

Define holistic health care, and describe the aspects of mind to body relationships...

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In the current environment of escalating cost of healthcare, holistic approach to healthcare has increasingly become popular amongst the Western society. Holistic healthcare can broadly be defined as an approach that not only treats the disease but also takes into account the physical, mental and social aspect of the individuals. Ernst et al., (2004) assert that holistic approach uses alternative healthcare that complements mainstream medicine that considerably diversifies the conceptual framework of traditional healthcare system. The broader perspective helps to promote prevention of diseases and incorporates the cultural belief and non traditional format of treatment that rely on non conventional means of medicines.

The efficacy of holistic healthcare relies on cultural beliefs of healing approaches that have been passed on by the generations. They are intrinsically linked to mind and body and emphasize on the mental and spiritual wellbeing also. Looking at the social aspect of individuals, the socio-cultural and environmental factors become major ingredients that significantly influence their health and general wellbeing. The external factors like stress, workplace tensions, fast food, drugs etc. considerably contribute to diseases like obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, heart diseases etc. These are also diseases that can be controlled through positive relationships that encourage positive attitude, strong willpower and self realization which helps them to cope with changes.

The relationship between mind and body is intricate but interesting and is treated separately as two different entities by Descartes. He believed that body is distinct in its inanimate physicality that can act only at the behest of the mind. It is also known as Cartesian dualism. According to him objects and

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sensation can only be identified and recognized when it is rationalized by mind. It not only 'sees' them but also understands and recognizes other objects because of its inherent ability to represent complex structures rather than relying on sensation and imagination (Descartes, 1901). This is an essential input because it considerably enhances the role of mind over body. Descartes theory of dualism is important element that helps to understand the holistic approach to healthcare. The manifestations of mind are reflected on the body. Alternative medicines therefore take into consideration the mental and spiritual wellbeing also because they recognize the importance of mind. If the individuals' mental frame of mind is influenced towards positive outlook, they would be inclined to develop more rational approach towards conflicts and other negative issues and things. they would also be less inclined to look at the diseases as serious issues but as problems that can be sorted out with diligent care. The positive attitude therefore serves as major paradigm that not only helps individuals to overcome problems but also serves as preventive measure for lifestyle diseases like stress, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart diseases etc. that are mainly due to external factors like tension, worry, fast food etc.

Indeed, medicine would cure headache but rest and de-stressing would also relieve headache, which just confirms that our beliefs and desires are linked to actions which are governed by our minds. One can therefore conclude that understanding the wider ramifications of mind and body relationship, the efficacy of holistic healthcare becomes more real and effective.

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