progressively zero in on more limited areas—in other words, we are being trained to learn more and more about less and less.

As a consequence, patients, with all of their complexities, are the ones suffering from this form of myopia in medical education. Another detrimental factor is the technologic revolution that tended to push aside the history and physical examination, which is so therapeutically important both to the patient and to the physician.

The writer argues for a better integration of medical subjects. It is crucial that this integration be developed to reflect the concepts of body unity and interrelationship of the body systems.

The article, "Medicine in the '80s: Need for an integrative approach," is a splendid generalization of some of the problems we face in medical education and, ultimately, in the practice of medicine itself. The need for an integrative approach is apparent. The article should be read and reread and committed into positive action.

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I. Natelson, B.H.: Medicine in the '80s. Need for an integrative approach. *Am J Med* 81:1048-50, Dec 86

Holistic medicine: A matter of definition

Ever since General Smuts, who was a South African statesman and military person, published the first reference to holism in 1926, there has been a growing use and misuse of the term. Smuts, who was also an amateur botanist, developed the philosophy as a means of looking at organisms and systems. He maintained that any entity is always greater than the sum of its parts.

That there are two definitions of holistic medicine is confusing to the public and divisive to physicians. For example, one approach is illustrated by the book, "High-level wellness: An alternative to doctors, drugs, and disease." As noted in a recent article published in *Postgraduate Medicine* on holistic medicine,¹ people promoting this definition downplay the role of physicians in maintaining health and even seem to regard doctors as a necessary evil rather than as leaders in programs designed to obtain maximal health.

However, the American Holistic Medical Association puts traditional medical training at the very center of holistic medicine, placing it neither in a contrasting or opposing relationship. The American Holistic Medical Association defines holistic medicine as "A system of medical care which emphasizes personal responsibility and fosters a

cooperative relationship among all those involved, leading toward optimal attunement of body, mind, emotions and spirit. Holistic medicine encompasses all safe modalities of diagnosis and treatment including the use of medication and surgery, emphasizing the necessity of looking at the whole person, including analysis of physical, nutritional, environmental, emotional, spiritual and life style values. Holistic medicine particularly focuses upon patient education and responsibility in the healing process." This is consistent with the basic philosophy which dates back to the early Hippocratic concepts. The first definition as an alternative to doctors, drugs, and disease is neither holistic nor is it medicine. The second definition is obviously consistent with the beliefs and basic tenets of osteopathic medicine.

Even today, despite the fact that many people realize the difference in these two definitions, the average layman still thinks that holistic medicine in some way supplants contemporary medical practice.

Dr. Still did not proclaim an alternative to fundamental medical practice. His stated purpose was to improve the current practice of medicine, surgery, and obstetrics. He proclaimed the holistic approach as a philosophic base upon which the search for health and the diagnosis and treatment of disease could be carried out.

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I. Davidson, K.W., et al.: Traditional and holistic medicine. Are they philosophically opposed? *Postgrad Med* 80:209-12, Dec 86

editorial comment

A cannister of pure oxygen is as traditional a sideline staple as Gatorade. Yet is the practice of inhaling 100 percent oxygen really necessary to rejuvenate an exhausted athlete? An exercise physiologist at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas thinks not.

Twelve soccer players were run to the point of exhaustion and allowed to recover by breathing either room air or pure oxygen. Not only did the gas make no statistically significant difference in renewed endurance, but the players could not even distinguish between which gas they had inhaled. Nor did pure oxygen facilitate the clearance of lactic acid from the blood.