

Holistic health is an approach to healing that takes into account the whole person, placing specific emphasis on a connection of mind, body, and spirit. Rather than focusing on simply managing symptoms and illnesses, this method of treatment attempts to go beyond merely eliminating the unpleasant indicators of disease. Instead, it encourages and supports the body to heal itself with an overall goal of total wellness.

‘Holistic health’ is sometimes an umbrella term most often used when discussing Alternative & Complementary Medicine (CAM) – which are those therapies that have characteristically not been a part of conventional Western medicine practices. It is important to note, however, that there is a difference between the two: alternative therapies are typically used in place of conventional medicine; whereas, complementary therapies can be used in conjunction with conventional medicine.

What’s more, complementary medicine and conventional medicine have recently been combined in a specific manner, producing the concept of ‘integrative medicine’ (IM). The University of Arizona’s Center for Integrative Medicine defines this term as “healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person, including all aspects of lifestyle. It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship between practitioner and patient, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapies.” In fact, this method of integrative healing is likely what most closely matches the World Health Organization’s definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

The basis of this approach to healing is rooted in the idea that a whole person is made up of interdependent parts and if one part is not working properly, all the other parts can be affected. For example, if a person has an imbalance in their life, it can negatively affect their overall health and present as disease within the body. Biological, psychological, behavioral and spiritual factors can contribute to

personal health outcomes. Even social determinants of health can play a role, often having just as much of an impact on a person's overall health as genetics. Therefore, it is not enough to diagnose illness; instead, we need to identify contributing factors and environmental influences that can consequently lead to disease and determine the best way to return the body to a state of homeostasis.

Continuous developments in public health policies and the implementation of preventative measures can lead to improved health outcomes, and these positive efforts are in line with several changes in the healthcare field as we are beginning to shift the focus to proactively managing the health of all populations rather than post-symptomatic treatment of disease. By focusing on prevention and encouraging active participation in one's healthcare, we can likely reduce costly medical procedures and hospitalizations. What's more, by developing specific policies and procedures, we can continue to push for evidence-based, demonstrably effective therapies to be covered/reimbursed by health insurance policies. Together, these policy changes and funding mechanisms could help reduce overall healthcare costs while improving quality of life.

Creating an interdisciplinary studies major based around the theme of holistic health allows me to further explore this area of personal interest. By taking a biopsychosocial approach in respect to choosing specific courses, I can better learn how biological, psychological and social processes interact to produce certain health outcomes. With the core of my classes stemming from Kinesiology, I will be provided with sufficient knowledge in the structure and function of the human body. When this is coupled with specific classes from Psychology and Anthropology/Sociology departments, I will be given a broader understanding of psychological, cultural and societal influences on health. This focus will effectively prepare me to continue my education via graduate programs in either health policy or social work.

The 12 courses that would comprise my core would be distributed as following:

|                 |                                |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| <b>ANTH 100</b> | Intro to Cultural Anthropology | <b>KINE 360</b> | Physiology of Exercise * |
| <b>BIOL 150</b> | Cell Biology*                  | <b>KINE 410</b> | Directed Research*       |
| <b>KINE 205</b> | Human Anatomy & Physiology*    | <b>PSYC 230</b> | Social Psychology        |
| <b>KINE 235</b> | Intro to Public Health*        | <b>PSYC 290</b> | Statistics*              |
| <b>KINE 260</b> | Nutrition*                     | <b>PSYC 351</b> | Health Psychology *      |
| <b>KINE 330</b> | Structural Kinesiology*        | <b>SOCI 110</b> | Intro to Sociology *     |

*\*course completed*

This major will culminate in a Capstone project wherein I will research Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and compare the conventional Western-medicine method of treating the disease with CAM/IM methods of healing, including (but not limited to): psychotherapy, animal therapy, yoga/meditation, acupuncture, and herbal medicine. This research will result in a paper that will then be graded by my Interdisciplinary Studies Committee. With military suicides estimated by the Department of Veteran Affairs to be at the rate of 22/day, there is no better time than now to determine what course of treatment is the most effective in terms of success rates, duration of treatments, cost-effectiveness, and ease of access.

### Works Cited

*"What is IM?" Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine:. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 July 2015.*

*"WHO Definition of Health." World Health Organization, n.d. Web. 24 July 2015.*