



TRUE WELLNESS

How To Combine the
Best of Western and Eastern Medicine
for Optimal Health

with an easy-to-follow plan to improve your health

Catherine Kurosu, MD, LAc
Aihan Kuhn, CMD, OBT

Forewords by George Rozelle, PhD, and Holly Olson, MD

Discover a path to optimal health, even in a complicated Western health-care system.

"Leads the reader to understand and develop skills that enhance their well-being—now and for a lifetime."

—Joseph M. Helms, MD; president, Helms Medical Institute; author, *Acupuncture Energetics*

"Valuable information for both medical professionals and the lay community . . . sure to become a classic!"

—Gerald J. Leglue Jr., MD, FAAPMR, FAAMA; president, American Academy of Medical Acupuncture

"A great job explaining how people can benefit from utilizing Western and Eastern medicine together to create better health and wellness."

—Robert E. Ford, MD

"The integration of Western and Eastern medical models the authors describe is groundbreaking."

—Dr. Phillip Stephens, author

"Fulfills the promise to understandably combine Western and Eastern medicine. Impressive."

—Michael M. Zanoni, PhD, LAC

"Offers an essential paradigm shift in the world of healthcare."

—Jennie Lee, author, *True Yoga*

True Wellness is a step-by-step guide to optimal health, blending the best of Western and Eastern medical traditions.

The authors have realized the conventional way of managing disease is unsustainable. They recognize that even as the high-tech accomplishments of Western medicine increase, the overall health of the nation continues to decline. In their own practices, however, they have discovered a path to optimal health, even in complicated Western health-care systems.

The secret is combining the strengths of both Western and Eastern medicine to achieve the unique health goals of each patient.

With this book you will

- Discover the strengths and benefits of both Eastern and Western medicine
- Utilize journaling topics, questions, worksheets, checklists, and practical advice to begin new, healthy behaviors
- Learn to create a multidisciplinary care team for a strong alliance between your Western health-care providers and Eastern practitioners

True Wellness encourages individual responsibility and prepares you to take your first step. By combining ancient wisdom, cutting-edge scientific discoveries, and practical advice, this book will lead you through a transformation to true well-being in body, mind, and spirit.



MONICA LAU
PHOTOGRAPHY

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TIMI COMRIE

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Look for subsequent books in the True Wellness series focusing on specific ailments and providing actionable tools you can use to combine the best of Western and Eastern medicine.

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Praise for *True Wellness*

“Finally, a book examining Western and Eastern approaches to medicine in one text. This great book not only dispels the myth that a huge chasm exists between each medical model but explores the concept that they are more similar than anyone has ever been willing to examine or admit.

“The authors discuss the history of both the Western and Eastern practice of medicine. They then do something no one has ever done by documenting the convergence of the two.

“You will never see qi and cell biology discussed in the same text except here. It is a refreshing and eye-opening view. This isn’t a text about choosing between Western and Eastern medicine but integrating both in complementary fashion.

“I teach evidence-based medicine and population health from the Western approach. I’m also a martial artist and author who writes about Eastern principles of thought. Seeing the fusion of these worlds is quite insightful, as it is done in academic fashion, filled with critical thought about the benefits of understanding the symbiosis of these models.

“The integration of Western and Eastern medical models the authors describe is groundbreaking. It should be a part of current medical education. People will be healthier, and medical practitioners will be wiser by reading this book.”

—Dr. Phillip Stephens, author, *Emergency Medicine: The Inside Edge*

“The authors have done a great job explaining how people can benefit from utilizing Western and Eastern medicine together to create better health and wellness. It should be required reading for medical, osteopathy, ARNP, and PA students. The qigong movements are easy to follow and a wonderful introduction to Eastern exercise. I plan on incorporating these principles into my daily practice of medicine.”

—Robert E. Ford, MD, specializes in family medicine (internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, orthopedics, emergency medicine) and personal injury

“Beautifully written book. Full of valuable information for both medical professionals and the lay community. Easy step-by-step instruction on how to achieve your ‘true wellness.’ This book is sure to become a classic!”

—Gerald J. Leglue Jr., MD, FAAPMR, FAAMA, president,
American Academy of Medical Acupuncture

“*True Wellness* offers an essential paradigm shift in the world of health care, encouraging unity across disciplines for both physicians and patients who want to combine the best options for alleviating symptoms and addressing the root cause of disease. It suggests a fundamental accountability that every person must take for their well-being and gives a plan of action to begin. In the increasingly complex world of medicine, Kurosu and Kuhn’s blending of science and humanism is a much-needed illustration of the potential for good when different vantage points work together toward a unified goal.”

—Jennie Lee, author, *True Yoga: Practicing with the Yoga Sutras for Happiness and Spiritual Fulfillment* and *Breathing Love: Meditation in Action*

“Drs. Kurosu and Kuhn are uniquely qualified to blend the art and science of Eastern and Western medicine. They examine the benefits of both disciplines and make persuasive arguments to integrate these two great healing traditions. Thoughtfully presented and articulately written, *True Wellness* leads the reader to understand and develop skills that enhance their well-being—now and for a lifetime.”

—Joseph M. Helms, MD; founding president, American Academy of Medical Acupuncture; president, Helms Medical Institute; author, *Acupuncture Energetics: A Clinical Approach for Physicians* and *Getting to Know You: A Physician Explains How Acupuncture Helps You Be the Best You*

“This book was written by two highly experienced practitioners of health and healing. It fulfills the promise to understandably combine Western and East Asian medicine. The text has just enough Western science to form a balance with the Daoist philosophy that underpins Chinese medicine. This enables the reader to understand how relatively simple steps can be effective in

treating complex health situations. Few authors have taken such a wide-ranging approach that effectively addresses medical care, philosophy, history, and culture. I am impressed.”

—Michael M. Zaroni, PhD, LAc,
diplomate in Oriental medicine (NCCAOM)

“*True Wellness* is a refreshing, well-informed, and well-presented discussion about a holistic approach to health that integrates both Eastern and Western methods. All too often, works of this type are exercises in hyperbole, breathless revelations of esoteric Eastern secrets, a Gospel or Prosperity for the Body that promises magical benefits for the true believer. What Drs. Kurosu and Kuhn present as a welcome antidote is a measured, sober, well-informed, and well-argued volume that provides a pathway toward integrating different approaches to health.

“Particularly for individuals involved with Eastern disciplines like the martial arts or yoga, the personal experience of the benefits of practice suggests that there is something to the mystical claims embedded in the philosophical treatises of the East. Qi or prana appears to be a force we experience fleetingly in our practice: real, yet elusive as smoke. How best to explain this?

“In *True Wellness*, the authors lay out a conceptual model that presents life and health as a dynamic process of energy management. Both Eastern and Western traditions acknowledge this as a fact, but they describe the processes in very different ways. In modern Western medicine, for example, the biomedical model stresses disease as something that is caused at the molecular level. Eastern approaches view the body as a microcosm of the universe, stressing the interconnectedness of various factors.

“The strength of this book is that the authors acknowledge the respective strengths (and weaknesses) of both systems. Western medicine is unparalleled in specific treatments for discrete health issues; Eastern approaches focus on the interrelationship of factors. As a result, Kurosu and Kuhn are candid in their discussion of what Eastern approaches can bring to the table. Acupuncture is a case in point. While there appear to be real benefits to the practice and some intriguing research about electrical conductivity at acupuncture points and possible physiological responses to stimulation, the authors are candid in noting that the meridians and energy channels posited by Eastern traditions remain elusive in terms of scientific standards. While they note associated

effects from acupuncture, the specific physiological mechanism associated with these effects has not been completely discovered.

“As a result, the authors wisely advocate for the integration of both traditions in the promotion of health. Where real benefits can be obtained from Eastern approaches, they can and should be incorporated into medical treatment. Certainly, the awareness of the complex interplay between diet, lifestyle, exercise, and other factors is by now widely acknowledged in the West. Eastern approaches may well offer additional benefits to what is sometimes a clinical and overtly fragmented Western approach.

“In the end, the authors advocate a refreshingly grounded perspective: remain open to new possibilities; use common sense; engage in moderation, good habits, and balance. Their chapter on steps to optimal health provides a good framework for those looking to apply these insights, advocating a step-by-step approach to evaluation and action. The subsequent chapter on goal setting provides readers with a blueprint that can lead from reflection to action. Appendices on topics like diet and glycemic index and load are also useful.

“In short, *True Wellness* is a well-conceived, well-written guide to a holistic approach to health and wellness. It combines the well-informed and measured approach of scientifically trained clinicians with the insights and possibilities inherent in non-Western approaches to health. What is most refreshing is the clear and levelheaded approach they advocate. The approach should be familiar to any individual following the disciplines of the East: remain open to possibility; be aware, reflective, and willing to engage in the hard and important work involved with the pursuit.”

—John Donohue, PhD, martial artist, author of numerous books about martial arts as well as martial art fiction

CATHERINE KUROSU, MD, LAc
AIHAN KUHN, CMD, OBT

TRUE WELLNESS

How to Combine the
Best of Western and Eastern Medicine
for Optimal Health

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NOTE TO READERS

The practices, treatments, and methods described in this book should not be used as an alternative to professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The authors and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury or negative effects that may occur through following the instructions and advice contained herein.

It is recommended that before beginning any treatment or exercise program, you consult your medical professional to determine whether you should undertake this course of practice.

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Foreword

I CANNOT THINK OF A TIMELIER TOPIC than True Wellness. I have been working in the “alternative medicine” field for the past thirty years and I have been frustrated with the health-care crisis we have in America. We have incredible technology and excellent doctors, but the system is geared toward acute care and sickness care. There is too much emphasis on treating symptoms and too little emphasis on helping patients learn how to get well and stay well. Sadly, there is more profit in keeping people sick. We need a better approach. Dr. Kurosu and Dr. Kuhn have both been trained in Eastern and Western medicine and they understand how to integrate the strengths of both disciplines. The authors make a strong argument for a new paradigm while offering an easy to understand guide for maintaining true wellness.

After laboring for years in traditional addictions treatment, I discovered intriguing research on using brain wave training to treat alcoholism. When I started implementing a brain-based approach in my treatment center, I experienced amazing transformations. This led me to embark on a career path of neurofeedback therapy, which is based on science and supported by professional literature, yet still regarded as experimental and non-reimbursable. Neuroscience has taught us about neuroplasticity and the brain’s remarkable ability to rewire itself. Regardless of diagnosis, when the brain works better, everything works better. Conversely, when the body works better, the brain works better. Eastern medicine has known this for centuries. When I had an opportunity to work with a skillful acupuncture physician we both discovered that the ancient wisdom of oriental medicine was very compatible with the modern technology of training the brain. The two modalities have a synergistic effect. This was my first experience with “East meets West” in medicine and it inspired me to learn more.

Today we have the science and technology to verify and understand the validity of Eastern concepts of qi and traditional practices of mindful movement. For those of us raised in Western society it may not be easy to grasp the concept of subtle energies and non-invasive health practices. How do we reconcile the daily messages delivered by Big Pharma through the media, with the idea that there are valid non-pharmaceutical approaches to health care? The answer is in communication and education.

It wasn't until I went through my own health crisis that I was able to put it all together. Under the illusion of robust health and infallibility, a combination of unusual stress, inflammation, sleep apnea, and a tiny virus suddenly put me into a life-threatening heart condition. It took a combination of Eastern and Western medicine to restore me to health. I now understand how integrative medicine can work for anyone. This book presents an exquisite explanation of how to utilize and integrate the strengths of both approaches to achieve and maintain true wellness.

My clinical and personal experiences led me to develop an integrative wellness center with a team of talented practitioners who collectively can treat, educate, and guide clients into true wellness. As part of this journey, I invited Dr. Kuhn to bring qigong into our program. I found her to be an amazing teacher and healer. Her energy, grace, balance, and strength were a testament to the wellness life style she embraces. We have subsequently collaborated on natural healing conferences with an emphasis of combining Eastern and Western approaches. The message is well received, because people are frustrated with our sickness care system and are seeking a better way. Herein is a better way.

I urge everyone to read this book and embrace its message. It is more than a text. It is a workbook that can help the reader to take charge of personal well-being. Whether one is suffering from illness, curious, skeptical, or already on a path of wellness, there is something of value in the following chapters for any reader. It is through education and communication that we can make informed decisions and take charge of our health.

George Rozelle, PhD, QEEGD, BCN, Senior fellow
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Foreword

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN.” This was the quote I was reminded of while reading through this exceptionally well-researched work on how the principles of Eastern and Western medicine can be combined to create a wellness regimen for everyone. As a physician, trained in Western medicine in the heyday of the scientific method, I have always been interested in why some of my patients chose “alternative therapies” and was often frustrated in my lack of knowledge to answer their questions. This book, while written for patients, provides all readers with a historical perspective on how the Eastern and Western medical traditions developed, and why they are not as opposed to each other, as some would presume based on their location on a navigational compass. As the medical system struggles to reinvent itself for the future, this look back is an opportunity to remind us all that we don’t have to choose one system over the other. For instance, rather than refer to Eastern medicine as “alternative” some schools have moved to rename their departments as “integrative” medicine. When patients learn that their providers are being trained in a system that acknowledges the benefits of both Eastern and Western medicine, this will hopefully lead them to be more open in telling their physicians what therapies they have already tried. While my understanding of Eastern medicine has remained rudimentary over the years, I have seen the benefits that it has provided to my patients first hand, often performed by Dr. Kurosu herself!

This book will provide patients and physicians a common vocabulary and will empower patients to take control of their health. By emphasizing healthy eating and by including a series of homework exercises, it serves as a practical guide. The discussion of motivation to

make changes is especially useful to encourage patients, in light of the non-linear method through which behavioral change occurs. *True Wellness* is a comprehensive guide for anyone who desires to improve their wellness, and that is a concept that physicians and patients both need. Given the modern crisis of physician burnout, the principles in this book are applicable to all. We need to rediscover the holistic concepts of the past in order to create a new model that combines the Eastern and Western traditions in an integrative fashion to improve health care for all.

Holly Olson, MD, MACM, FACOG, Deputy Designated
Institutional Official for Graduate Medical Education,
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Preface

LIFE IS ABOUT ENERGY MANAGEMENT. Human existence may also include acts of kindness, heroism and compassion, artistic creation, and athletic achievement, but none of that can happen without adequate energy. Our existence revolves around procuring, preparing, and consuming food, moving through our day productively, then sleeping to allow our brains and body to repair and function efficiently the next morning. In short, we take in energy and then expend it. When the body can't take in sufficient energy or process it correctly, a shortfall results. If uncorrected, this lack of energy feeds a vicious cycle, dampening our metabolism, disrupting our sleep, and eventually leading to disease.

Whether you look at health and disease through the lens of Western or Eastern medicine, energy management is at the heart of the matter. A Western physician is concerned about the biochemistry of cellular metabolism as a function of energy utilization, whereas the Eastern practitioner is interested in the flow of energy throughout the channels and organ systems of the body.

It is our contention that all these healers are talking about the same phenomena.

Western and Eastern medical systems share a common foundation: the understanding that humans are energetic beings. What differs is the way in which these energetic processes are described. Millennia ago, practitioners of either paradigm had no access to biochemical tests, magnetic resonance imaging, or electrocardiograms. The light microscope wasn't even invented until a few hundred years ago. Each group, half a world apart, had to develop a logical system of medicine to care for their people; each system was based on the prevailing culture. As we shall see, each culture's worldview shaped its approach to health and

healing. Our purpose in writing this book is to show that, as is often the case between competing factions, Western and Eastern medicine have more commonalities than differences.

Certainly, all practitioners strive to give the best care and attention to their patients, no matter the approach. The goal is to help patients live well through optimal energy management. This is just another way of describing how today both Eastern and Western health practitioners counsel patients to choose nutritious food, exercise regularly, practice qigong or tai chi, meditate daily, and sleep sufficiently. All these endeavors affect the quality and quantity of energy in the body and the manner in which it is expended. This is what allows a person to go beyond merely existing; to focus the mind and harness the creative spark that gives rise to a symphony, a ballet, or a painting; to care for our families with love and compassion; and to contribute our time and efforts to bettering society for all of its members.

Can blending Western and Eastern medicine do all that? We believe the answer is a resounding “Yes!” As physicians trained in both Western and Eastern healing systems, we understand how to use the strengths of each to meet the needs of the individual patient. Over the years, our patients have learned how to use Eastern methods to treat Western diseases and have achieved amazing results. By incorporating acupuncture, qigong, tai chi, and meditation into their standard care, our patients have optimized all aspects of their health.

We do not share a medical practice, but when we met in 2009, we immediately saw our similarities and the potential to collaborate. We are both Western-educated medical doctors. As it happens, we both specialized in gynecology and obstetrics, and also trained as practitioners of Eastern medicine. We saw how our patients had struggled within the national health-care system before adding Eastern methodologies into their daily routines. These people were suffering with all the chronic diseases that are rampant in America, such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic pain syndromes, and cancer. We saw our patients improve their quality of life and reduce their disease burden by taking control of their health and including Eastern practices.

But, we also saw the effort required. Some patients were absolute self-starters. All they needed was the right information and they sprang into action. These people were the exceptions. We knew that making fundamental lifestyle changes is difficult for most people, and they require continued guidance and encouragement along the way. With the complexity and expense of the current medical system, it is often not possible for Western health-care practitioners to give the patient this attention. Even with physician extenders, such as nurse practitioners or physician assistants, there is a shortage of medical providers in many areas of the country. As a consequence, there simply isn't enough time in an average medical appointment for these healers to effectively counsel and cajole a patient into making these huge shifts in self-care—but these huge shifts are exactly what are needed to turn the tide of chronic illness, individually and nationally.

This book, which is the first of a series, will help you lay the foundation for lasting health. Our hope is that you, the reader, will be inspired to take matters into your own hands. The general guidelines presented here can be applied universally. Startling improvements can be made in almost every chronic illness. For those who may still need specialized treatment plans for specific conditions, the upcoming series of books will offer unique insights, in-depth discussion, and a precise integrative approach for a variety of chronic ailments.

Books cannot substitute for a caring medical provider, but our intent with this initial installment is to help you take that first step toward wellness. Throughout these pages we offer our shared perspective on the nature of real well-being and offer some personal reflections based on the experiences of our patients.

Chapter by chapter, we walk you through this integrative approach to care, on your way to improved health. Through an understanding of the history and philosophy of Western and Eastern medicine, you will see the similarities. By examining some of the scientific evidence that explains energetic phenomena, you will recognize the factors in your daily life that can make an enormous impact on your well-being. In taking a short detour to comprehend the complexity of this country's

medical system, you will find your role within it and learn how to navigate that industry more effectively. After learning more about the benefits and safety of Eastern medicine, you will be presented with strategies for speaking with your doctor and creating a therapeutic alliance within your own multidisciplinary health-care team.

Finally, in the last chapter, we provide tools to help you solve your health challenges. Step-by-step, using techniques derived from both Western and Eastern medicine, you will discover how to breathe, think, and act in ways that will be energetically transformative. You will be able to prepare and implement a healing plan that you can sustain. We are confident that the healthy choices you make each day will lead to a lifetime of optimal health for you, your family, and your community. We wish you true wellness.

Catherine Kurosu, MD, LAc
Aihan Kuhn, CMD, Dipl. OBT

Medicine in Evolution

EVERY CIVILIZATION HAS SEARCHED for the cause of disease. In ancient times, throughout the world, it was thought that illness originated with the supernatural. A person who became sick was either possessed by an evil spirit or being punished by a god. Every society had its own myths, legends, and explanations regarding disease. The “doctor” of the tribe was a shaman, a spiritual leader who also had the ability to heal. By blending an understanding of human nature, community, and the physical world, shamans created rituals and potions that could cure all ills, or so they thought.

Gradually the role of the shaman was subdivided into two—the spiritual leader and the physical healer. Over time, and in different societies, these roles overlapped to varying degrees, but the realization that diseases were not caused by mystical events marked a significant conceptual shift. Doctors started to look at the natural world around them to explain why people became sick.

At the beginning of the formal history of medicine, whether Eastern or Western, the physician viewed the patient as a complete person. Rather than focusing on only the physical aspects of a patient’s illness, the ancient physician was acutely aware of the emotional and spiritual dimensions of disease. Doctors recognized that having a medical condition could affect a person’s emotional and spiritual state. Conversely, emotions and spirituality could influence the course of a given disease. Additionally, the physician knew that each patient was part of a family and a society that would certainly influence that person’s state of health. It was also understood that the person’s well-being had a great deal to do with their daily habits and how those habits affected their internal

energy. It was the duty and privilege of the physician to assist their patients in achieving optimal health. That meant not simply recovering from illness but, more important, maintaining good health.

The following is a brief explanation of how Western biomedical philosophy and education has strayed from that path and how Eastern medicine has never faltered.

The History and Philosophy of Western Medicine

Today, Western medicine is considered to be the practice of medicine as performed in modernized, industrialized countries all across the globe. Other names for this sort of medicine are allopathy or biomedicine. This system generally favors the use of the latest technologies and tends to focus on the alleviation of symptoms. Western medicine can trace its lineage back to ancient Greece, but there the central idea of how to practice medicine was the opposite of the manner in which Western medicine is practiced today. Thousands of years ago, it was understood that to successfully treat a patient, one did not just relieve their symptoms. The underlying abnormality that started the disease process had to be discovered. Once this was found, the problem could be solved. In ancient Greece, and all other similar civilizations, physicians knew that treating the symptom would result in only temporary relief, but unearthing the root cause of a disease could lead to a lasting cure.

The father of Western medicine is considered to be Hippocrates, a Greek doctor who lived from 460 to 360 BCE. Hippocrates felt that in order to care for a patient, he had to understand the patient's way of life and particular constitution. He emphasized balance in daily living with respect to food, drink, and exercise. Disease was thought to be an imbalance of material substances within the human body, specifically blood, water, and bile. These substances were called "humors." These humors also were associated with qualities (hot, cold, moist, and dry) and elements (earth, air, fire, and water). Hippocrates considered "health"

to be the perfect balance of the humors, qualities, and elements within each person.

Even before Hippocrates, Greek philosophers and physicians were very interested in the natural world and, like the Chinese, used observations of the natural world to explain human growth and development. Two such philosopher-physicians, Pythagoras and Alcmaeon (circa 500 BCE), felt that the universe was made up of pairs of opposite qualities, such as hot/cold and moist/dry. Harmony within these pairs was considered to be all-important, as an imbalance would result in disease. This is mirrored in the Chinese theory of yin and yang, which we discuss in greater detail shortly.

Another similarity between Eastern medical theory and early Western medical thought lies in the concept of “vitalism.” This is the idea that there is within the human body an active and intelligent force that instinctively maintains and repairs the health of each person. This “vital force” could be considered equivalent to the Chinese concept of “qi.” The tenets of vitalism can be seen within several disciplines of medicine that arose from Western medicine, such as homeopathy and chiropractic.

The idea of a dynamic energy within an individual began to lose favor in Europe after the Renaissance and during the Scientific Revolution (1450–1630 CE). Advancing technology gave physicians of this era the tools to examine ever more intricate workings of the human body, and more and more of its mysteries were solved. Increasing attention was paid to anatomic dissection and localized disease processes.

Prior to the invention of the light microscope in 1609 and the identification of bacteria, it was thought that diseases arose spontaneously without a discernible cause. This was called the theory of “spontaneous generation.” Even though microorganisms could be seen under the light microscope, many believed that these creatures arose spontaneously. From the mid-1600s onward, some scientists tried to disprove this theory. Italian scientists Francesco Redi (1626–1697) and Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729–1799) performed experiments that discredited the theory of spontaneous generation, but there were still those who found fault with

their experimental design. Finally, in 1858, it was the experiments of Louis Pasteur, a French professor of chemistry, that disproved the theory of spontaneous generation and then later demonstrated that infectious diseases were caused by microorganisms. With the work of Pasteur, a German scientist named Robert Koch, and other notable European investigators, modern germ theory was brought to fruition.

Because bacteria, viruses, and molds could cause infectious diseases, an understanding of these microbes eventually led to many treatments that could cure these illnesses. Vaccines were created to prevent contracting a disease in the first place.

The study of microbiology and the development of antibiotics and vaccines are some of the most important discoveries of Western medicine. Countless deaths have been avoided as a result. It is highly likely that each of us knows someone whose life has been saved by the use of antibiotics.

As undeniably remarkable as these discoveries were, it is interesting to note that, from the 1800s onward, the study of medicine changed. It became centered on the search for the simplest, single explanation for the cause of an illness. This is quite understandable, given that these discoveries were made in the midst of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. At this time, factories emerged, and each part of the production process was broken down and compartmentalized. No longer did an artisan see the creation of an item through from start to finish. Rather, a worker manufactured one portion of an item and passed it on to the next worker for completion.

This idea of fragmentation became pervasive in Western medicine. The ability to break down biochemical or physiologic processes into smaller and smaller components has led to an astonishingly deep understanding of the human body. This led to the rise of the physician-scientist. Historically, in America, many doctors were trained to use a more practical type of medicine that involved natural botanical remedies; the curriculum of a great number of medical schools in the United States at the end of the 1800s fell into this category. Unfortunately, some of these schools advertised to and accepted any student who could pay

Qi, the Dao, and Cell Biology

BOTH WESTERN AND EASTERN medical traditions base their definition of health on the correct functioning of bodily systems. In the Western paradigm, this is considered optimal cellular metabolism. In the Eastern model, this is considered the smooth flow of qi. Which concept is correct? They both are.

Ancient practitioners of both healing arts recognized that the strength and abundance of a person's vital force, or qi, was predictive of their state of health and longevity. It was also noted that within families, vitality or frailty could be passed from generation to generation. In Eastern medicine, the qi you receive from your parents is called "pre-heaven qi." In Western medicine, this would be considered your genetic constitution.

Either way you look at it, these are the cards you are dealt. But, it is the decisions you make during the game that influence the outcome. These decisions include what you eat, the quality of air you breathe, whether you exercise, how long you sleep, how you manage your stress, how you view your place within your family and society, and many other factors. The combination of all these elements dictates the quality of the physical, emotional, and spiritual resources that sustain you. This is "post-heaven qi," from an Eastern perspective, and much of it is within your control. This holds true from a Western point of view too. You received a particular set of chromosomes from your parents. Maybe some of them predispose you toward developing heart disease,

diabetes, or cancer, but these conditions are not a certainty. How you choose to live your life actually alters gene expression and the lifespan of cells in your body.

How does this work? Most cells in your body have a nucleus, the control center of the cell. Within the nucleus are your chromosomes, which are composed of genes. Your genes are like a blueprint. From conception and throughout your life, your genes are copied to create new cells. The genes you carry determine your potential: for example, how tall you might be or how fast your metabolism is or whether you are more likely to develop a certain type of cancer. Many factors affect the expression of your genes, such as what you eat; your level of physical activity; your work hours; the psychological stress you experience; and whether you smoke, drink alcohol, or are exposed to environmental pollutants.¹

Even the act of copying can affect your genes. Every time a cell divides and has to make a copy of the genes within the nucleus, a bit of the genetic material at the ends of the chromosomes is lost. Over time, if enough genetic material is lost, the cell cannot function properly and dies. Genetic material is made up of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The DNA is composed of pairs of nucleotides. The order in which these nucleotides are put together determines whether the sequence contains information that can regulate growth, metabolism, and reproduction through the creation of proteins. This type of DNA is called “coding” DNA. However, the majority of DNA does not code in this fashion but, rather, acts like punctuation in a sentence. A comma or a period does not have meaning in and of itself, but the placement of a punctuation mark creates coherence within a sentence. The DNA patterns that serve this function are called noncoding sequences.

One such noncoding DNA sequence, called the telomere, is found at the ends of each chromosome. The telomeres protect the coding

1. Jorge Alejandro Alegria-Torres, Andrea Baccarelli, and Valentina Bollati, “Epigenetics and Lifestyle,” *Epigenomics* 3 (3): 267–277, doi:10.2217/epi.11.22.

Our Current Health-Care System

The American Paradox

You may have heard of the “French paradox,” the fact that the French seem to be able to drink alcohol and eat rich foods yet still maintain good health. Well, America has its own paradox: we spend vast amounts of money on health care, but we are in terribly poor health as a society. In fact, for all the money that has been spent, our actual health is among the worst of all industrialized countries.

Let’s look at just a few categories:

- Avoidable deaths
- Life expectancy
- Infant mortality

Avoidable Deaths

Avoidable deaths (known as avoidable mortality) is a measure of how well a nation’s health system can cure a condition that is, in fact, curable. The United States came in last among nineteen developed nations on this parameter, largely due to lack of universal access to care. If you are under seventy-five with a curable illness and you live in America, you are two times more likely to die from that disease than if you lived in France, Japan, or Spain.¹

1. T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care* (London: Penguin, 2010), 28.

So, if you have a curable ailment, you are more likely to die if you live in the US. What if you have a chronic, incurable condition, like asthma or diabetes? Would you fare better because of all the newer treatments and medications that are available here? Sadly, no. In a study that looked at how patients with chronic conditions fared in nine industrialized countries, asthmatics died sooner in the US than in any other country aside from Great Britain. Diabetics in America ranked last in terms of life expectancy within this group.²

Life Expectancy

With respect to life expectancy, the United States lags behind the majority of European countries as well as industrialized Asian ones. One could argue that this result is a misrepresentation, since many more Americans die in the prime of life due to car accidents and violent crimes than do young Europeans, for example. So, to take a more even-handed approach, we can look at a marker that medical researchers call “healthy life expectancy at age sixty.” This does not mean how long a person will live after the age of sixty, but rather how many more years a person will be healthy after the age of sixty. As such, this statistic is a good indicator of how well a nation’s health-care system takes care of its populace. Unfortunately, in this 2006 survey, the United States was tied for last among twenty-three other industrialized countries.³ Moreover, in the United States, for the first time in many decades, this number is decreasing. That means that children born today will enjoy fewer years of good health in their senior years than will their parents.

Infant Deaths

Speaking of children, let’s look at another parameter of a nation’s well-being: the infant mortality rate. This is a statistic that tells you how many newborn babies die within one year of birth. The infant mortal-

2. Ibid., 32.

3. Ibid., 33.

East Meets West

How to Get the Most Out of Your Health-Care System

The Importance of East-West Integration

It is clear that the current health-care system in the United States does not completely meet the needs of the people. It is also clear that this system is not going away, medically, economically, or politically. From a medical point of view, few would want to do without the fabulous life-saving technologies that biomedicine has discovered, such as antibiotics and surgery. Economically and politically, the country is deeply divided over the best way to offer medical care to the public. For better or worse, corporate-driven for-profit biomedicine is here to stay for the foreseeable future. The larger question for every individual is, how do we maintain optimal health within the structure that is available?

From this first question, many more come to mind: Is biomedicine alone the best system to manage chronic disease, lifestyle-related illnesses, or musculoskeletal ailments not amenable to surgery? Is biomedicine effective for chronic pain without masking it with addicting medications? Does biomedicine go to adequate lengths to prevent these conditions in the first place? Many would answer these questions with a resounding “No!”

So, how to fill in the gaps, to take advantage of the modalities at which biomedicine excels but supplement in the areas in which it struggles? Eastern medicine and those systems related to it certainly fit the bill and are uniquely suited to provide individualized therapies for both

acute and chronic conditions. Many practitioners of Eastern medicine would agree that, in Western societies, the dovetailing of these two systems could offer effective treatment for almost every ailment.

For those unfamiliar with the benefits of Eastern medicine, other questions arise:

- What is Eastern medicine used for?
- Has Eastern medicine been researched?
- How effective is Eastern medicine?
- Could good results just be placebo effect?
- Is Eastern medicine safe?
- Why should we consider the integration of Eastern and Western medicine?
- Are Western physicians willing to incorporate Eastern modalities?
- How should I approach my doctor about using Eastern medicine?
- How should these two systems be used together?

We discuss all these issues in the coming pages. By the end of this chapter, the utility of integrating Eastern and Western medicine will be apparent.

What Is Eastern Medicine Used For?

When people think of Eastern medicine, they most commonly think of acupuncture. When they think of acupuncture, they instantly think of back pain. It is true that back pain is the first ailment for which Western countries accepted Eastern solutions. However, there is a vast array of different conditions for which all components of Eastern medicine can be used.

As we have already discussed, Eastern medicine is composed of various strands: acupuncture, herbal formulas, bodywork, tai chi, qigong, dietary therapy, exercise, and meditation. Any or all of these practices can be used to improve many chronic and some acute conditions. For certain life-threatening acute conditions, Western medicine would still be the modality of choice. If you had a shattered leg from a car ac-

cident, you'd want an orthopedic surgeon. If you had an overwhelming bacterial infection, you'd want intravenous antibiotics. If you were a woman in labor with a baby who was too big to be born naturally, you'd want a cesarean section. In our Western society, we all too often forget that the "natural" consequence of certain conditions is severe disability or death. In these situations, Western medicine shines, saving the lives of people who would normally die in another time or place where these techniques were not available.

But no system is perfect. What Western medicine lacks is the capacity to effectively treat many chronic illnesses. This is where Eastern medicine makes its greatest contribution. Many people are surprised to learn that Eastern medicine can be used for such diverse conditions as cardiac arrhythmias, digestive complaints, insomnia, gynecologic problems, infertility, and asthma. (A much more extensive list from the World Health Organization can be seen in the table in the subsection below that discusses treatment effectiveness.)

Has Eastern Medicine Been Researched?

If you were to go to your computer and use a common medical search engine such as PubMed to look for research articles on Eastern or Oriental medicine, you would find thousands. By searching the subject "East Asian medicine," you would be presented with over ten thousand papers. If you looked specifically for articles about acupuncture, more than seventeen thousand would appear.

It is one thing to say that research has been done, but it is important to know a little about how studies were designed and what questions they were set up to answer. These two questions are crucial, regardless of the modality being tested. It could be the latest drug for diabetes, the newest surgical technique, or a therapy as ancient as acupuncture. The question being posed and the study design are key to yielding meaningful results that can be applied to the individual patient.

Research itself is a relatively new concept. In Western medicine, up until around the Second World War, the effectiveness of a certain

treatment was measured by the improvement of the patient. During that time, the validity of a therapy was based on the accumulated outcomes of its use. Over time, with repeated successes, practitioners incorporated an intervention into their usual practice. Those therapies that did not benefit the majority of patients were discarded. This is the manner in which Eastern medicine has developed over the millennia. It is a very practical way of looking at the utility of a treatment. The bottom line was this: Did the patient improve or not?

Just before the Second World War, researchers studied the effects of certain agricultural fertilizers on the growth of two groups of plants. One group was treated with the active substance and one group was not. The untreated group was designated the “control” group. So began the era of controlled trials.¹

Then the idea of randomly assigning participants (human or otherwise) to either the clinical or control group gave rise to the randomized controlled trial, commonly referred to as an RCT. Randomized controlled trials were further refined by “treating” the control group with a placebo. In essence, the control group was managed in exactly the same way as the study group, except the control group was not given the active substance that was being tested. At the end of the trial, differences between the groups had to be sufficiently large to show that the active substance or treatment was having an effect. This is referred to as being statistically significant. It was no longer enough to say that a patient or group of patients improved after an intervention; now the improvement in the study group was required to be greater than the improvement seen in the placebo control group. As we shall see, this methodology has several problems, particularly with respect to Eastern medicine and acupuncture.

Randomized controlled trials are designed to answer a specific question: that is, does the treatment/drug/intervention being tested cause the observed effect? This sort of study design is said to be “explana-

1. Claudia W. Witt et al., “Efficacy, Effectiveness and Efficiency,” in *Integrating East Asian Medicine into Contemporary Health Care*, ed. Volker Scheid and Hugh MacPherson (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier, 2012), 190.

Four Steps to Optimal Health

NOW WE ARE AT THE CRUX of the matter. In the preceding chapters, you have learned about the history of Eastern and Western medicine and how they can complement each other. You have seen how ancient concepts and practices lead to optimal health and how these transformations can be explained by modern science. You have a greater understanding of the powers at play within the American health-care system and what is at stake if the alarming epidemic of chronic disease continues to grow. You now have the tools to approach your primary care provider about incorporating the tenets of Eastern medicine into your care so that you reap the benefits of both healing systems. By blending the best of Eastern and Western medicine, you can attain true wellness—the maximization and balance of mental, physical, and emotional health.

But how do we put all that knowledge into practice?

To paraphrase an ancient Chinese proverb, “The longest journey begins with a single step.” This applies to all of our endeavors. Some journeys are easier than others. If people are going to transform habits that are deeply ingrained, they must overcome a certain amount of inertia. We have been flooded with information about how to lead healthier lives, but putting all that excellent advice into action is the really tricky part. Not everyone can “just do it,” as the popular advertising slogan instructs. If it were that simple, we’d all be in perfect health—focused, calm, slender, and fit. Most of us know what needs to be done, but do not take the necessary steps to achieve long-lasting results. The big question is, “Why not?”

In the last fifty years, Western psychologists have been studying how and why people make significant lifestyle changes. Initially, this may seem like just another Western reductionist way to pick apart a complex process, but the resulting theories and models have a great deal in common with Eastern medicine's approach to the patient. The predominant Western theory in this area is called the transtheoretical model of change, and it demonstrates what the Chinese have known all along: each person is a unique and multifaceted being who is traveling along on their journey at their own particular speed. Taking this into account, health-care practitioners are better able to tailor advice and interventions to meet their patients' needs.

The transtheoretical model of change was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente after they researched how people successfully made lifestyle changes.¹ They determined that when people make sudden behavioral changes without preparation, they commonly fail. Certainly some people can quit smoking cold turkey or exercise daily without missing a workout, but most of us need more preparation to make these significant shifts part of our routine. Prochaska and DiClemente discovered that long-lasting changes are more likely achieved if the person proceeds through five distinct stages:

Stage 1: Precontemplation (no intention of changing)

Stage 2: Contemplation (thinking about changing)

Stage 3: Preparation (getting ready to change within the next month)

Stage 4: Action (behavior change less than six months)

Stage 5: Maintenance (behavior change more than six months)

Variations include additional stages:

Stage 6: Relapse (regression to an earlier stage)

Stage 7: Termination (behavior has completely changed)

1. J. O. Prochaska and C. C. DiClemente, "Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrative Model of Change," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 51 (1983): 390-395.

These last two stages may not apply to all situations. For example, some people never regress, and some behaviors cannot be completely terminated. While it is possible to quit smoking entirely, one cannot absolutely stop eating. Maintaining a healthy diet and avoiding overeating is a lifelong endeavor. In a similar vein, those who conquer addictive behaviors such as alcohol or drug abuse may always consider themselves to be in the maintenance stage.

Rather than achieving linear progression, most people progress through this model in a circular or spiral fashion. Very few people are able to modify undesirable behaviors on a permanent basis on their very first attempt. Often, they move between stages. This is perfectly natural and expected. The most important thing is to keep trying. Your persistence will eventually pay off, and you will find yourself transformed!

Another name for the transtheoretical model of change is the “stages of motivational readiness for change model.” Use the questionnaire that follows to determine your current readiness for change; it will help you see from which stage you are starting. Then, based on your stage, you can use the exercises supplied in this book to assist you in moving from one stage to the next until you have achieved your goal.

When answering the questions in each survey or exercise, it is important to be completely honest. You might assume that just by reading this book you are past stage 1 (precontemplation) and are already in stage 2 (contemplation), but truthfully consider your circumstances. Did you pick up this book of your own volition? Are you eager to embark on your healing journey? Is a doctor or loved one nagging you to make lifestyle changes? Would you really rather stay as you are?

The word “change” in the questionnaire means any behavioral change you want to make. This could be anything at all, such as exercising, meditating, or being more attentive to your spouse. You can repeat this survey multiple times for multiple behaviors or over time to gauge your progress. For example, you may be an avid exerciser (maintenance stage) but you are still smoking and do not intend to stop (precontemplation stage). Keeping all of this in mind, start by completing the questionnaire.

Readiness-for-Change Questionnaire*

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I intend to integrate this change into my life. | Yes | No |
| 2. I have already integrated this change into my life. | Yes | No |
| 3. I have been integrating this change for one to six months. | Yes | No |
| 4. I have been integrating this change for more than six months. | Yes | No |

SCORING

If you answered	You are in
1, No; 2, No; 3, No; 4, No	Stage 1: Precontemplation
1, Yes; 2, No; 3, No; 4, No	Stage 2: Contemplation
1, Yes; 2, Yes; 3, No; 4, No	Stage 3: Preparation
1, Yes; 2, Yes; 3, Yes; 4, No	Stage 4: Action
1, Yes; 2, Yes; 3, Yes; 4, Yes	Stage 5: Maintenance

*Adapted from B. H. Marcus, J. S. Rossi, et al., "The Stages and Processes of Exercise Adoption and Maintenance in a Worksite Sample," *Health Psychology* 11 (1992): 386–395.

Now that you have determined your readiness for change, you will be able to use the four steps for optimal health more effectively as you move toward your goal. Our four steps progress in a similar manner to the transtheoretical model:

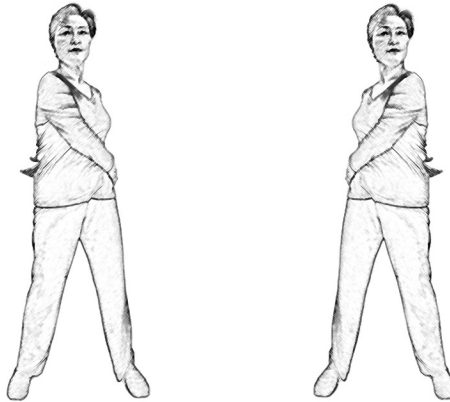
- Step 1: Build a Positive Mind (Contemplation)
- Step 2: Set Your Goal and Plan (Preparation)
- Step 3: Start Your Action (Action)
- Step 4: Be Persistent (Maintenance)

Within the four steps are a series of exercises that will lead you from one action to the next. Tiny changes made over a long period of time are more likely to be permanent. These four steps can effectively

Qigong for Daily Nourishment

Quick Warm Up

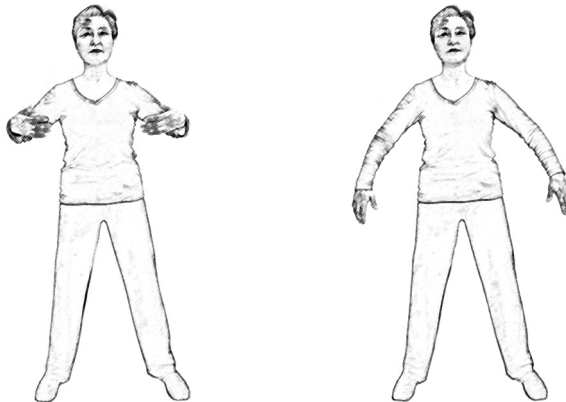
1. Turn Body



Feet are shoulder width apart.

Swing your body from left to right, right to left. Allow your arms to follow your body, swinging side to side. Repeat 16 to 32 times.

2. Shake Hands



Keep the same body posture. Shake both hands upward and downward in front of your body.

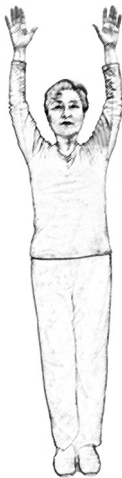
Relax your arms and body while you are shaking your hands.

3. Shooting Star



Bend your elbows so that your hands raise up to the sides of your shoulders. Keep your elbows pointed downward and your hands in a light fist. Quickly throw your hands upward and open your fingers. Repeat 16 times.

4. Reach Sky, Touch Earth



With your feet together, raise your hands up with fingers pointed upward.

Bend your knees and touch your hands to the floor. Roll your body back up to a standing position. Repeat this 8 to 16 times.

5. Knock the Body



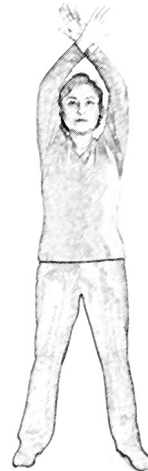
Gently knock your body with an open palm: use the right palm to knock the left upper chest, left arm, left shoulder. Repeat 3 times, then change sides.

Use the left palm to knock the right upper chest, right arm, right shoulder. Repeat 3 times.

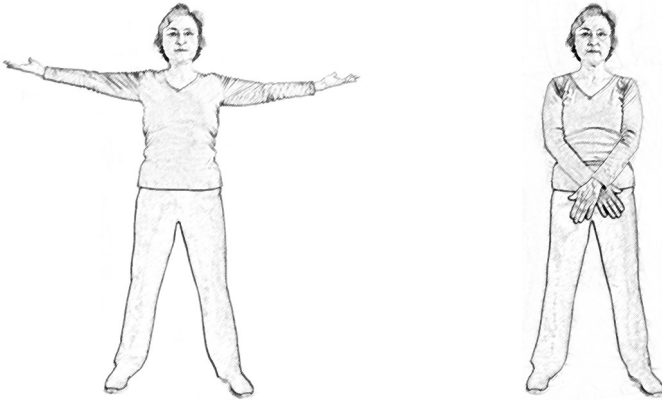
Take a deep breath.

Daily Short Qigong Practice for Busy People

1. Open to See the Sky (Open All Channels)



Raise your arms in front of your body and above your head as you inhale; separate your arms, then lower them down along the side of your body as you exhale.



Again, raise your arms in front of your body and above your head as you inhale; lower your arms down along the side of your body as you exhale.

If you have neck problems, you may modify this exercise as follows:

When your arms are raised, turn your head toward your left hand. As you lower your arms, allow your head to move as your eyes follow the movement of your hand. The second time you raise your arms, shift your gaze to your right hand. As you lower your arms, allow your head to move as your eyes follow your right hand.

Repeat this movement 4 times on each side.

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About the Authors

Dr. Catherine Kurosu

Born, raised, and trained in Canada, Dr. Catherine Kurosu graduated from the University of Toronto School of Medicine in 1990. She completed her internship and residency at the same institution and qualified as a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology in 1995. Dr. Kurosu has studied and worked in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Chile.



Photo by: Monica Lau

Through her travels, she has learned that there are many ways to approach a problem and that the patient usually understands their illness best. By combining the patient's insight with medical guidance, effective treatment plans can be developed.

In 2006, Dr. Kurosu became a diplomate of the American Board of Holistic Medicine, now known as the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine. In 2009, she became certified as a medical acupuncturist through the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the Helms Medical Institute. Dr. Kurosu became a member of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, then a diplomate of the American Board of Medical Acupuncture, which confers this title to practitioners with increasing experience.

Since then, Dr. Kurosu completed a master of science in Oriental medicine, graduating from the Institute of Clinical Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in Honolulu. In 2015, she became a licensed acupuncturist in Hawai'i, where she practices integrative medicine, blending Western and Eastern approaches to patient care.

She now lives on O'ahu with husband, Rob, and daughter, Hannah.

Dr. Aihan Kuhn

A graduate of Hunan Medical University in China (now called Xiangya Medical School) in 1982, Dr. Aihan Kuhn had oriented her focus to holistic healing since 1992. During many years of practice, she has accumulated much experience with holistic medicine and achieved a great reputation for her patient care and education work. Her patients benefit



from her many important tips for self-improvement in physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as simple and easy healing exercises to enable them to participate in healing. Dr. Kuhn incorporates tai chi and qigong into her healing methodologies, changing the lives of those who have struggled for many years with no relief from conventional medicine. Dr. Kuhn provides many wellness programs, natural healing workshops, and professional training programs, such as tai chi instructor training certification courses, qigong instructor training certification courses, and wellness tui na therapy certification courses. These highly rated programs have produced many quality teachers and therapists. Dr. Kuhn is president of the Tai Chi & Qi Gong Healing Institute (www.TaiChiHealing.org), a nonprofit organization that promotes natural healing and prevention.

Dr. Kuhn lives with her husband, Gerry, in Sarasota, Florida. For more information, visit www.draihankuhn.com.