

Alternative medicine

Alternative medicine is a term used to define medical procedures outside classical medicine.

From the point of view of the methodology of science, **alternative** medicine is the opposite of classical **medicine based on evidence** (Evidence Based Medicine).

Definition of Alternative Medicine

Alternative medicine includes methods and procedures whose effectiveness has not been successfully tested by scientific methods (e.g. using double-blind trial, etc.). This does not necessarily mean that the method is ineffective, just that it is not verified by the methods of contemporary science. With all the skepticism towards alternative methods, we must also bear in mind the methodological limitations of contemporary science. For example, it is very likely that in folk healing (counted among alternative medicine) there are methods that have a rational, empirically tested core. However, for integration into classical medicine, such a procedure would have to be objectified, and this may not be easy with an unknown number of input parameters.

Rate of method alternation

On the scale of the scientificity of treatment methods, there are a number of intermediate states, some of which can be summed up in the terms **traditional medicine** or **folk medicine**. These are mostly methods based on empiricism, the effect of which is accepted to some extent, but the mechanism of their effect is not known (e.g. acupuncture). The degree of rejection or acceptance of individual alternative methods may differ regionally or change over time. Acupuncture, for example, is considered a common part of medicine in some Asian countries and is significantly less accepted in the Euro-Atlantic context.

The different degree of tolerance for individual alternative methods is also related to the fact that for some there is "just" a lack of scientific explanation, and for others the traditional explanation directly contradicts current scientific knowledge.

Problems with the classic approach

Proponents of classical medicine, who deal with the consequences of using inappropriate medical procedures, try from time to time to "order order" in medicine by means of legislative restrictions. This approach pushes alternative methods into the gray zone, but it has never led to their disappearance. Nevertheless, it is in the power of classical medicine to influence the size of the space that alternative procedures fill. A certain germ of the existence of alternative approaches is founded by the classical view itself with its penchant for analysis. We are willing to analyze the disease in ever-increasing magnification until the human disappears from our field of vision. We see the "electron spin", but no longer the context of the patient's life. The state is also influenced by the "industrialization" of healthcare, characterized not only by alienation (we care more about diseases than people), but also by the economization of healthcare. The pressure on performance indicators does not give the physician enough time to look for the big picture and context.

In practice, this lack of time and overly analytical focus is also manifested in the fact that patients lack the comprehensive approach of a doctor (previously, for example, a family doctor). Alternative medicine formulated this deficiency into a requirement for a holistic approach to the patient. Thus, classical medicine creates space for alternative methods. With some exaggeration, it could be said that: **classical medicine will win when it finds an alternative to alternative medicine.**

When defining classical medicine against alternative medicine with the help of scientific arguments, it should be remembered that science easily disproves the shaky "theories" of alternative medicine, but it is difficult to grasp the possible rational core that the alternative method may have despite the absurd theory.

Care should be taken even with the current possibilities of science, which has problems, for example, in explaining rarely occurring phenomena. An example is the well-known event from 1790, when a meteorite (later called Barbotan) fell on a field in Aquitaine, France. A local farmer took a piece of the found stone to the French Academy of Sciences for examination, but the academics refused to deal with it, saying that "stones cannot fall from the sky, therefore they do not fall". Similar problems are encountered, for example, in ball lightning research, which was recently labeled as an illusion in a serious scientific article ^{[1],[2]} and despite all the progress we can neither explain nor create ^[3].

Problems with the alternative approach



Acupuncture

The problem with alternative medicine is its unscientific approach. After all, science means - to follow known paths and thereby achieve standard results. Alternative medicine uses methods that are not (scientifically) verified and the results achieved are not guaranteed, as they may depend, among other things, on the abilities and personality of the therapist.

The personality of the therapist has far more room in alternative medicine (even for making mistakes) than in classical medicine. There are no universally accepted recommended practices that summarize the experience to date and provide assurance that the best possible care has been taken for the patient. So there is room for both "talented physiotherapists" and conscious charlatans.

Providing alternative therapy in acute cases can mean a waste of time in a critical situation.

The problem of alternative medicine is also the thought constructions that are supposed to explain alternative procedures. They are often based on ideas and traditions far removed from Euro-Atlantic scientific rationality and skepticism. However, it would be too convenient to consider disproving these irrational notions as solving the problem of alternative medicine. Rationality forces us to be interested in the impulses coming from there, despite non-rational interpretations. The situation is not unlike the story of alchemy. While its theories have been abandoned, alchemy itself is now seen as a pre-scientific field that helped discover and develop the experimental methods used by modern science.

Opposing views on the use of

Alternative medicine often "alternates" work with the patient's psyche, which is difficult to grasp in classical medicine and depends on the doctor's personality (and enough time). In principle, the patient does not care whether a placebo, dancing around the fire, or a recognized drug will contribute to his recovery. The question can be generalized as follows: Which is more important? The benefit of the patient or the truth? Doctors generally prefer methods that are scientifically graspable and reproducible independent of the personality of the person providing the care. The difference between these two points of view reinforced by the importance of health for each of us, is reflected in the tension between supporters and opponents of alternative medicine.

Links

Related Articles

- Evidence Based Medicine, Hierarchy of evidence
- Experimental study

External links

- HEŘT, Jiří. *Alternativní medicína a léčitelství - Kritický pohled* [online] . Chomutov : Český klub skeptiků Sisyfos, 2010. 265 pp. Available from <https://www.sisyfos.cz/files/Alternativni_medicina_Hert.pdf>.

References

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2. MIHULKA, Stanislav. Are ball lightning hallucinations?. *OSEL: Objective Source E-Learning* [online]. 2010, 09.07.2010 [cit. 2013-02-19]. Available from: <http://www.osel.cz/5144-jsou-kulove-blesky-halucinacemi.html>
3. Ball lightning. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [cit. 2013-02-19]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ball_lightning