
Book Review

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Clinicians' and Educators' Desk Reference on the Licensed Complementary and Alternative Healthcare Professions

Developed by Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care

In light of the recent controversy of Physical Therapists appropriating acupuncture into their scope of practice, it is evident that the notion of integrative medicine needs to be grounded in clear terms. Patients, healthcare practitioners, healthcare institutions, and legislative bodies need a reference to know who has been trained in what and to what degree. The newly published ***Clinicians' and Educators' Desk Reference on the Licensed Complementary and Alternative Healthcare Professions*** details the training and scope of practice of the licensed complementary and alternative healthcare professions.

There is no doubt that the last decade has seen a growing interest in collaborative and integrative medicine that has been fueled largely by patient demand. Though adversarial rhetoric from the last century between conventional and complementary medicine advocates still lingers, there is an increasing emphasis on collaboration. Collaboration is most possible when it is based on understanding. Likewise, integration (real and appropriate integration) is fostered when the education, skills, and credentials of the alternative/complementary practitioner are known and valued. ***Clinicians' and Educators' Desk Reference on the Licensed Complementary and Alternative Healthcare Professions*** is a concise, well-articulated and reliable reference that serves as a



landmark step in fostering collaboration and understanding between healthcare professions.

The aim of the Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care (ACCAHC) in publishing the ***Clinicians' and Educators' Desk Reference on the Licensed Complementary and Alternative Healthcare Professions*** is to provide a reliable source that documents and describes the major complementary healthcare professions with the end goal of ameliorating patient care. This endeavor is fulfilled by following an accessible format with concise and well-documented content written by prominent experts from each of the disciplines. This excellent desk reference should be made available to healthcare professionals, institutions, schools, educators, students, libraries and patients.

The five licensed complementary and alternative healthcare professions detailed by individual chapters are: Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine; Chiropractic; Massage Therapy; Direct-Entry Midwifery; and Naturopathic Medicine. Within each chapter the professions are further delineated by the following sub-sections: Philosophy, Mission, Goals; Characteristics and Data; Clinical Care (approach to patient care, scope of practice, referral practices, third party payers);

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Integration Activities; Education (schools and programs, curriculum content, faculty and other training information, accreditation); Regulation and Certification (regulatory status, examinations and certifications); Research; Challenges and Opportunities; and Resources. This is followed by a set of appendices adhering to the same format as above to describe the related integrative practice fields of Ayurvedic Medicine, Holistic Medicine, Holistic Nursing, Homeopathy, Integrative Medicine and Yoga Therapy.

Of special note are the first two sections of the book, which consists of two introductory chapters written by ACCAHC members John Weeks, Elizabeth Goldblatt and

others. The first section, *Introduction: An Endpoint and a Beginning*, describes the need for creating a platform to advance collaboration via sound information and documentation. Further, the organization of the book is detailed in this section. Fundamentally, it describes the partnership with national organizations to author chapters on the professions and the template and review process of the chapters.

The second section, *Toward Collaboration between the Disciplines: An ACCAHC Perspective*, is in my opinion the most compelling. It offers a survey of collaborative efforts of the past thirty years. The most fruitful are those promoted by educators to instill understanding in their

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students of the skills and depth of knowledge of other disciplines. The least fruitful collaborative efforts described are the adaptations of CAM therapies by conventional medicine practitioners without referral to or collaboration with CAM practitioners. Section two also contains tables and sidebars to engage the reader and allow pertinent information to be highlighted visually. From my point of view, the table which emphasizes the need for a reference book such as this is entitled "Bilateral Prejudice as an Operational Issue Limiting the Integration of Complementary and Conventional Health Care." This table visually demonstrates the need to provide a higher level of understanding of the CAM disciplines.

The practical benefits of this reference are multiple. First and foremost I believe that it serves as an educational tool to clearly define each of the disciplines in qualitative and quantitative terms. This is fundamental from the perspective of different constituents. The school or health-care institution may use this as a reference tool to define for their students or patients who is who in the world of complementary and alternative healthcare. For the conventional medicine practitioner, it may serve to clarify misperceptions regarding the hours of training, regulation, certification, scope of practice, etc. of their CAM colleagues. For the patient it may be a resource to help determine which field(s) of medicine would best address their healthcare concerns.

Acknowledging this reference as an educational tool further underscores its value as a referral source. Conventional as well as complementary and alternative medicine practitioners may reference this book to determine which modality would best serve the patient and make appropriate referrals based on that determination. This is the basis of collaboration in healthcare- providing education on the various healthcare professions and

making appropriate referrals to best serve the patient and increase the quality of care.

In a similar manner, *authentic* integration of conventional and CAM practices is more likely when all parties are aware of and respect the education, training, licensing procedures and scope of practice of each profession. Currently, Physical Therapists are usurping acupuncture into their practice, but there have been similar infringements amongst the various healthcare professions in the past. It is my hope that popularizing a reference book such as this will serve to decrease like violations and increase the desire for authentic integration amongst the healthcare professions.

In summary, the ***Clinicians' and Educators' Desk Reference on the Licensed Complementary and Alternative Healthcare Professions*** is a concise and reliable reference book that details essential information on the major licensed complementary and alternative healthcare professions. It is an appropriate recommendation for the individual healthcare consumer, practitioner, or institution. In its clarity and accessibility it serves as a cross-disciplinary platform to increase collaboration among healthcare professions with the goal of increasing the quality of patient care.

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