Endeavour College of Natural Health Definition of Complementary Medicine

Complementary Medicine (CM) refers to a wide variety of healthcare practices and therapies that are not generally integrated into the conventional practice of medical doctors and allied health professionals in our society. Most CM practices and therapies would be considered “traditional medical systems” or “whole medical systems”, which are complete systems of theory and practice that have evolved independently over time in different cultures. Modern CM brings together centuries of systematic development, practice, and research into a contemporary, scientific framework that can comfortably work alongside, or as an alternative to, other forms of medicine. The boundary between conventional medicine and complementary medicine has begun to adopt some of the therapeutic approaches from traditional medical systems.

CM encompasses therapeutic modalities, lifestyle practices and underpinning theories and philosophies used in the maintenance of health, as well as prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of physical and mental illness. Most CM disciplines take a holistic view of illness and wellness and encompass therapeutic approaches that address body, emotions, mind and spirit within a framework of patient-centred care.

CM practices that encompass whole medical systems are Naturopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Chiropractic and Osteopathy. Both within these systems and practiced as stand-alone therapies are many modalities, encompassing:

- Ingestive therapies, such as herbal medicine, food as medicine, and nutritional supplementation,
- Physical therapies, such as remedial massage, myotherapy, movement therapies, and spinal mobilisation/manipulation,
- Energetic therapies, such as acupuncture, homeopathy, and flower essences,
- Mind-body techniques, such as meditation, relaxation techniques, and guided imagery), and
- Lifestyle practices and counselling, such as tai chi, qi gong, work-life balance, and sleep hygiene.

The study of CM at the tertiary or post-graduate level incorporates a rigorous grounding in health sciences and evidence informed practice to ensure safe, ethical and effective practice and optimal health outcomes for patients. Such study takes place against the backdrop of the art and heart of holistic health practice, teaching students how to embody a healing presence and create meaningful therapeutic relationships that assist patients on sometimes lengthy healing journeys to becoming the best possible version of themselves with the highest possible quality of life.

*Endeavour has opted to adopt the use of the term “Complementary Medicine” to replace the former “Complementary and Alternative Medicine” in alignment with the April 2014 change made by the Australian NHMRC, to reflect the fact that the majority of patients utilise complementary modalities alongside conventional medicine, as opposed to as an alternative/replacement for conventional medicine. This term also aligns with the name of our newest Bachelor of Complementary Medicine.*