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Advanced Family Health PLLC
Alternative Vs Traditional Medicine Providers
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Naturopath? Homeopath? Allopath? Osteopath? What PATH should I take? The Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner, the Traditional MD – A Brief.

Have you ever wondered about the difference between various alternative medicine providers and traditional providers? It can be a confusing subject and one that may be blurry to the patient who seeks help.

In the traditional (western) medicine setting, allopathic doctors (M.D.) and osteopathic doctors (D.O.) comprise what most people think of when they think of “doctors” or physicians. Both receive similar training and require: Four-year undergraduate bachelor’s degree, four-years medical/osteopathic school and taking the Hippocratic oath. For osteopaths, each must finish additional coursework in the musculoskeletal system in their fundamental belief that the alignment and function of our bones, muscles and connective tissue strongly influence the whole body’s health. Once classroom training is completed, these physicians soon to be must complete a three-eight-year post-graduate training in residencies and fellowships to specialize in an area of medicine such as pediatrics, family medicine, general surgery, neurology, dermatology, etc. Each need to be licensed through state licensing boards in order to practice medicine and both doctors typically obtain board certification in their areas of expertise. These board certifications require continuing education courses and periodic comprehensive examinations to prove ongoing proficiency.

Traditional Chinese medicine has been used for over 2,500 – 3,500 years and bases its care upon the understanding that there is a vital life-force (or “qi”) energy that flows through each person. Disease occurs when this energy flow is blocked. These practitioners will acupuncture and sometimes body work such as shiatsu, to help patients get back to a place of balance. Always look for a licensed and certified diplomate of oriental medicine. Practitioner who has a Master’s degree and has passed the national certification commission for acupuncture and oriental medicine’s exam, oriental medicine national certification.

Licensed acupuncturists (l.ac), typically have over 2,700 hours of master’s level training at a nationally-accredited school and have hands-on experience with 250 patients before passing their national certification commission for acupuncture and oriental medicine exam for acupuncture, acupuncture national certification. This is in contrast to being “certified in acupuncture,” which requires much less training. Any provider currently licensed in another specialty, i.e. Dentist, nurse, physician, chiropractor, can take a course of 100-300 hours to learn about acupuncture. However, a certified in acupuncture is not required to pass the national certification commission for acupuncture and oriental medicine’s exam.

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Integrative physician has been a generic term that providers use to specify that they try to integrate the whole person concept (mind, body, spirituality) when caring for patients. Most often it's an integration of eastern and western medicine practices that utilize the best of both worlds in treatment options and a focus on prevention and the emphasis that the body has an inherent ability to heal itself if we can help patients to recognize what's out of balance.

Complementary and alternative medicine (cam) can encompass anything from traditional Chinese medicine, to an acupuncturist, a chiropractor, a provider of Ayurveda medicine, naturopathy or homeopathy, massage therapy, yoga, reiki/energy medicine, herbal therapy, aromatherapy.

chiropractors utilize adjustments of the spine and nervous system to treat a variety of ailments, primarily neck, back and joint pain. Chiropractor training includes four-year undergraduate degree before they are accepted to an accredited chiropractic college to earn their doctorate of chiropractic care. One-year of post-graduate clinical training is required after chiropractic school. All 50 states in the U.S.A. require licensing of chiropractors through national board examinations after completion of training, chiropractic training.

Homeopaths believe that "like cures like", similar to how low dose shots of certain allergens are given to patients (i.e. "allergy shots") that have bad allergies. Homeopathic treatments dilute substances (usually plant-based or minerals) to extremely low levels in the thought that these may stimulate the body to heal itself. All homeopathic remedies sold in the us have been regulated by the government since 1938 and considered generally safe because of this. Skeptics of homeopathy state that the level of dilution used removes most or all of the active ingredients and that if patients improve, it's through the belief that they will improve, or the placebo effect. Currently, only three states require licensing for practicing homeopathy (Arizona, Nevada, Connecticut), and only M.D.'s or D.O.'s can obtain this license.

Naturopathic doctors emphasize disease prevention, wellness, and the body's inherent ability to heal itself. In the event of disease, their tools include: nutritional therapy, botanical extracts, acupuncture, homeopathy and occasionally prescription medication to treat patients. In 16 states they are required to be licensed and board certified through the north American Board of Naturopathic

Ayurveda medicine is an ancient (5,000 yrs old) practice founded in India. It uses herbs, diet, yoga/exercise, detoxification, aromatherapy, psychological interventions, meditation to balance a person's *dosha*, or life force. There are some controversial elements to Ayurveda practices, such as detoxification through the purging of bowels or blood-letting. Currently, there are no certifying organizations or licensing requirements in the United States for someone to practice Ayurveda medicine.

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