

**QUESTION OF THE WEEK****Q:** What is integrative medicine?

**I**ntegrative medicine is a health-oriented approach that takes into account the whole person by using both traditional and alternative approaches to promote the body's natural healing response. In other words, integrative medicine endorses both conventional medicine and alternative therapies that have been scientifically tested.

Integrative medicine is not simply alternative medicine because it employs standard Western approaches as well as scientifically based and complementary non-traditional approaches.

Many Americans are trying to take charge of their own health through the use of supplements and herbs to treat various symptoms. Their physicians may have neither the time nor the training to help them and thus it is left to the sales clerk at the vitamin shop to advise them on treatments. Integrative medicine doctors are trained to deal with the safety and efficacy of herbs and dietary supplements and their interaction with prescription medication.

While traditional medicine has increased our lifespan through vaccines, sanitation and the control of infection, the biggest



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health threat to Americans is lifestyle. There is little debate that lifestyle and nutrition are important to health. Because of the heavy patient loads of most doctors, it is often more practical to prescribe a pill rather than take an hour to show a patient how to prevent heart disease or diabetes with comprehensive dietary and stress counseling.

The integrative doctor

reinforces the fact that food remains the most important medicine at our disposal. By the year 2020, cancer and diabetes will increase worldwide by 50 percent. Globally, heart disease accounts for 29 percent of all deaths. Cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes can be dramatically reduced by simply following a healthy diet, exercising regularly and reducing stress. Integrative medicine doctors are partnering with their patients to make this a reality.