

Glossary of Holistic and Alternative Medicine Terms

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an alternative medicine modality. It is associated with Traditional Chinese Medicine and is one of the oldest healing practices in the world. Acupuncture involves the stimulation of specific points on the body that are located on channels called meridians. The objective of the stimulation is to correct imbalances in the flow of *qi* through these meridians. This process has the potential to alter biochemical processes and physiological conditions thus initiating an improvement in health. Stimulation is achieved by the insertion of very fine needles into the skin, which may be manipulated manually or by electrical stimulation. Situations in which acupuncture may be helpful for animals include allergies, muscle and joint pain (eg, muscle strains and arthritis), digestive issues, inflammation, nervous system issues, overuse injuries, and stress or anxiety. Acupuncture may also be useful in stimulation of the immune system.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is an alternative medicine modality that uses aromatic or essential oils for their ability to influence mental or physical well being. Aromatherapy can be administered either by inhalation or by topical application of the essential oil to the skin. Most essential oils require dilution in a carrier oil prior to application to the skin. Caution is advised, as some animals may have sensitivities to various oils. Caution is also advised when using essential oils with pregnant animals. Situations in which aromatherapy may be helpful for animals include sleep issues, nausea, nose or throat issues, poor circulation, skin conditions, and stress or anxiety disorders. Aromatherapy may also be useful for stimulation of the immune system.

Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurvedic medicine originated in India 5000 to 6000 years ago. Ayurveda means the 'science of life.' It is based on the beliefs that energy and matter are one and that the microcosm of the individual is a reflection of the macrocosm of the universe (ie, 'as above, so below'). Ayurvedic medicine addresses both prevention and treatment of disease. Typical treatments for animals include herbal medicines, detoxification, massage, diet, and use of supplements. Situations in which Ayurveda may be helpful for animals include allergies, digestive issues, joint pain, arthritis, nervous system issues, skin conditions, and stress and anxiety disorders. Ayurvedic medicine may also be useful for stimulation of the immune system.

Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CIM)

CIM, also referred to as Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM), refers to the many health care and wellness approaches with a history of use or origin outside of mainstream allopathic medicine.

They include alternative medical systems (eg, acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), aromatherapy, qigong or tai chi, yoga), complementary primary care and diagnostic systems (eg, Ayurvedic medicine, homeopathy, naturopathy, iridology, applied kinesiology), manipulative and body-based therapies (eg, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, myofascial release bodywork, Rolfing, relaxation massage, therapeutic massage, and Trager), energy therapies (eg, craniosacral therapy, polarity therapy, reflexology, Reiki, therapeutic touch), mind-body therapies (eg, art therapy, biofeedback, guided imagery, hypnotherapy, meditation, sound healing), and biological-based therapies (eg, chelation therapy, colon hydrotherapy or irrigation, detoxification, dietary supplements, herbal medicine, low level laser therapy).

Craniosacral Therapy (Biodynamic Model)

Craniosacral therapy is a type of energy medicine that uses a gentle non-invasive hands-on approach. (see **Energy Medicine** for more information) The craniosacral system is the environment in which the brain and spinal cord reside. Craniosacral therapy supports overall health, but particularly the health of the nervous system. It focuses on the mobility of craniosacral bones, accommodative abilities of the dural membrane, the flow of cerebrospinal fluid and blood, and mind-body integration. Like other energy modalities, craniosacral therapy supports the body's own innate abilities for natural healing. It is said to be helpful for problems of aging (stiffness, dryness, memory loss, inflammation, immune imbalances), emotional disorders, physical injuries, and recovery from surgery.

Energy Medicine

Energy medicine is a type of complementary and integrative therapy with its foundation in the principles of physics. All living things are made of vibrating energy – when the vibration stops, the organism dies. The body functions through a system of electromagnetic signals known as the human biofield or the human energy field. The human energy field can be measured scientifically and has been shown to be obstructed, disordered, or depleted in individuals with disease. Moreover, scientific research shows that when energy fields of specific strengths and frequencies are used, diseases may be modified. (see *Etiology* by Dr. Christina L. Ross, for more information). Energy medicine is based on the belief that balancing the body's energies is essential to maintaining health, vitality, and well-being. Energy practitioners work with the body's subtle energy fields to achieve this balance using hands-on or off-body techniques. These techniques may include the application of various degrees of pressure on specific body or reflex points, rocking motions, or gentle touch. Types of energy medicine include craniosacral therapy, polarity therapy, reflexology, Reiki, and therapeutic touch. The intention of these techniques is to restore flow, balance, and harmony to subtle energy field. Energy medicine has been used to correct imbalances that may lead to future illness, correct energy imbalances associated with established illness or disease, stimulate immune function, relieve headaches, release stress, improve memory, enhance digestion, relieve arthritis, neck, shoulder and low back pain, and cope with electromagnetic pollution.



Polarity

Polarity therapy is a type of energy medicine. (see **Energy Medicine** for more information) It is based on the science of Ayurvedic medicine and the work of Dr. Randolph Stone and applies the universal principles of physics and energy – attraction, repulsion, and neutrality. It defines patterns of health based upon the concept of energy movement and balance of the 5 elements – ether, air, fire, water, and earth. Polarity therapy integrates body work and lifestyle (diet and exercise) to achieve and maintain wellness by removing energy blocks in the body. Practitioners use a combination of energetic touch and reflex and acupressure points to balance energy, thereby reducing pain and stress in the body. Both on-body and off-body techniques may be used. Polarity practitioners attend a formal training program, must be skilled, and many are board certified. Polarity therapy can be useful to relieve inflammation in the joints, decrease anxiety and grief, detoxify tissue layers, enhance the immune system, increase vital energy, reduce stress, stimulate organs and circulation, and support better sleep.

Reiki

Reiki is a form of energy medicine developed in Japan. It channels universal life-force energy for the purpose of healing. 'Rei' means spiritual wisdom and 'ki' means energy. The goal of a Reiki session is to enhance life force energy, which flows through all living things. (see **Energy Medicine** for more detail) This life force energy affects individuals on the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels; Reiki treats on all of these levels. Reiki involves the gentle placement of hands on the body. It may also be done off body and from a distance. Reiki may be used for any disease or to maintain wellness. It provides for deep relaxation and reduced stress and fatigue.