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The therapeutic value (TV: the ratio benefit to harm) of holistic medicine is 1,000,000,000 times larger than the therapeutic value of pharmaceutical drugs for cancer, coronary heart disorder, depression and schizophrenia.

- Soren Ventegodt, Director
- Joav Merrick

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"I happen to think that healing energy and erotic energy are just two different forms of the same thing."
Dean Ornish, MD

The success rate in medicine is often expressed as Number Needed to Treat (NNT): How many patients do I as a physician need to treat for one patient to reach the treatment goal? In the same way, the risk of harm is expressed as the Number Needed to treat to Harm: How many patients will I need to treat for one to have this adverse effect or event?

In medicine two things are interesting for patients: Efficacy and harm. A treatment must be efficient to be interesting. It must be likely to help. If the change of being helped is below 50%, say 20% or 5% or 1%, the treatment is not very attractive, for then it is not very likely that I get better. Patients are therefore very sad to learn that the normal NNT -number for pharmaceutical drugs is about 20 (1), meaning that only 5% of patients are helped. And this is according to the pharmaceutical industry. If you ask the Cochrane researchers the NNT-numbers are more likely to be 50 or 100 (2).

But even more important is harm, and especially the ratio benefit to harm - which we often call Therapeutic Value (3,4). It can be expressed as NNH/NNT , or more correctly, NNH_{total}/NNT_{total} , where NNH_{total} expresses the total likelihood to be harmed (experience a adverse effect or event), and NNT_{total} in the same way expresses the total likelihood to get clinical benefit.

Most drugs have one positive effect and 10, 20 or more adverse effects with NNHs of 2-50, and NNTtotal of 1-3 (3). The therapeutic value TV of drugs are often 1 or less. For the major physical and mental illnesses like cancer, heart disease, depression and schizophrenia the NNTtotal is about 100 while NNHtotal is about 1, giving a TV=0.01 (2,3,11,12,13).

How efficient is holistic medicine? Dean Ornish clinical studies have documented that about 80% of patients with coronary heart stenosis or prostate cancer get clinically well after interventions on life-style and the level of intimacy they practice (long term results). You can hear him say the following on YouTube: "Anything that promote intimacy is healing" and "I happen to think that healing energy and erotic energy are just two different forms of the same thing" (14).

Ornish believes that love and intimacy and emotional openness is the way to healing. As do most holistic doctors. Ornish is treating patients with the most severe physical disorders and he is doing this with a NNT of 1. Often NNTs of holistic medicine (holistic mind body medicine i.e. CHM) is 1 or 2 short term, and 1 long term (15,16). Holistic medicine is so efficient that it heals and cures most patients.

But the positive effects do not stop here. When non-drug medicine works it improves all aspects of existence. When we measure the effects of holistic medicine it has at least 10 important, clinically relevant, positive effects (5,6,7,8).

The patient goes for improving one aspect of life, but end up with a complete new life.

The central healing (salutogenic) principle of holistic medicine has ever since Hippocrates been to learn to love yourself more and understand yourself better (17). Self-insight is the essence of the cure, and through this you will also improve all other aspects of health, quality of life and ability (social, sexual, work-related, study-related), as well as your personal relations with yourself, your partner, your friends etc.

It is amazing that holistic medicine heals the whole person and everything related to him or her! Compared to this pharmaceutical drugs almost always address one aspects of one organ or function, and the aim is rarely healing but most of the time only improvement of symptoms. Often surrogate outcome measures are used with modest correlation to the clinical outcome if interest. In this way a positive effect of drugs can be documented even when it hardly has any clinical significance to the patient (18)!

We could fairly have divided NNTs from drug trials with 10 on this account but we will not do that. We just set NNTtotal=10 for holistic medicine.

At the same time research has documented touch and talk therapy to be almost without side effects; less than one in a million gets hurt by massage therapy and gentle physical touch according to the NCCAM (9), and mind-body medicine which also includes talk therapy is similar harmless (10). Therefore we set NNH and NNHtotal to >1,000,000 (4).

With NNHtotals of 1,000,000 and NNTtotals of 10 the TV of holistic medicine is $\text{NNHtotal}/\text{NNTtotal}=10,000,000$. TV for drugs for the serious clinical conditions was 0.01. This means that the therapeutic value (TV) of holistic medicine is about 1,000,000,000 times larger than the therapeutic value of drugs for the severe mental and physical diseases.

One billion times is a lot. It is so much that one starts to wonder what is happening in medicine. Well, when you think about it this is quite obvious: Love and healing has been replaced with drugs and money. Medicine has gone astray (19).

BMJ deputy editor Trish Groves talking about "evidence-debased medicine" (20).

We think it is time to take it a step further. Instead of evidence-based medicine we have got "industry-based medicine". This is what has gone wrong in medicine. And this is what we need to change. And we need to change it right now.

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Errata: There is an error in the calculation here, but the result is correct.

NNTtotal for holistic medicine is 0.1, not 10.

It comes from 80% of patients getting cured physically (NNT=1) and at the same time getting 10 other positive, clinically relevant effects, like happiness, improved mental health and improved sexual functioning (therefore $NNT_{total}=1:10=0.01$).

The Therapeutic Value of holistic medicine is then calculated:

$TV(\text{holistic medicine})=NNH_{total}/NNT_{total}=1,000,000/0.1=10,000,000$.

Then the ratio $TV(\text{holistic medicine})/TV(\text{drugs})=10,000,000 / 0.01=1,000.000.000$

The result is thus correct.

The authors.

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