

Book Review

General Practice; The Integrative Approach

By Kerryn Phelps and Craig Hassed
Elsevier, 2010
ISBN 9780729538046

A lack of trust and understanding are often the two main reasons that prevent doctors and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners working collaboratively. CAM practitioners often feel threatened when they think doctors are invading their turf and doctors are often reluctant to work with practitioners of a therapy they do not understand. Integrative healthcare requires a collaborative approach with respect and trust between all parties that can only be achieved through education. *General Practice; The Integrative Approach* attempts to set the foundation to break down the 'us and them' mentality which still exists between many doctors and practitioners of CAM.

General Practice; The Integrative Approach is a general practice textbook written to guide general practitioners (GPs) through the integrative medicine approach. The book uses the definition of integrative medicine as developed and adopted by the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine; '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'. It includes a large amount of information from the most basic introduction to the concept of integrative medicine and the principles

of general practice through to detailed chapters on diagnosis, investigation and management of many common conditions seen in general practice.

The authors are two very well known general practitioners. Professor Phelps is Adjunct Professor at Sydney University in the Faculty of Medicine. She is also Conjoint Professor at the University of NSW in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. She is a past Federal President of the Australian Medical Association, and is currently President of the Australasian Integrative Medical Association (AIMA). Dr Craig Hassed is a general practitioner and senior lecturer in the Monash University Department of General Practice and a founding board member of the AIMA.

It is a full colour text and contains a table of contents, list of contributors, list of reviewers, a Foreword, a Preface, Acknowledgements, an Appendix, a list of Picture Credits and an Index. The book is divided into seven Parts containing 62 Chapters, Part 1 Principles of Integrative Medicine, Part 2 Principles of General Practice, Part 3 Systems, Part 4 Men's Health, Part 5 Women's health, Part 6 Lifecycle Health and Part 7 Social Conditions.

As you would expect of a book with the title *General Practice; The Integrative Approach* it dedicates a significant portion of its text to the principles of integrative medicine. The first 124 pages contain 14 chapters covering

subjects that include the basic concepts in integrative medicine, principles of herbal medicine, the essence of good health, behaviour change strategies, clinical nutrition and spirituality.

Some reviewers have been critical about the practicalities of using this book as a clinical resource because of its size. It weighs in at more than 3 kg and is certainly not a textbook that you would carry around for quick reference. I would suggest that this criticism is a little unfair because purchase of the book entitles you access to an electronic copy via Student Consult <<http://www.studentconsult.com>>. This means that with an electronic tablet or smart phone with an internet connection the entire book can be available to you in the palm of your hand.

The disappointing part of an otherwise satisfactory textbook are the pictures on page 552 labelled Figure 38.5 and 38.6. Bearing no apparent relation to the text, the pictures of electro-acupuncture and laser acupuncture do not make much sense at all and do nothing to depict how these therapies are commonly practised. This is most likely due to the teething problems associated with a first edition.

General Practice; The Integrative Approach is recognition that a general practitioner needs to understand the art of medicine and not just the hard science of the reductionist model. It challenges the reader to practise a more comprehensive holistic medicine which considers not just the physical but also social,

emotional and spiritual needs of each patient. It encourages referral between doctors and practitioners of CAM to achieve optimal health outcomes for patients. Although some GPs might be tempted to use this book as a 'CAM how to guide' it does not provide enough information to perform CAM safely and effectively without appropriate training.

Regardless of whether you practise allopathic medicine or CAM, most of us are, in reality, working in a form of general practice and seeing patients from many different walks of life presenting with a wide variety of conditions. This book provides detailed information on a range of conditions commonly seen in general practice and also provides

us with a chance to reflect on how we interact with our patients.

If you want to understand the direction that integrative medicine is taking then you need to get involved and *General Practice; The Integrative Approach* might be a good place to start.

Reviewed by Ian Murray
