



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk & Dr. Remy Coeytaux

Integrating Traditional and Complementary Medicine

“What is the difference between complementary and integrative medicine and alternative medicine?”

Patient What is the difference between complementary and integrative medicine and alternative medicine?

Dr. Coeytaux I think that’s a very important distinction to be made. The terms change over time but the basic idea currently is that there is a modern allopathic medicine which is the modern medicine that we are used to, which are taught in medical school. Then there are alternative or complementary therapies which are generally a protest to health care that are not typically in the main stream of current modern-day medicine. That’s a dynamic interface because as some modalities get incorporated into the mainstream, they are no longer considered complementary or alternative and new approaches may be introduced. That’s a distinction between allopathic or modern medicine and complementary or alternative medicines.

The term “integrative medicine” is a relatively new term that is becoming more well-defined as time goes on. For the most part, I define it as the thoughtful integration of complementary and alternative medical approaches into the medical mainstream health care system. That’s how I see it.

Dr Falk So you are then, an integrative physician?

Dr Coeytaux I am, or I call myself that, and I think it’s a reasonable label for my practice at the moment. There are training programs in integrative medicine—there’s a very good one at the University of Arizona that trains physicians in integrative medicine. I myself have not done that 2 year training program.

The reason that I call myself an integrative medicine physician is that I am working at the interface between allopathic,

conventional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine approaches. I'm trying to bridge those various approaches in a careful, thoughtful way with the goal of improving health care. That we can and should be considering other approaches to health and healing beyond that which is limited to the conventional medicine world.

