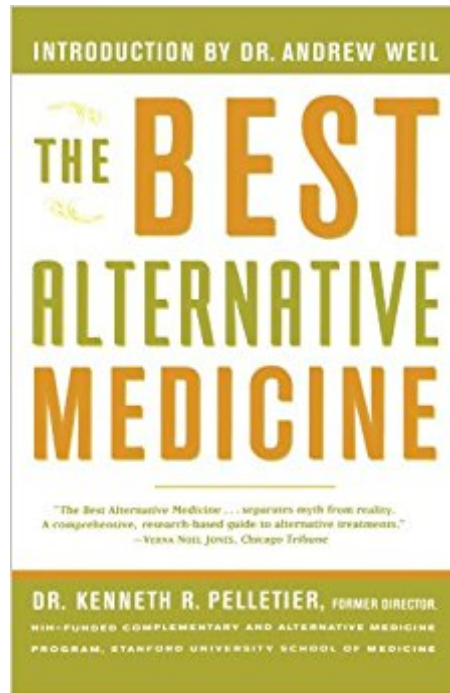




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# The Best Alternative Medicine



## Synopsis

The Best Alternative Medicine is the only book available today that both evaluates the major areas of alternative medicine and addresses how they can be used to treat specific conditions. Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier explains such popular therapies as mind/body medicine, herbal and homeopathic remedies, spiritual healing, and traditional Chinese systems, discussing their effectiveness, the ailments each is most appropriate for, and how they can help prevent illness. In the second part of the book, which is organized alphabetically, he draws on the latest National Institute of Health (NIH)-sponsored research to present clear recommendations for the prevention and treatment of health concerns ranging from acne to menopause to ulcers. Combining valuable guidance about alternative treatments with definitive health advice, The Best Alternative Medicine will be the standard reference for the increasing number of people integrating alternative medicine into their personal and organizational health-care programs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Complementary and alternative medicine, which ranges from acupuncture and chiropractic care to more esoteric disciplines such as Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, was a \$14 billion industry by the year 2000. As the public's interest in health practices outside the purview of conventional medicine has increased, so has the controversy about the efficacy of such methods. But while conventional doctors criticize the absence of conclusive clinical evidence for most alternative therapies, there is nevertheless a growing number of people who suffer from chronic

illnesses and, frustrated by the usual medical route, are willing to try new modalities. In *The Best Alternative Medicine*, Dr. Kenneth Pelletier of the Stanford School of Medicine addresses the debate head-on with the goal of providing an authoritative consumer reference guide that focuses on the existing body of clinical research (funded in large part by the National Institutes of Health) and the safest applications of the 12 most common practices. Pelletier, who is also the director of the National Institutes of Health's Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program and the author of *Sound Mind, Sound Body: A New Model for Lifelong Health*, evaluates those approaches mentioned above as well as mind-body medicine, supplements, Western herbal medicine, homeopathy, naturopathy, and the healing applications of spirituality from three perspectives: what works, what doesn't work, and what is "in the works." He then presents an A to Z of health conditions--from AIDS and arthritis to osteoporosis and varicose veins--with bulleted points referencing the beneficial alternative therapies. While Pelletier is clearly an advocate of complementary and alternative medicine, he takes a discerning position and carefully cuts through the jargon and unsubstantiated claims to present an unbiased, evidence-based resource that will be invaluable to people considering a new approach to their health care. --Rebecca Wright --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Pelletier (*Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer*) examines the most popular alternative therapies being used today--from homeopathy and Western herbal medicine to traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda--with an eye toward integrating them with traditional medicine. A clinical associate professor of medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine and director of the Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program, Pelletier notes that while many forms of complementary alternative medicine (CAM) are not recognized by the medical community, consumer interest in them has risen dramatically. If, as Pelletier concludes, optimal health stems from attention to all aspects of life--physical, psychological, spiritual and environmental--then CAM therapies, which take all of these aspects into account, will become even more common. Far from suggesting that traditional medicine be bypassed, Pelletier emphasizes that CAM can increase its effectiveness at a relatively low cost. He cites numerous studies in which CAM has fostered the healing process, as well as other studies that either have negated certain claims for alternatives or proved inconclusive. In the second section of the book, Pelletier discusses how CAM can be used for specific conditions such as cancer, heart disease, AIDS and depression. This forward-looking book will be useful to those seeking to address all aspects of their well-being. BOMC, QPB, One Spirit alternate. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable

edition of this title.

great book highly recommended

enlightenment comes from the cumulative knowledge presented in many formats, take what you need and continue on. I liked it.

This excellent book is written in three parts. Part I is a thoughtful introduction to complementary and alternative medicine (or "CAM"). It looks at the history of medicines, acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, homeopathy, chiropractic, and much, much more. Part II is an examination of the complementary and alternative treatments for many illnesses and ailments including: Aids, allergies, high blood pressure, and much more. I just can't say enough about this book. It has a wealth of information, both general and specific, and it is very easy to read. If you are interested in alternative medicine, then you must get this book. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

Like most people I am aware of the scientific limitations of some complementary and alternative medical practices and approaches (CAMs). I am also aware that there are some ailments that are most effectively treated by conventional methods. As Dr. Pelletier points out, "conventional medicine excels in the treatment of acute trauma, childbirth emergencies, treating broken bones, performing corrective surgery, and treating acute, life-threatening illnesses" (p. 183). Nonetheless I am a staunch supporter of alternative approaches taken selectively, in particular those based on a long history of practice, such as acupuncture, Chinese medicine and some aspects of Ayurvedic medicine. I am also aware that the theory behind these practices is sometimes flawed in a scientific sense, and that the reason for the effectiveness of some of the treatments is not fully understood. Additionally, it is sometimes impossible to separate the effectiveness of a therapy from the placebo effect. The fact is, however, the art and science of medicine is still in its adolescence at best, and we have a lot to learn. I think in particular the American Medical Association and its members have a lot to learn. The main thing they should understand is that a strictly scientific approach to the healing arts is of limited effectiveness because an essential part of the healing process is treating the whole person, physically, mentally, and emotionally. This is particularly true of the chronic diseases that plague modern societies. However I cannot give a ringing endorsement to this book, mainly because it is primarily a carefully constructed, painstakingly written, legally considered endorsement of the alternative medical industry. As such it is a book taking a political position,

clearly motivated by a desire to convince the insurance industry of the wisdom of allowing its clients to choose CAMs instead of, or in addition to, conventional treatments. Again and again Dr. Pelletier tells the reader that this or that alternative approach is more cost effective than the conventional approach (e.g., see p. 149). While I wish Dr. Pelletier success in getting the HMOs to fork out cash for CAMs, I would prefer a book that concentrates on helping the lay person evaluate the effectiveness of the various approaches. Dr. Pelletier has too many people to please for him to be candid about the relative merits of the various methods. Again and again we are told that the evidence is "suggestive" or "intriguing" (p. 147) or that some recent findings are "so new that they...have not yet been published and subjected to peer review" (p. 203). If one does not read carefully, one might get the impression, for example, that homeopathic medicine is the equal of say, Chinese medicine. Homeopathic medicine is based on a rather limited tradition and a highly suspect theory, while its principle technique is to give patients astronomically-diluted solutions of curative agents that are not necessarily curative. The explanation for how such a medicine works is that the water in the solution somehow "remembers" the form of the curative agent! However I must add that it is to the infinite credit of homeopathy that it follows the first and most important rule of medicine--a rule that conventional medicine does not always adhere to--which is, to do no harm. Having seen the horrendous harm that chemotherapy and radiation treatment can do, I say, thank you, dilute solutions! Chinese medicine, in contradistinction, is based on the use of thousands of medicines and practices honed over thousands of years of practice. This is an enormous difference not emphasized in the text. The real reason these alternative practices work (when they do work) is that the body heals itself, but it heals itself best when the patient has confidence in the therapy and is treated with respect, kindness, consideration and intelligence. The conventional medical establishment still hasn't gotten this very important message. The AMA has spent many decades decrying the "false" medical practices of, for example, chiropractic, but hasn't seen that a bigger problem lies with itself and the medical practices of far too many of its members, practices that neglect and ignore the whole-body, mind and emotional needs of patients while astronomically increasing the cost of their treatments. What has happened is CAMs have rushed in to fill the real needs of patients, and if their approach is not as scientifically "valid" as that of mainstream medicine, in many cases it doesn't matter, since the body itself is really the healer. What often matters most is how the patient feels during treatment. The "best" alternatives that Dr. Pelletier presents include, in addition to those mentioned above, "MindBody," "Western Herbal Medicine," "Naturopathy," and "Spirituality." He has a chapter devoted to each with an introduction to the particular approach, a brief history, and a statement of principles. He follows this with a "What

Works" section, a "What Doesn't Work," and a "What's in the Works" section." Again the text must be read carefully. For example, on page 199 he writes, "Homeopathy's underlying theoretical principles appear to contravene the principles of modern scientific medicine...However...the principle of like cures like was the basis for the development of vaccines and allergy desensitization treatments. This analogy, though, is not really accurate..." etc., leaving the reader in a position of clear uncertainty! What is not uncertain is that some conventional doctors are becoming better educated and are reaching out into the fields of alternative medicine for ideas on how to improve their practice. But not all. Some are still the willing dupes of medical insurance companies; indeed there are mainstream doctors whose primary source of income is derived from making diagnoses that please HMOs and protect them from patients with chronic illnesses. The growth of alternative approaches may have the effect of forcing the practitioners of conventional medicine to become more responsive to the public welfare. At least one hopes so. This book should help.

Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Arizona School of Medicine and at the University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco (UCSF). He has also written the books *A Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer* and *A Sound Mind, Sound Body: A New Model For Lifelong Health*. He wrote in the first chapter of this 2000 book, "What is needed in the ongoing debate over complementary and alternative medicine are more constructive yet critical voices ... This book is intended to build such an evidence-based foundation." Here are some quotations from the book: "Currently, the United States, and much of the rest of the world, is experiencing an epidemic of chronic and degenerative illnesses... Very often, these illnesses are the result of obvious, common lifestyle risks, such as smoking, overeating, or being too sedentary. Frequently, such illnesses can be prevented, arrested or even reversed..." (Pg. 32) "Another major element in both research and clinical practice is the placebo effect... Placebo effects often obscure the true efficacy of a treatment. It is generally believed that about 35 percent of patients experience the placebo effect." (Pg. 52) "However, naturopathic practice does have its limitations. Naturopaths acknowledge that conventional medicine excels in the treatment of acute trauma, childbirth emergencies, treating broken bones, performing corrective surgery, and treating acute, life-threatening illnesses. Nevertheless, naturopaths can provide excellent supportive treatment for all these conditions." (Pg. 183) "Most frequent users of (Complementary and Alternative Medicine/CAM) are also individuals who tend to require less medical care than average. This decreased need for care is very financially important to HMOs... This financial incentive to attract CAM users into managed care is a powerfully positive force supporting CAM." (Pg. 276)

This excellent book is written in three parts. Part I is a thoughtful introduction to complementary and alternative medicine (or "CAM"). It looks at the history of medicines, acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, homeopathy, chiropractic, and much, much more. Part II is an examination of the complementary and alternative treatments for many illnesses and ailments including: Aids, allergies, high blood pressure, and much more. I just can't say enough about this book. It has a wealth of information, both general and specific, and it is very easy to read. If you are interested in alternative medicine, then you must get this book. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

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