

# What Is Holistic Medicine?

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## DEFINITION OF HOLISTIC MEDICINE

There are a number of terms used to describe holistic medicine. They have similar meanings, but some subtle differences.

- Holistic medicine treats the body as a whole, using whole herbs, complete supplements rather than single chemical sources, etc.
- Natural medicine does not use artificial chemicals; rather, it uses natural methods such as acupuncture, massage, herbs, and nutritional supplements.
- Integrative medicine uses a combination of the best of conventional and holistic medicine.
- Alternative medicine uses nonconventional but valid methods, including such ancient methods as Ayurvedic medicine and traditional Chinese medicine.

Holistic medicine is also called *natural medicine*, *complementary medicine*, *integrative medicine*, and *alternative medicine*. There is currently no single accepted name for the concept. Each of these labels indicates a separate aspect of the idea of non-mainstream medicine. In addition, treatments that were originally considered alternative are now becoming part of mainstream medi-

cine. This shift makes the term *alternative* less useful than some would think. *Complementary* or *integrative* medicine indicates the way that many holistic veterinarians practice this type of medicine: they rely on certain aspects of conventional medicine in their practice and use less conventional means for other aspects. In addition, mainstream veterinarians who adopt a formerly alternative treatment have integrated this into their practice. Many veterinarians prefer this terminology.

The term *holistic* medicine reflects the idea that we need to look at a person or pet as a whole (body, mind, and spirit) and at healing methods as a whole (whole herbs, herbs plus acupuncture, methods that treat body/mind/spirit, etc.). Conventional medicine, especially as it is taught or presented in textbooks, tends to look at a single disease with a single treatment method. When multiple diseases occur simultaneously, treatment compromises are necessary, and the best treatment for one disease may not be the best for others. For example, treating elderly animals often results in a compromise: they may have kidney disease, which would indicate the ideal diet should be low protein, but also have cancer, for which a moderately low-carbohydrate diet is preferred. If an elderly animal is thin enough, with a poor appetite, often the general advice is to feed it whatever it will eat because weight loss for these animals is the most immediate threat.

The idea of reducing the problem to a single diagnosis of a single disease that has an ideal treatment, also known as the *atomic* or *reductionist* approach, seeks to reduce a problem to its smallest part and to fix that part. This is a powerful approach when only one thing is wrong or only one problem is life-threatening. Holism begins with all the individual problems and tries to see a pattern, believing that the whole picture is greater than the sum of its parts.

A tenet of holism is that the absence of a specific diagnosed disease does not necessarily mean that a body is healthy. (This is why people who just don't feel well, but have normal lab tests, are usually not helped by conventional medicine but are often helped by the holistic approach.) This approach looks at the animal, the health problems it may have, mental aspects such as anxiety or aggression, the owner, the type of food being fed and any undesirable ingredients in that food, and the environment in which the animal is kept before recommending a treatment. Instead of a drug that has a single ingredient, herbs that contain a specific ingredient plus all its supporting factors may be preferred—or multiple antioxidants instead of one single vitamin, or a Chinese herbal formula with many herbs, etc. Even a single herb has many healing components that are synergistic rather than one single component that primarily treats one problem, and the herb can have a greater range of beneficial effects. Humans and animals originally evolved along with the plants they ate or used and may respond better to them than to a drug.

## HISTORY OF HOLISTIC MEDICINE

- Some types of holistic medicine date back thousands of years.
- Ayurvedic medicine is from India, dating from before 1600 BC.
- Chinese herbal medicine is more than 2000 years old.
- Kampo (Japanese herbal medicine) began in 562 AD.
- Homeopathy began in Germany in the late 1700s.
- Chiropractic and osteopathy are more recent but developed to address problems that conventional medicine does not address.

Much of what we think of as holistic medicine was at one time considered conventional medicine. Ayurvedic medicine has been described in the *Rig Veda*, compiled before 1600 BC. Written descriptions of Chinese herbal medicine and moxibustion date back over 2,000 years (*Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing*). Kampo (Japanese herbal medicine and acupuncture) began in 562 AD when Chinese medical texts were brought to Japan. Homeopathy was developed in the late 1700s at a time when conventional medicine treated disease by bleeding, purging, and other unpleasant methods. Homeopathic hospitals were common in the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and some evolved into present-day hospitals.

Other methods, such as chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation, have developed more recently as ways to help health problems that are not fully addressed by conventional medicine.

W. K. Kellogg invented cornflakes as a nutritious way to start the day at his health spa in the early 1900s. He emphasized the need for exercise as well as proper nutrition to help people recover (Kellogg Co., 2010). This idea was revolutionary in its time and is an example of a holistic way of looking at things that resonated with the populace and improved their health, without being a part of general medical practice.

## HOLISTIC AND CONVENTIONAL TREATMENTS

The holistic practitioner may use treatments that are not as well documented by scientific literature as conventional treatments but that have had hundreds or thousands of years of use behind them. Holistic practitioners may consult respected sources that may be 2000 years old. Conventional veterinarians look at modern published sources and place special confidence in double-blind studies. Holistic practitioners and holistic clients are more likely to look at the body-mind connection and to delve into areas such as hospice care for pets, pet-owner interactions and their effect on pet health, and the whole process of death, dying, and grieving, although this is now a growing field in conventional veterinary medicine as well.

**Table 1.1** Comparing and contrasting holistic and conventional practitioners.

<b>Holistic Practitioners</b>	<b>Conventional Practitioners</b>
Holistic practitioners may consult sources that are hundreds or thousands of years old.	Conventional treatments are mostly those that have been recently discovered or that may be only a few decades old
Holistic practitioners look at the human-animal bond and mind-body connection as part of their diagnosis and treatment.	Conventional practitioners tend to look at the human-animal bond as one of many behavioral diagnoses, with specific treatment depending on the problem.
Holistic practitioners are greatly concerned about side effects of conventional medicine.	Conventional practitioners are greatly concerned about the smaller amount of research done for holistic methods.
Holistic practitioners worry about quality control and contamination of pet foods.	Conventional practitioners are concerned about quality control and contamination of holistic remedies.

Another aspect that troubles holistic practitioners is the number of side effects or adverse effects of conventional medicine. A 2004 study showed that 1.2 million hospitalized patients experienced an adverse drug reaction. 90% of these reactions were to drugs that were properly administered (AHRQ Agency, 2007). Conventional medicine may not be safe or very effective for chronic conditions. Although there can be side effects from holistic methods, when used correctly, these effects are generally much less serious than those from conventional medicine. For example, consider drugs commonly used for arthritis in veterinary medicine. NSAIDs commonly have deleterious effects on the gastrointestinal tract, liver, and/or kidneys (FDA, 2006). These side effects are not always reversible, especially any renal damage that may occur. Veterinarians are cautioned to perform laboratory tests regularly when treating animals with these drugs. Corticosteroids such as prednisone can cause long-term muscle wasting, weight gain, liver dysfunction, polydipsia, and polyuria (FDA, 1991). In contrast, side effects from acupuncture or homeopathy used for arthritis are extremely rare (Weidenhammer, 2007). Massage therapy also has few adverse effects but has almost immediate benefits. Side effects of herbs used for arthritis, when used as trained herbalists recommend, are few, milder than effects of COX-2 inhibitors, and generally reversible (Setty and Sigal, 2005).

Conventional practitioners, in turn, are concerned about the lack of research available for a number of holistic methods. Quality control has been of concern in the past, but by using companies that control both quality and contamination it is much less of a problem than in the past.

The term *evidence-based medicine* (EBM) is often used as the gold standard for judging treatment methods. It is usually interpreted strictly as referring to

only research-supported methods and does not recognize the value of methods that have been used for so long that research has never been done. For example, the use of fluids to help pets with renal dysfunction feel better is widely used but is not supported by research. Giving subcutaneous fluids is recommended for kidney failure, especially for stages 3 and 4 (Polzin, 2004). There are good theoretical reasons for doing so. Yet, there are no research studies published for either benefits or risks of giving subcutaneous fluids for renal failure, and the evidence supporting its use is grade 3. Yet for those who have seen fluids used, it is clear that it helps these pets feel better.

A good definition of EBM is rather “the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values” (Sackett et al., 2000). Roudebush and colleagues (2004) believe that for veterinary clinical nutrition, the best clinical decisions are made when clinical expertise, research evidence, and owner/patient preferences overlap. This model is also valid for the practice of complementary and alternative veterinary medicine.

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS VERSUS HUMAN HOLISTIC PRACTITIONERS

- Pet owners will turn to holistic practitioners for humans if they can't find a veterinarian who treats animals holistically.
- Just as medical doctors are not qualified to practice on pets, most holistic practitioners for humans are not qualified to practice on pets.

If no holistic veterinarian is available, owners will often turn to those who practice on humans. Conscientious practitioners will seek training or at least an understanding of animals before they treat them, or they will associate with a veterinary practice so they have the input of a veterinarian. Alternatively, practitioners will tell owners they have not studied animals and refer owners elsewhere. This is important because animals' anatomy and physiology are different from those of humans. This is especially true for cats: they lack the main liver enzyme used by humans and dogs to process various substances, thus drugs and herbs that create no problems or that are only mildly toxic for a dog can be deadly for a cat. If a practitioner gains a client's trust, it may save an animal's life. (See the box Misinformation from a Chiropractor.)

### MISINFORMATION FROM A CHIROPRACTOR

I once saw a cat that repeatedly suffered from levamisole poisoning. The owners, on the advice of their chiropractor, had been giving the equivalent of

*(Continued)*

a sheep's dose of levamisole weekly. They were trying to get rid of the parasites that the chiropractor diagnosed and that he told them needed to be treated for a month. As a result, the cat kept ending up in the emergency hospital with liver disease, to the mystification of the treating veterinarian. The owners never told their veterinarian that they were giving their cat levamisole because their veterinarian was skeptical about all holistic treatments. They did tell me because I was willing to talk about anything and everything holistic. I educated them about levamisole poisoning, the difference between cats and sheep, the susceptibility of cats to poisoning by almost anything, the superior ability of veterinarians versus chiropractors to detect parasites, and the necessity to discuss with their veterinarian, or a holistic veterinarian, any treatment not recommended by a veterinarian. I also let their veterinarian know what was going on.

Practitioners should do what they are trained to do. Those trained for humans should not practice on animals without further training.

## USE OF HOLISTIC MEDICINE IN HUMAN PATIENTS

- One out of four human hospitals in the United States offered some type of complementary or alternative medicine services in 2006.
- Many pet owners use holistic medicine for themselves and their pets, but they often do not tell their veterinarian.
- Some interactions of holistic methods and conventional methods are possible, especially when clients use them without consulting a veterinarian.
- Veterinarians need to know *everything* a pet is taking because of possible interactions.
- Holistic methods may look or sound strange unless the practitioner understands the background behind them.

In human medicine, musculoskeletal problems are the focus of much of complementary medicine. In 2007, 37% of hospitals surveyed stated that they offered complementary/alternative medicine services. Massage therapy, acupuncture, and relaxation therapy were the most popular outpatient therapies; the top three inpatient therapies were pet therapy, massage therapy, and music/art therapy. The top three reasons for offering these services were patient demand, clinical effectiveness, and organizational mission (Ananth, 2009).

These alternative methods were well received by patients despite the fact that few insurance carriers cover complementary medicine, which results in patients paying for these services out-of-pocket.

More than three-fourths of adolescents interviewed had already used some form of complementary or alternative medicine in their life (Wilson, 2006). Veterinarians may be unaware that their clients use complementary medicine themselves and may already be using it for their pets. Interactions between some holistic treatments and conventional medicine are possible, however. If owners are not asked what alternative medicine therapies they are using for their pets, they will usually not volunteer the information to the practitioner, which may cause problems in treatment of a patient.

#### MISSING INFORMATION FROM A CLIENT

A dog was referred to me that had problems with both oxalate stones and struvite stones. A diet for one type of stone increased the possibility that the dog would get the other type, and this patient had already had surgery twice: once for oxalate stones and once for struvite stones. I was the first veterinarian who had asked the owners about any supplements or herbs they might be giving. The dog was on three calcium supplements in addition to the calcium he was receiving in his food. When the supplements were stopped, the stone problem went away.

Methods used by holistic veterinarians may seem strange, especially when judged by conventional medicine. Acupuncture looked like some sort of voodoo until Westerners saw what it did for people in China. Chinese herbs don't look anything like what most Westerners think of as herbs. Homeopathy does not make sense to many people. Veterinarians who don't see evidence of arthritis on a radiograph usually ignore the possibility of trigger points, muscle spasm, and decreased range of motion as a contributor to lameness. Bad behavior may be attributed to anxiety, stubbornness, or willfulness when it actually is caused by pain that is not easily elicited or detected by conventional means.

#### LAY (UNLICENSED) PRACTITIONERS

- Some unlicensed practitioners are very talented and can be very helpful.
- Others do not have sound knowledge or are not familiar with the differences between animals and humans and thus can harm pets.

Lay practitioners can be both a help and a hindrance to the practice of veterinary medicine. This field covers a wide variety of talents and treatments for pets. Some, such as Linda Tellington-Jones (See TTouch in Chapter 6),

have great talent, have studied their field carefully, and have evolved valid systems of treatment that can give amazing results. Others may use substances or amounts of substances that are toxic to animals. State boards of veterinary medicine are often overworked, underfunded, and understaffed, and usually focus on veterinarians rather than untrained lay practitioners who may do more harm.

#### POOR ADVICE FROM A LAY PRACTITIONER

Years ago in Southern California, there was a person who called herself an “herbalist” and advertised in the veterinary practice section of the yellow pages. She told her clients never to consult a veterinarian, not even holistic ones. One of her victims was brought to me for a second opinion. The practitioner had recommended an “herbal detox” for an ancient mixed-breed dog who developed severe diarrhea and dehydration. The owners had asked for a change in treatment, and the practitioner refused, saying the dog was just detoxing and they needed to let it run its course. Fortunately, the owners could see that the dog was deteriorating rapidly and ignored her opinion. Some of the herbs were toxic, so I stopped her formula, rehydrated the dog, substituted herbs that were actually beneficial, and the dog rapidly recovered. When I reported the so-called herbalist to the state board, their response was to send the person a letter telling her to stop advertising in the veterinary section of the yellow pages.

On the flip side are those who may do unusual things that you may not believe in but that are harmless and may actually give you or your veterinarian some insight. Those who practice “animal communication” (and who do it well) may provide some amazing insights that can help point treatment in a new direction. Always be willing to listen to pet owners who have contacted a good communicator. Often, a communicator’s reading agrees with what is being done (without having any contact with a practitioner beforehand), and sometimes it can give a veterinarian an idea that helps with the treatment. At the very least, it encourages the client to tell a practitioner everything possible that might have a bearing on the pet’s problems.

#### INTEGRATION WITH CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

- There are times when holistic medicine works best and other times when conventional medicine works best.
- Conventional medicine has many useful diagnostic techniques unknown to ancient practitioners.

- Surgery can be life-saving.
- In emergency situations, conventional medicine works quickly and saves lives.
- Holistic methods work well for chronic disease.
- Holistic methods are ideal for whole-body support.
- Holistic practitioners can be useful as part of the veterinary holistic community.

Conventional and holistic medicine integrate well. Conventional medicine works best for most types of diagnosis. Also, there are many problems for which surgery is the only answer. For instance, currently there are no satisfactory substitutes for surgery in the sterilization of an animal. In an emergency or for immediate results, conventional medicine saves lives.

Although it is possible for holistic medicine to have rapid results, more often it takes longer for it to demonstrate its full effect. Holistic treatment also creates long-term results. Holistic medicine is ideal for chronic disease, musculoskeletal problems, and for general, whole body support.

If a practice becomes known to other practitioners as one that does a good job holistically, achieving results that conventional medicine cannot and giving good advice without criticizing conventional practitioners, then those practitioners will begin to refer people to that practice for questions about herbs or other alternative treatments. Conventional medicine practitioners will no longer tell people to quit taking herbs, that large doses of vitamins are dangerous, and that complementary medicine is quackery. This is the best kind of integration.

## RESEARCH

- Research in holistic veterinary medicine is difficult.
- Research funding is difficult to get. For some methods, there may be no good placebo to use as a comparison.
- Holistic methods work best where combinations of factors are used; research usually tries to isolate single factors, which ends in poor results for these modalities.
- Some holistic methods are highly individualized thus there is no good way to quantify a single treatment for a single disease for research purposes.
- Meta-analyses may not be valid for some holistic methods. Much of conventional medicine is not validated by the gold-standard double-blind research study.
- Well-written case studies may be the best way to show the validity of holistic medicine.

Research in holistic veterinary medicine is complicated by a number of factors. First, it is difficult to get funding for many facets of holistic medicine because such medicines use cheap, easily available ingredients. When vitamins or amino acids can be substituted for a currently patented drug, drug companies are less willing to fund this research.

Second, for some therapies it is difficult to properly devise a procedure using a placebo. For instance, “sham” acupuncture, where practitioners are directed to insert a needle into a randomly selected area of a body, may not be truly sham. There are hundreds of acupuncture points on the body. An experienced acupuncturist can find a point without using anatomical charts or point finders and can feel the point on the body without knowing or memorizing every single point. It is possible that an acupuncturist might subconsciously choose an acupuncture point if it is close to the sham point. In addition, some points come and go (especially Ah Shi points). A point that is a sham point for some may be a real point for others.

Reiki is another instance in which a placebo study would be nearly impossible. Reiki involves either touching a body with certain patterns of the hands or positioning the hands just above the body. Because the placement of the hands on the body is imperative for this modality, no other location could be used for the placebo.

Third, Western research tends to try to isolate one single item as *the* cause of a disease or a patient’s improvement. Holistic medicine recognizes an interplay of factors as the cause of disease. It also emphasizes the use of complex factors for treatment: whole herbs not herb extracts, Chinese herbal formulas rather than single herbs, combinations of antioxidants rather than single antioxidants, etc. Some of this is validated in research (although it may be difficult to locate it) (Institute of Functional Medicine, 2008). For example, when vitamin E acts as an antioxidant, it is changed into a pro-oxidant form. Vitamin C is required to convert it back to an antioxidant. If large amounts of vitamin E are used alone in a cancer patient, the final result is an increase in pro-oxidants. This causes an acceleration of the disease and decreased survival time. If megadoses of both E and C are given at the same time, then often improved survival times are seen. Beta carotene, used as the sole high-dose antioxidant, will result in a higher incidence of three types of lung cancer and worsening of the disease. Carotenoids, used as a group or in whole foods, can improve cancer survival times. In addition, the action of an item in the body can be very different from that of the same item in an *in vitro* study. (All antioxidants will make cancer cells grow faster in tissue culture. However, *in vivo*, the beneficial effect on normal cells is greater than the effect on cancer cells.)

This last factor also confounds meta-analyses. If you combine all research articles on the effect of vitamin E on cancer, you may find the result says there is little to no effect, since the pure-E studies will cancel out the E-with-C studies

and in vitro studies will cancel out in vivo studies. A careful selection of studies with specific criteria (such as in vivo only, in combinations only, always the same dose, used alone only) will generate the proper conclusion without selecting only the best cases.

Many holistic practices are used because large numbers of holistic veterinarians find them useful and valid, even without double-blind studies. These practitioners are criticized by mainstream veterinarians for doing so. However these conventional medicine veterinarians do the same thing. The earlier discussion about subcutaneous fluids is one example.

The best published articles for holistic medicine may well be in the form of rigorous case studies, conforming to specific criteria recognized as valid by the general scientific community. Unfortunately, the general public usually sees only the “testimonials,” and even herb, pet food, and supplement companies often do not understand the difference. Without realizing it, licensed veterinarians may rely on one or two poorly designed studies for the off-label use of pharmaceuticals. It can take years before someone publishes a study demonstrating that these off-label uses are not effective.

The *Journal of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association* (AHVMA) has published case studies in veterinary holistic medicine for years. The *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* published an article in November 2009, on evidence-based medicine and the need for just such articles (Holmes, 2009). Veterinary technicians and nurses can help veterinarians by keeping careful records and gathering information for publication of such studies. Such published studies will go far to advance the cause of holistic medicine and to help conventional veterinarians improve their practices. Submission of case studies to the *AHVMA Journal* is a great way to share this information and to create a body of evidence for those who say there is no proof.

## TELLING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REAL AND FAKE

- You can't judge whether a modality is real by its terminology.
- Modalities can be judged by other criteria:
  - Can you verify or falsify its claim (for example, by laboratory tests)?
  - Can you relate its vocabulary or explanations to something else that is valid?
  - Is there actual proof (not testimonials) that the patient really got better?
  - Is there anything about the method that shows promise (whether or not the main method works as claimed)?

Because some explanations, such as traditional Chinese medicine theory, are so different from what we learn about the causes and treatments of disease

in conventional medicine and because some names sound so different from the names we are used to, it is easy to get caught up in the terms and forget to look at the results of a treatment. There are several items we can look at to determine whether a holistic treatment is worthwhile.

First, are practitioners of a modality making a claim that we can verify (or disprove)? There is one theory about cancer that says that all cancer is caused by immature flukes. All we have to do is kill all the flukes in our body, and we will cure all cancer. There is one big problem with this theory: immature flukes are easy to see. They are multicellular organisms and thus are much bigger than single cancer cells. When a pathologist sections a small tumor, he or she may look at every section of the tumor. Looking at medical literature, lab reports, and veterinary textbooks published over the past 40 years, there has never been any report from a board-certified pathologist that noted the presence of any immature fluke in any tumor.

In contrast, there is the theory that low levels of iodine can cause or contribute to breast cancer. You need three items to check this theory: a test to check for low levels of iodine, a survey to see if people with breast cancer have lower levels of iodine than those without cancer, and cases of breast cancer that improved after they were given iodine.

There is a test to check for low levels of iodine: Measure the amount of iodine in the urine for 24 hours. Swallow a big dose of iodine. Measure the iodine in the urine again. If you have enough iodine, you will urinate out the excess. If you don't have enough, you will absorb the iodine and very little will come out. After you have absorbed enough, iodine will start coming through into your urine. This test exists and has been validated (Abraham et al., 2006).

There are two ways to see if breast cancer victims have low levels of iodine: do the test above, and measure the amount of iodine in the cancerous breast tissue. Both tests have been done. Both showed that these people have lower than average amounts of iodine in their body (Eskin, 1977).

The only way to know for sure if the rest of the theory is true is for doctors to perform the tests, give iodine to their patients, and publish the results in medical journals. This has been done, and the patients have improved (Derry, 2006). (This can be the hardest thing to convince a holistic veterinarian to do.) So it sounds crazy, but all the tests point to iodine as a good way to treat breast cancer in humans, and perhaps in dogs.

Second, if the explanation sounds crazy, can you relate it to anything else? A person in Southern California has a background in electrical engineering, but years ago found he was able to help people improve their health. When he speaks of this, he talks in terms of grounding a part of their bodies and sending electrical energy to organs, which sounds crazy when you hear it. However, the places where he presses to "ground" them are places that are also called acupuncture points, and the way he "sends energy" is by performing a maneuver that releases trigger points. He had figured all this out himself.

Others have to study books and attend classes and read research to accomplish the same thing.

Third, is there proof that the patient really got better? Did the cancer disappear (and are there radiographs or pictures to prove it)? Did the infection go away (and are there cultures to prove it)? Did the paralyzed patient start walking? Did the patient stop trying to chew his foot off? One of the problems with “proofs” of cancer therapies working in humans is the lack of before and after data. Another problem is that there is not a long enough follow-up period for patients. Just feeling better is not enough. In addition, up to 30% of improvement using some verified cancer treatments can be from the placebo effect (Beecher, 1955). (The mind is a powerful influence over cancer.) So if a treatment works for 30% of human cancer patients, you may be seeing the placebo effect.

Because an animal’s lifespan is much shorter than that of a human, it is easier to follow a case until the end of the pet’s life. The biggest key here is good recordkeeping.

Finally, is there anything that shows promise, even if the claim itself is invalid? Rife’s beam ray sounds crazy, looks crazy, and, in its current form, the equipment has not cured any cancer (or at least, no verifiable medical report has been published saying so). However, it has been known to instantly stop the pain of bone cancer. There is no other treatment that acts this rapidly, without side effects. Instead of believing the Rife treatment is worthless, we should be trying to understand how it stops cancer pain.

## CONCLUSION

Holistic medicine is increasingly used by pet owners, both for themselves and their pets. In most cases, side effects are milder and less frequent than those for conventional medicine. This holistic medicine treats the whole body, not just one aspect of it. It is probably used by more clients than a practitioner is aware of, and if a practitioner doesn’t bring up the subject, he or she won’t know. Knowledge of at least the basics of holistic medicine can help with client communication, with the effectiveness of conventional treatment, and to avoid interaction with any drugs that a pet may be given. An open mind might lead a practitioner to new ways of helping patients.

## SUMMARY

What can a technician do?

1. Familiarize yourself with the types of holistic medicine your veterinarian practices.

2. Know what a technician can do and what can be done only by a veterinarian.
3. Know the reputable practitioners (both veterinarians and lay practitioners) in the area to whom your veterinarian refers clients and have their addresses and phone numbers on hand.
4. Be able to help clients determine whether an item or practice is legitimate.
5. Be able to explain why your veterinarian uses some conventional methods, such as x-rays, surgery, and lab tests.

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