable for all patients and greatly beneficial in numerous situations so that patients are not limited by what treatments will work positively for them.

I have chosen to incorporate Massage therapy into my holistic health treatment program because there are so many different types of this therapy that can be used depending on the patient's medical needs, and this flexibility becomes valuable. Massage is also unique because it can be performed on almost anyone, even infants and expectant mothers, in almost any environment, and there can be a wide range of benefits that may vary from patient to patient as well. Jennifer Jacobs, MD, MPH, and consultant Editor for the Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine says that "Massage loosens contracted, shortened, and hardened muscles and can stimulate weak, flaccid muscles. Jacobs explains that chronic muscle tension which may be caused by everyday stress, can reduce the circulation of the blood and movement of lymph in an area. (Lymph is a milky white fluid that drains impurities and waste away from the tissue cells. A component of these wastes is toxins which are the by-products of metabolism. So, it is a vital to our health.) Muscular contraction, which is onset by the work of a massage therapist, has a pumping effect that moves this lymph throughout the body.

Also, the oxygen capacity of the blood can increase 10-15% after a massage of any type. Jacobs says that this occurs by indirectly or directly stimulating nerves that



supply internal organs, when blood vessels of these organs dilate and allow a greater blood supply to flow to them.

“Massage also provides a gentle stretching action to both the muscles and connective tissues that surround and support the muscles and many other parts of the body, which helps keep these tissues elastic (2). Massage can also balance the nervous system by soothing or stimulating it, depending on which effect is needed by the individual at the time of the massage, and one's skin condition may also be enhanced by improving the function of the sebaceous and sweat glands, which keep the skin lubricated, clean, and cool.

Another result of massage is better digestion and intestinal function. “Massage increases the body's secretions and excretions. It increases the production of gastric juices, saliva, and urine. There is also an increased excretion of nitrogen, inorganic phosphorus, and salt. As a result, the metabolic rate increases (1).” Relief of acute and chronic pain can also be results as well as a recovery from fatigue and from minor aches and pains.

In an interview with the *Massage Journal* in fall of 1999 Joan Borysenko states that “Studies funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have found massage

beneficial in improving weight gain in HIV-exposed infants and facilitating recovery in patients who underwent abdominal surgery. At the University of Miami School of Medicine's Touch Research Institute, researchers have found that massage is helpful in decreasing blood pressure in people with hypertension, alleviating pain in migraine sufferers and improving alertness and performance in office workers. An increasing number of research studies show massage reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure, increases blood circulation and lymph flow, relaxes muscles, improves range of motion, and increases endorphins (enhancing medical treatment). Although therapeutic massage does not increase muscle strength, it can stimulate weak, inactive muscles and, thus, partially compensate for the lack of exercise and inactivity resulting from illness or injury. It also can hasten and lead to a more complete recovery from exercise or injury."

There are two main types of massage I will focus on at my center. They are Neuromuscular Massage Therapy, and Swedish Massage Therapy. I have chosen Neuromuscular Massage because it is used mainly on patients with chronic pain, and is based on balancing the nervous system with the muscular system. This form of massage also searches for the

underlying causes of long standing pain. The actual massage treatment session generally begins with a thorough case history followed by a postural analysis of the patient. Neuromuscular massage treatments generally last an hour, (such as do most massage treatments) and aim to release muscle spasm and trapped nerves, eliminate trigger points (which cause referred pain), and so restore alignment, good bio-mechanics and flexibility. It is also beneficial for the treatment of many painful dysfunctions including scoliosis, headache, OOS and chronic back, jaw and neck pain amongst others.

According to [www.simplymassagetherapy.com](http://www.simplymassagetherapy.com), Neuromuscular Massage Therapy (NMT) is "a form of deep tissue massage that is applied to individual muscles. It is used to increase blood flow, reduce pain and release pressure on nerves caused by injuries to muscles and other soft tissue. Neuromuscular massage helps release trigger points, intense knots of tense muscle can also "refer" pain to other parts of the body. Relieving a tense trigger point in your back, for example, could help ease pain in your shoulder or reduce headaches." A therapist must be specially trained in NMT and is educated in the physiology of the human nervous system and its effect on the muscular and skeletal systems as well. The Neuromuscular Therapist

also must be educated in kinesiology and biomechanics. Some people may find a neuromuscular massage painful at times since the muscles are being penetrated more deeply than in other forms of massage. This type of massage is also known for being more "powerful" in treating issues of severely sore muscle or chronic pain, since it is working more deeply into the muscle tissue.

I have chosen Swedish Massage Therapy because it is used as a more relaxing form of massage than neuromuscular and can be used on very young or elderly patients. A Swedish massage is done using mainly long strokes, and kneading motions with the hands. It was developed in the 1700's by a Swedish doctor named Pir Henrik Ling, and is thought to possibly be the first organized and systematic method of modern massage therapy in the western world. Like all massage, Swedish massage works the muscles to increase blood circulation. It reduces stress, both emotional and physical, and is suggested in a regular program for stress management.

Ayurvedic therapy is another form of treatment that my Center for Holistic Medicine will focus on. I find Ayurveda highly beneficial in reaching the goal of optimal health because it is not just a form of "treatment" but rather it is the adaptation of a healthy way of life. Ayurveda is

actually made up of two Sanskrit words. The first word is Ayu, and this means life. The second word is Veda which means the knowledge of, therefore, to know about life is Ayurveda. According to *healthplusweb.com*, "Ayurveda is a holistic system of healing which originated among the Brahmin sages of ancient India approximately 3000 - 5000 years ago."

Ayurveda mainly focuses on establishing and maintaining balance in ones life rather than focusing on individual symptoms that arise from an imbalance in life, and since everyone's lifestyle is very diverse Ayurveda is a complete medical system that suggests different programs for different types of people. Ayurveda views the person as a unique individual made up of five primary elements. These elements are ether (or space), water, fire, air and earth.

Ayurveda is valuable in that it focuses on using all natural products to aid in the treatment of a wide range of ailments and does not use any form of modern western medicine. I feel this is beneficial since "We know that approximately one hundred and six thousand people die each year from taking prescription medications as prescribed (Lazarou,10)." We also know that commonly taken medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen can be dangerous and can cause serious disability and even death.

Approximately 16,500 people die each year from taking these nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs.

Dr. Paul Dugliss M.D. writes in the beginning stages of his book on Holistic Health that "Danger can exist in a single medication or from medication interactions. Enlightened medicine suggests having periodic review of medications to insure safety. Patient safety from the adverse effects of medications must be insured. Imagine the horror we would experience if a jumbo jet crashed every day. That is approximately how many people die each year from taking prescription drugs as prescribed. Most of these drugs are new. New drugs are constantly coming on the market. Many of the older drugs have not been used for more than twenty or thirty years and it is typical that additional side effects and problems are discovered through longer use (20)." Although the period review of medication that Dugliss suggests is a crucial aspect in the monitoring of patient health and safety, my center for holistic health will still have no form of prescription medication or modern drug prescription, and will use only all natural products.

Another interesting and compelling thing about Ayurveda is that for every disease Ayurveda recommends lifestyle recommendations that include diet, principles of treatment and extensive information. This approach is remarkably similar to that of modern western medicine in American culture and it is possibly even more comprehensive. Over the last century, Ayurvedic Medicine has experienced what many call a rebirth as more people within western society realize what it has to offer. Today, modern Ayurveda also includes things such as Sangakara Chikitsa which means "Treatment of Addictions" and Panchakarma Chikitsa which is Purification and Rejuvenation Treatments. There is also Sthaulya Chikitsa, which are The Ayurvedic Approach to Diet and Weight Loss.

The next form of treatment my center will focus on is aromatherapy. I feel that the main benefit of Aromatherapy is its great flexibility as an alternative or a complementary form of therapy, although it seems to be used much more as a mainstream form of complementary medicine than alternative in most cases. *American* According to the *American Holistic Medical Association*, "Aromatherapy is a therapeutic natural practice that can be used to promote health, beauty and a sense of well being. It involves using pure essential oils by a variety of methods, including

inhalation, bathing and massage. When you use essential oils in the bath or massage, the healing properties absorb right through the skin."

How aromatherapy works within our bodies though, can be very complex. As one inhales an aroma, odor molecules enter the nostrils and drift toward the olfactory receptors. Here the receptors identify an odor, and the nerve cells relay this information directly to the limbic system. The olfactory nerve cells are the only sensory pathways that open directly into the brain, and the brain is where odors can trigger memories as well as influence emotions and behavior. The brain registers aroma twice as fast as it does pain, and this is why the inhalation of aromas can so powerfully transform the emotions. When one inhales essential oils, they enter into both the respiratory system as well as the brain. In our lungs, molecules of essential oils attach themselves to oxygen molecules and are carried into your blood stream and circulated to every cell in your body. Within the cells, essential oils can activate the body's ability to heal itself and improve health.

For centuries Eastern cultures have embraced the concept that disease prevention is more crucial to our health than the disease treatment our Western society



focuses on, and subsequently the East is known for being one of the healthiest regions on earth. I think that in order to be truly "healthy" one must lead a relaxed and nourishing lifestyle, and part of this nourishment can come from an ongoing regimen of alternative or complementary medicine as part of one's lifestyle. It is only recently that our western culture has begun to value and practice the benefits of "alternative therapies or alternative medicine" in order to achieve these optimal health levels.

One of my main goals in the creation of my Holistic Health center is to reduce the cost of healthcare for patients in America. According to Dr. Paul M. Dugliss of the Center for Enlightened Medicine in Ann Arbor, "First, and foremost, we do not have a health care system in the United States. If anything, we have a disease care system." One of Dr. Dugliss' main goals is to reform healthcare through the health center that he has created. Dugliss states that "Without people using it, there is no medical system. When Eisenberg showed in his 1993 *New England Journal of Medicine* article that there are more visits to alternative medicine practitioners than to primary care physicians, it was a wake-up call for the medical profession. We, the people, create the medical system by our passive or active use and acceptance of it. Without our

consent, it will not exist. We can create an alternative system, if we so choose. With our energy and will directed towards an enlightened medical system, we cannot fail in transforming medicine – for without us, there is no medical system.” This information supports the fact that if there are alternative healthcare options available that are affordable and safe people seem inclined to utilize them.

According to

[http://www.blackstocks.com/in\\_news/9298.c/page2110.html](http://www.blackstocks.com/in_news/9298.c/page2110.html),

“Almost all of the resources we spend on health care are actually spent on managing disease. In fact, Medicare was set up this way.” The site explains that in America we fail to emphasize disease prevention, and we do not take care of health. “Our “system” does not manage or optimize health. We have a system that allows individuals to ignore health and then when disease manifests, we have “health-care insurance.” The major benefit of this system is that it will insure that the individual does not go bankrupt treating the disease or managing its symptoms. Or at least, that is the myth. The reality is that even the disease care system of insurance is tragically flawed, as is evidenced by the exorbitant number of bankruptcies due to medical expenses.”

“When it comes to the economic impact of health care, there is no argument”, states Dugliss (5).” “Health care costs have been skyrocketing at a phenomenal rate and during a period of historically low inflation at the turn of the century, the average increases in health care costs have remained in the 10 to 15 percent per year range. This has resulted in a doubling of costs in less than 10 years. Small businesses are being faced with paying more than \$1000 per month per employee for health insurance. A frequently quoted phrase used to be that General Motors was paying more for health care than for the steel that goes into the cars it makes. In 2003, it paid approximately \$3 billion for flat-rolled steel for its autos while the same year it paid over \$14.3 billion for prescription drugs alone (6).” Dugliss goes on to say that “The number one cause of individual bankruptcy in the U.S. is exorbitant medical expenses – the cause of at least 40 percent of bankruptcies in America, and to quote Senator John Kerry, “The American health care system has the world's best doctors and nurses, the finest hospitals and the most effective drugs. But far too many Americans can't afford or access the system (6).”

Dugliss argues repeatedly that “Most of modern medicine is not necessary because most disease is

preventable and many conditions can be treated with low-tech solutions from ancient and alternative medical systems. Modern medicine does offer amazing solutions to many medical problems. But if we conservatively estimate that half of disease is preventable and another half of the remaining can be treated with alternative medicine, only 25% of modern medicine is actually necessary (12)."

By creating a healthcare center that is non-profit, patients can be reassured that they are getting the best healthcare possible. Also, since the goal of my center is to not only promote prevention, but also to promote education that teaches prevention, people will be able to keep themselves healthy, so that less medical attention is needed over a prolonged period of time. Dugliss says that, "It is proven that up to eighty percent of all cancers in the United States may be primarily the result of environmental factors, and are completely preventable. Environment encompasses a person's way of life, including occupation, diet, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and sun exposure. Alterations of environment may be sufficient to prevent most cancers (10)." Also, "More than 700,000 strokes occur annually in the United States--one every 40 to 50 seconds. Although stroke is one of the nation's most

expensive diseases to treat, costing \$41 billion per year, most strokes (perhaps as many as two thirds) are preventable (Dugliss, 11).

According to Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, more than 50 percent of all deaths each year are preventable, and these statistics are listed in the chart below.

<b>Cause</b>	<b>Estimated No. of Preventable Deaths</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Deaths</b>
Tobacco	400,000	19
Diet/activity pattern	300,000	14
Alcohol	100,000	5
Microbial Agents	90,000	4
Toxic Agents	60,000	3
Firearms	35,000	2
Sexual Behavior	30,000	1
Motor Vehicles	25,000	1

Illicit Use of Drugs	20,000	<1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,060,000</b>	<b>50</b>

Another main problem I see within the modern medical world is that patients are often switching health practitioners and valuable medical information can easily be lost or misinterpreted. At my center each patient will be given a CD-ROM disc containing all of their personal holistic health information and backgrounds that can be automatically updated, or edited and viewed by almost any computer. This personalized disc will include past forms of treatment, progress within that particular treatment form, and the treatment practitioner they practiced under. There will also be a listing on the disc, of various supplements or diet regimens they may have practiced during their various types of treatment.

Patients at the center will also be able to participate in a wide range of informational and educational health seminars and discussions that deal with topics that range from Ayurvedic cooking techniques to what types of air pollutants can harm the human respiratory system. The center will also bring in guest speakers as

well as therapists and practitioners on a regular basis and these seminars will be free and open to the public. From the research that I have done, I realize that maintaining a center as a successful non-profit organization is not easy, especially since many organizations that begin as non-profit sectors often fail within their first two years. My focus will be on fundraising, and on the basis that if there is a desire among the public for effective alternatives to modern medicine, then there will be a public that is willing to help make a center that focuses on these alternatives a reality.

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