

Integrative vs Traditional Medicine

*By Dr. Shannon Ginnan, M.D.*

*Virginia Integrative Health & Hyperbaric*

**What does “Integrative Medicine” mean?**

Over the years, many of my patients have asked me "what does Integrative Medicine really mean"? It takes the approach that for most cases of disease, there are multiple ways of evaluating the symptoms, diagnosing the condition, then treating to re-establish a positive state of health.  It focuses on treating the underlying causes to address the root of the condition, not just treating the symptoms, to ultimately aid in providing the best possible outcome for the patient.

**What type of treatment is involved in an Integrative approach?**

We aim to treat as many potential causes as possible, often utilizing multiple modalities to produce the most possible and meaningful symptom relief to the patient.

Integrative Medicine practitioners may use a multitude of disciplines, including but not limited to:

* Traditional Western Medicine
* Functional Medicine
* Infiltrations/Injections
* Nutrition and Nutraceuticals
* Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy
* Chiropractic Care
* Naturopathic Medicine
* Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine / Herbology
* Biofeedback

Not only does Integrative Medicine recognize that there are multiple ways of approaching the healthcare paradigm, but it is firmly rooted in the belief that the best possible outcome can only arise when multiple treatments are employed together for a synergistic result.

**How do Integrative and Traditional Medicine compare?**

As an example, High Blood Pressure is a very common condition in the United States.  Standard of care within traditional US medicine is to tell the patient to try diet and exercise, test some basic bloodwork, possibly an EKG and chest x-ray. After a few months, if blood pressure is still high, they are often put on an antihypertensive medication, and then continue to increase dosages, switch, and add medications until a target is reached.  There's nothing wrong with this, it works, and it's an approach that has significant value because it saves lives.

In an integrative approach, we may do some more extensive labs to look for nutritional deficiencies that could be affecting energy production, inflammation, gut dysregulation, hormone testing, toxin testing, etc.  Once we have potential causes of physical imbalance that could be leading to the condition, such as hypertension, we will make corrective measures with nutrition, supplements, and other functional medical treatments.

Both approaches, can achieve success, but the Integrative Medicine approach may have a greater chance of producing positive results because we are approaching the underlying cause from so many different angles, to help provide the patient the best possible care.