

A Guide to Evidence-based Integrative and Complementary Medicine

V Kotsirilos, L Vitetta, and A Sali. Published by [Churchill Livingstone Australia](#), 2011. ISBN 9780729539081. Contains 956 pages. Price AU\$88.20

This book delivers just what the title promises. For each of 34 common medical conditions it summarises the evidence for effectiveness of a series of non-pharmacological therapies, assessing the evidence as Level 1 to V using standard evidence-based medicine criteria.



Conditions include anxiety, asthma, several cancers, diabetes, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, headaches, hypertension, infections, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis. There is an extensive appendix listing food sources of macronutrients, micronutrients, phytonutrients and chemicals. Of wider interest is an appendix that details nutrient and herb interactions with a wide range of medically prescribed drugs, listed in drug order. 'Complementary medicine' describes a broad range of therapies that may or may not have much in common, and are therefore each considered separately in this book.

The authors prefer the term 'integrative medicine' by which they mean a style of practice in which the practitioner and patient choose the appropriate medicine or therapy for their condition, where the choice is made from a wider range of options than are used in 'conventional' medical practice.

One common classification system of natural, complementary and alternative medicine divides them into five categories: alternative medical systems (e.g. homeopathy, naturopathy, traditional Chinese, Ayurveda); mind-body interventions (e.g. counselling, patient support groups, prayer, art, dance, music); biologically based therapies (e.g. herbs, foods, vitamins); manipulative and body-based methods (e.g. chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation); and energy therapies (e.g. therapeutic touch, magnetic fields).

By addressing each therapy and each condition individually, and using standard evidence-based medicine 'level of evidence' criteria, the authors are open to promoting specific therapies for specific conditions while recommending that other therapies be abandoned. Furthermore, in their evidence summaries and their 'clinical tips for patients' summaries they pay considerable attention to lifestyle factors including sleep, sunshine, physical activity, stress reduction, breathing, fun, smoking and alcohol.

The book is produced to a high quality by a prominent academic publishing house, supplemented by web access to additional material including 'clinical tips' handouts for patients and downloadable slides of figures and illustrations.

The authors reasonably claim that conventional practitioners have a legal and ethical obligation to know of the potential harms from interaction between the pharmaceuticals they prescribe and (widely used) complementary medicines, and also to inform their patients of evidence-based effective complementary therapies.

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