

PS1.190

The potential of integrative medicine to address modern challenges of health care

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Background: If we as doctors humbly look into our day-to-day practice, how many chronic cases do we really manage to cure? How often do we wish that our toolbox was larger and contained cheaper and more appropriate options with fewer side effects? We all have a feeling that healthcare has to be individualized, but our treatments are standardized. In our clinic we have asked ourselves if sharing health care with different modalities of therapy from around the world is a part of the answer. By combining the various diagnostic and treatment strengths of diverse systems, the integrative model effectively addresses limits of the current system.

Aim: To explore the potential of Integrative Medicine to address modern challenges of health care.

Methods: The process started 7 years ago. Experiences from that process created the foundation for developing the Integrative approach, which we now explore and develop further in our daily work at Santé Clinic.

Conditions: A collaborative effort of a multidisciplinary experienced team where all are willing to participate in the process of creating and working in an Integrative health care model. A dynamic and flexible organisation structure capable to accommodate new ideas and implementation of necessary changes. Current team: Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, medical doctors, homeopathy, medical shiatsu, yoga and breathing teacher, psychotherapy, lifestyle coaching. To facilitate the process of collaborating within an Integrative Team we have developed:

- Interdisciplinary conferences (exchange, learning, visioning)
- Patient care conferences and health navigation (integrative patient care)
- Themes (exploring efficiency of each discipline in addressing various pathologies)
- Joint interdisciplinary consultations (practice together)
- Integrative telephone consultation
- Consultation record format used by all doctors/therapists
- Documenting treatment of selected conditions for future research

Results: Still a work in progress:

- Joint interdisciplinary care for acute/chronic patients is taking shape
- Providing health care to a population of 3000 people representing 42 countries.