

Chinese Medicine: A Model for Wellness & Balance

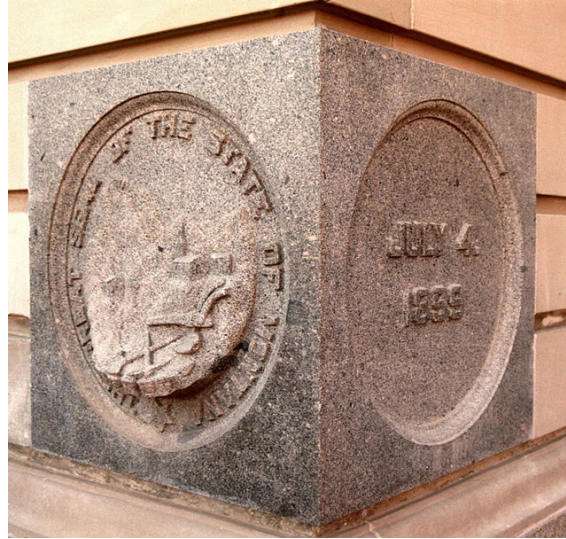
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Health and Wellness programs, that is programs which emphasize getting employees healthy and keeping them healthy, are the primary way by which organizations can keep down their health care costs . Research has shown that 70% of health problems are caused by lifestyle mismanagement . Research into health care cost accounting indicates that for every \$1.00 invested in keeping people healthy three to \$5.00 is saved .

In this short presentation you will see how Chinese medicine is extremely popular with users and offers advocates of corporate wellness an excellent model for success.

Corporate wellness is problematic and requires a solid cornerstone



Corporate wellness is a relatively new concept in Hong Kong. To make it work, we need all the examples we can get. Fortunately we have an excellent example already imbedded in the culture of Hong Kong, and that is Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine is based on the development and integration of physical, mental, and spiritual health and thus contains all the components of corporate wellness.

As will see in the next few minutes, in the United States, Chinese medicine is perceived not as an exotic foreign import but as hands-on, patient-centered holistic medical care. Chinese medicine has been extremely successful in the practice of wellness.

The material presented here may provide HR professionals and business strategists with a blueprint to help their teams make better lifestyle choices, and thereby reduce corporate healthcare costs and increase productivity, retention and morale.

Strategists need solid data for successful decision-making



The first step in determining how to create a wellness program is finding out what employees want.

Next is the necessity for senior level management to understand the principles and practice of wellness management. Following that, to have an operating plan and a supportive environment in which to conduct these programs. Finally there needs to be a mechanism for evaluating outcomes. We'll look briefly at Chinese medicine as an example of the fulfillment of these requirements.

Workplace fitness, productivity and morale are far short of excellent



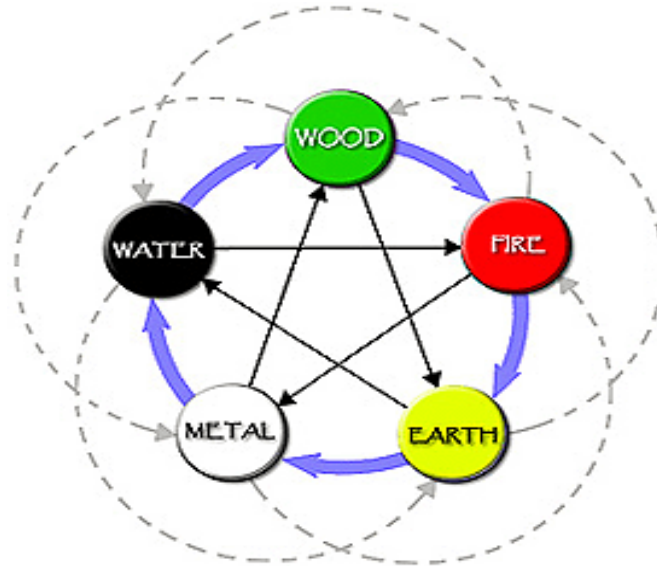
In a competitive environment, companies which do well out-think and out-perform their competitors. To do so they need fit, productive and engaged management and employees. What one company has done others can do and no matter how well any particular company is doing it can always do a whole lot better.

A healthy, productive work force is both desirable and within reach



There are numerous examples of companies who have corporate wellness as a cornerstone of their strategy and therefore have a happier, healthier employees. The benefits of reduced healthcare costs and increased morale have been amply demonstrated.

Chinese medicine is a compelling model for wellness



What you'll see in the next few minutes will demonstrate that Chinese medicine is a compelling model for wellness.

It's a compelling model not because Chinese medicine practitioners say so, but because patients say so!

Users of Chinese medicine are sophisticated medical consumers



I am referencing work by Claire M. Cassidy, Ph.D., in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine Vol.4 number one 1998 entitled "Chinese Medicine Users in United States: Utilization, Satisfaction and Medical Plurality". This study and other work which Dr. Cassidy has produced made such an impression on me that I contacted her and we have been sharing information for several years.

The survey reported here is the first in-depth and large-scale survey of Chinese medicine users in the U.S. As such it is exploratory and provides an initial database. It also provides insights into the rising popularity of Chinese medicine in the West.

The demographic pattern of consumers of Chinese medicine is one of middle-class, educated users in disproportionately entrepreneurial, professional, technical and managerial occupations. These people were willing to try a new form of healthcare (new to United States anyway) and had sufficient income to pay out of pocket for their care.

75% were college graduates and fully a third of the sample had graduate degrees. Income levels were middle to high.

Chinese medicine users sought pain relief, mood care and wellness care



63% of users sought Chinese medical care for musculoskeletal pain and disability.

66% of users of CM sought Chinese medical care for mood care, i.e. to relieve symptoms of stress, anxiety, fatigue and depression.

40% of users of CM sought Chinese medical care for immune system building; for example, reducing the frequency and intensity of colds and flu, and for the relief of respiratory problems including asthma and allergies.

Many used CM for all three reasons and often did so at the same time.

Significant proportions also sought help for dependency on prescription drugs including steroids and anti-depressants.

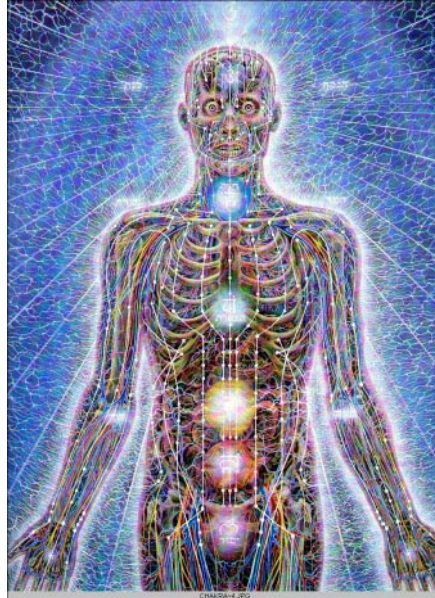
Other forms of healthcare were used by most of the respondents.

Biomedicine was the most used system after Chinese medicine, with medical doctors having been consulted by 54% of the respondents in the three months preceding the survey.

Only 15% of respondents depended on acupuncture alone; most respondents were using multiple systems of care. In fact, the average number of professional medical systems used in addition to Chinese medicine was 2.2.

The respondents indicated that they used medical services selectively. In other words people didn't duplicate services and simply add costs; rather they selected certain offerings. They used Chinese medicine for some things and western medicine for other things.

Users explained that Chinese medicine yielded 5 major benefits



Five themes emerged from the experiences of CM users:

1) Chinese medicine users reported relief of symptoms and improvement of function. Users reported relief of physical pain, relief of emotional pain & decreases in the frequency, intensity and duration of chronic complaints

2) Chinese medicine users reported increases in energy and productivity by improving physiological coping. Users reported increases in energy; a sensation of profound relaxation; reduction of reliance on prescription drugs, reduction of the need for surgery and reduction of frequency of colds

3) Chinese medicine users reported that Chinese medicine improves psycho-social coping or adaptation. Respondents reported increases in self awareness, a sense of balance, wholeness, centeredness and well-being; increases in a sense of self-efficacy. Chinese medicine is deeply empowering to people, many of whom reported that their lives had changed and that their energy levels and their engagement with life were far better than before.

4) The 4th key theme was that Chinese medicine involved a close patient practitioner relationship. Respondents described their relationships with their practitioner as facilitating, using terms like partner, friend, guide and coach.

5) The 5th key theme: Chinese medicine treats the whole person, the body, mind and spirit. Sample comments "I feel the acupuncture treatments are the best and the nicest things I've ever done for myself and for my well being". Another, "I believe that this approach leads to a lifetime of self-care and self-understanding".

Chinese medicine users reported high levels of satisfaction



92% reported that symptoms or conditions for which they had sought treatment had disappeared or improved.

Regarding quality of life: 76% reported that they felt better; 71% stated that they missed fewer workdays; 69% said that they got along better with others; 64% stated that they performed better at work; and 58% said that they were more focused and had more energy as a result of their visits to CMP's.

Respondents reported health care and cost savings while receiving Chinese medicine. 84% said that they were able to reduce office visits to medical doctors. 79% said that they reduced the use of prescription drugs; and 70% said that they were able to avoid surgery which had been recommended for them.

As mentioned, most respondents were using multiple systems of care particularly biomedical care which was used by more than half of the respondents. Respondents were using an average of 3.3 medical and healthcare systems. Psychotherapy, chiropractic and nutritional therapy were commonly used in the prior three months before the study was conducted.

When asked to say what factor made the difference in their health, 75% of those who used Chinese medicine and biomedicine stated that it was definitely or probably Chinese medicine that made the difference.

The stunning news is that consumers overwhelmingly prefer Chinese medicine



When respondents were asked to compare their levels of satisfaction with Chinese medicine and with biomedical care, the results were as follows. Satisfaction level with Chinese medicine care: **extremely satisfied 59%**; very satisfied 29%; satisfied 11%; not satisfied 1%

The figures for biomedical care: **extremely satisfied 13%**; very satisfied 18%; satisfied 36%; not satisfied 23%

The stunning satisfaction level findings for Chinese medicine practitioners: **extremely satisfied with the Chinese medicine practitioner 69%**; very satisfied 22%; satisfied 8%; not satisfied 1%

Satisfaction levels for biomedical practitioners: **extremely satisfied 15%**; very satisfied 28%; satisfied 33%; not satisfied 24%

Degree of satisfaction with Chinese medicine costs of care: **extremely satisfied 43%**; very satisfied 26%; satisfied 25%; not satisfied 5%

Degree of satisfaction with biomedicine cost of care: **extremely satisfied 12%**; very satisfied 14%; satisfied 37%; not satisfied 36%

The solution lies in using the model consumers enthusiastically support



Wellness models that work really need to resonate with consumers. Chinese medicine does. By-in and compliance with healthcare guidelines and “doctor’s orders” are longstanding problems with western medicine. They are not nearly as much of a problem with Chinese Medicine.

When respondents are given free rein to express their own goals for use of a healthcare system, symptom relief is an important issue but mood care and preventive care emerge as equally important.

Respondents stated that key to their enthusiastic support of Chinese medicine was a close relationship with their the Chinese medicine practitioner; learning more about their health and feeling increasingly able to care for themselves and guide their own lives.

Respondents knew very little about the theory of Chinese medicine. Instead their language and experiences indicated familiarity with a holistic model of health care and they experience Chinese medicine as such a model.

Consumers were not looking for an exotic kind of health care but rather for a hands-on patient-centered healthcare which respected their opinions and their participation.

Western biomedicine was generally seen as unfriendly, impersonal, patronizing and condescending.



To conclude, the issues of corporate wellness require the creative integration of conventional biomedical models with holistic models as exemplified by Chinese medicine.

What respondents like and experience with Chinese medicine are collegial relationships with practitioners, hands-on care, a sense of being treated as a whole person, education in the principles and conduct of healthy living and the encouragement of self responsibility.

These findings are important because in the current conversation about reforming health care in Hong Kong the respondents we have just been looking at are already living many of the components of an integrated “world medicine”.

They’re doing this by using a wide variety of health care options and by using an already existing holistic health care system, namely Chinese medicine.

Chinese medicine can serve as a model of not only what holistic healthcare feels like to patients but what it might look like in practice.