

Health Locus of Control and Outcomes of Holistic Nutritional Counseling

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Abstract

The relationships of multidimensional health locus of control scores to changes in health symptom survey scores were examined in a population of 10 holistic nutritional counseling patients. Health symptom survey parameters include self report assessment of 18 physical symptom areas (head/throat, eyes, ear, lungs, heart, digestion, etc.). The multidimensional health locus of control instrument covers internal, external, and chance belief systems. Data were collected at the initial appointment at the author's holistic nutritional counseling private practice and again at 6 weeks post-intervention. There were significant health improvements (11.1 %) pre- to post- health symptom survey results in the treatment group over the control group. There was also a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) between Chance health locus of control scores and the regression analysis residuals indicating that the higher the individual's belief in Chance locus of control, the higher the regression residual and thus, the lower the improvement in overall health. There was also a negative correlation between Chance locus of control scores and Internal locus of control scores, and a positive correlation between Chance locus of control scores and External locus of control scores.

Introduction

In the past decade and a half, the field of alternative/natural/holistic health has grown significantly. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1998 (Eisenberg et al., 1998) surveyed 1539 adults in 1991 and 2055 adults again in 1997 to identify trends in alternative medicine use. Results extrapolated to the US population suggested an increase of 47.3% in total visits to alternative medicine practitioners during those years. Estimated expenditures for alternative medicine professional services increased 45.2% during the same years and were conservatively estimated at \$21.2 billion in 1997 with \$12.2 billion paid out-of-pocket.

A study published in 2005 (Tindle, Davis, Phillips, & Eisenberg, 2005) compared the results of the 1997 study in trends of alternative medicine use to a survey completed in 2002. The results showed that although prevalence of some treatments increased and others decreased, overall the use of alternative medicine remained stable from 1997 to 2002. This amounts to approximately 72 million Americans who use complementary and alternative medicines. The greatest increases in use between 1997 and 2002 were for herbal medicine and yoga, and the greatest decrease was for chiropractic care.

When the first study was published in 1998, many critics predicted that alternative medicine use would be a short-lived fad. The publication of the current study is a strong suggestion otherwise. In an informal study at this researcher's holistic nutritional counseling office, patients identified over ten alternative modalities that they regularly consider when they have health concerns. These include chiropractic care, massage

therapy, Reiki, herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, kinesiology, holistic dentistry, naturopathy, medical intuitive readings, native American shamanic journeys, and of course, holistic nutritional counseling. This large variety of modalities is indicative of a significant awareness, interest, and trust of non-traditional medical approaches.

Many of these non-traditional health care modalities have commonly been thought to lack scientific grounding and research as their basis. Websites such as www.quackwatch.org, www.naturowatch.org, www.nutriwatch.org, and many more devote their energies to identifying the so-called unscientific foundations of all alternative practices. And while it's true that some individual practitioners of alternative modalities are known to hyperbolize their claims for health outcomes (some individual traditional practitioners are known to use hyperbole as well), it is not true that these modalities are without historic, clinical, and scientific foundation.

Ironically, many of the scientific foundations of alternative modalities come from traditional research efforts. In the fields of holistic and clinical nutrition, organizations such as the Institute for Functional Medicine (see www.functionalmedicine.com), founded by Jeffrey S. Bland, PhD focus their efforts on nutritional biochemistry incorporating all previous and current research across the health related fields. Similarly in the field of herbalism, the German Commission E Monographs, and scientific journals such as the Journal of the American Botanical Council, Phytotherapy Research, Phytomedicine, British Journal of Phytotherapy, Medical Herbalism, European Journal of Herbal Medicine, and The Australian Journal of Medical Herbalism all rely exclusively on peer reviewed original research (Hobbs, 2000).

Holistic dentistry, which focuses on the safe removal of mercury/heavy metal amalgams from dental fillings is based on extensive scientific research on the toxicity of mercury. According to the homepage of the website www.holisticdentalnetwork.com : “Scientific research from the Universities of Iowa, Calgary, Oral Roberts and New Zealand clearly shows mercury vapor escapes from amalgam fillings. Additional confirmation is provided by The World Health Organization (WHO) Environmental Health Criteria document 118 citing the average daily intake of mercury as 3.8 - 21 micrograms. Likewise research in Sweden and Tubingen, Germany studied total body burden of mercury showing 20 times the excretion in feces as in urine. Danish research established that in unborn babies the highest levels of mercury via the placenta were in the liver and pituitary. Recent studies at the University of Kentucky show a high correlating level of mercury in the brain cells of Alzheimer's patients.”

The Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (see www.fcer.org) sponsors annual conferences as well as ongoing research projects based on the latest scientific research into the effectiveness of chiropractic care. Palmer’s College of Chiropractic was funded in October 1997 by the National Institutes of Health to create the Consortial Center of Chiropractic Research. And groups such as the American Chiropractic Association (www.amerchiro.org) and the Journal of Vertebral Subluxation (www.jvsr.com) also encourage and publish scientific research in the field of chiropractic care.

Even fields as non-traditional as medical intuition have accumulated a body of scientific testing to validate its effectiveness. Carolyn Myss and Norm Shealy, MD, PhD have worked together to document the reliability of medical intuition since 1984 and

have published several books on the subject beginning with The Creation of Health (Myss, Shealy, 1988). The Institute for Noetic Sciences (www.noetic.org) also sponsors medical intuition research as does The Council for Healing (www.councilforhealing.org).

So as more and more individuals come to rely on alternative, holistic health methodologies for their wellbeing, it will become increasingly important to measure and publish the overall effectiveness of these strategies. It will become more and more important that effective natural health strategies are matched appropriately to patient needs. And it will become more and more important that practitioners are better able to route patients to the best protocols at the most beneficial time. The present study is designed to contribute to that process in the field of holistic nutritional counseling.