Holism and Complementary Medicine
Origins and Principles

Vincent Di Stefano

Allen & Unwin, 2006
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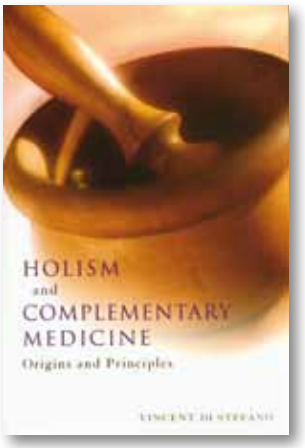

Complementary medicine is rapidly increasing in popularity in the western world. This book by Vincent Di Stefano is very timely. He has qualifications in osteopathy, western herbal medicine, naturopathy and acupuncture, and has been involved in teaching philosophical concepts of healing at university level to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The book is in two parts. The first examines the early origins of medicine in ancient Egypt to the current era from a historical context. There is a systematic review of traditional healing practices, the development of the western biomedical model, and holistic philosophy, which is the basis of complementary medicine in the western world.

The second part reviews complementary medicine from a medical/philosophical perspective and includes chapters on holism and reductionism in medicine, the healing relationship, and therapeutic aims of holistic medicine. The last three chapters compare and contrast biomedicine and complementary medicine. The differences between holistic and conventional biomedical traditions and approaches are examined from a philosophical point of view.

Also explored, are the key practice issues and the role of holistic principles in current medical practice. A substantial number of references are included which are very useful in this vast subject.

A minor criticism of the text is that no mention is made of the pioneering role of medical graduates in Australia in the establishment of integrative medicine. Examples include the first College of Nutritional Medicine, the first National Integrative Medicine Association, and the first Postgraduate Medical School in Integrative Medicine.

Holism and Complementary Medicine is a useful for students, health professionals and for the increasing number of the public who have an interest in the origins, principles and philosophy of natural medicine.

Avni Sali
Hawthorn, Vic