

**Holistic Veterinary Medicine**  
**ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE**

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**Christopher Day - Veterinary Surgeon**

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Chinham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ UK

01367 710324

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**HOLISTIC VETERINARY MEDICINE**

There are many 'buzz-words' in our language, most of which start to lose their meaning from wrong or excessive use, owing to fashion, fad and popularity. In a medical connection, 'natural' and 'holistic' are in danger of going that way, if we do not keep their real meaning in view.

The 'natural' tag on promotion of products and services is used as if it were synonymous, not just with 'good' but with 'the best'. It is designed to create a 'feel-good' factor, to sell more [product](#). It is worth, however, taking a breathing pause and looking more closely at that mental connection. Mycotoxins are natural but can be very dangerous. Arsenic is natural but is a deadly poison. Being bitten by a snake is natural but is hardly an attractive prospect. A truly holistic view is needed, in order to avoid being taken in by such feelings.

This means that everything must be seen 'in context' and from a very broad perspective, if we are properly to understand it. A [holistic](#) approach necessitates taking into account not just what we see but all the parameters affecting it and affected by it. Nature creates 'systems', each system being within another and both being affected by and affecting all other systems. No system is independent of another. No part of a system is independent of another part, influencing all others and being influenced in turn by all others. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The body, whether animal or human, is no different. Each organ or tissue affects all others or is affected by all others. Nothing operates independently within the body. The body itself is clearly greater than the sum of its parts. The body cannot operate independently of its environment and must, in turn, influence its environment. In holistic medicine, we recognise these immutable relationships, realising that anything which influences the body will produce a reaction in all parts of the body. We also recognise that health cannot be independent of lifestyle, of environment nor of diet. The body reacts differently to different doses of any stimulus, thus a poison, such as arsenic, may act as a stimulant or

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as a medicine at other doses. X-rays can be either a stimulant or a cytotoxic influence, depending upon dose. Different species will treat substances differently, according to their peculiar nature. Even within species, there will be differences in quality and degree of reaction. 'One man's food is another man's poison'. We are unable to categorise any substance purely as medicine, food or poison, unless we take in the whole context. As Einstein showed us in physics, everything is relative to something else.

[Homeopathy](#), Traditional Chinese Medicine (a.k.a. TCM, of which [acupuncture](#) is only a component), [Herbal Medicine](#), Ayurvedic Medicine etc., properly practised in their full forms, are all holistic therapies or systems of medicine. All consider the body, including the mind, as a functioning whole. All take deep cognisance of diet, environment and lifestyle, in their efforts to heal. If different therapies are used together, they must be properly-integrated, for fear of 'confusing' the body energy, thus leading to more complex disease.

In the treatment of each species, different factors must be considered, in the context of the lifestyle and environment of the patient. This is why a Homeopathic, Herbal, Chinese or Ayurvedic product, or other 'patent' supplement, sold over the counter, as if it will suit any patient, is not good or wise medicine. It may even be dangerous, but it makes good marketing and profitable sales! No account has been taken of special symptoms, of overall diet, of environment, of lifestyle or of special needs. Grass, for instance, has a different meaning, depending upon the type of horse to which it is fed. Lowland grass suits thoroughbreds but can produce the devastating disease of laminitis in a moorland pony. It also differs according to the way it is managed and grown and what else is in the diet. Bones are really good for a dog, to maintain teeth, gums and dietary balance. They are not suitable for horses. The '[nutraceuticals](#)' now available for animal treatment may not be suitable across all species, since they may not be in harmony with a natural dietary balance for certain species. We should not feed animal products to herbivores, for instance, nor ask a cat to be vegetarian. Blood products, cartilage, pig gelatin, liver or beef proteins and fish products can be found in some popular horse supplements. They may be 'natural', in themselves, but to feed them to a horse seems utter folly. To feed a vitamin supplement to any particular animal, without a deep study of its overall diet, is not just unwise, it can be very dangerous. To set out to treat a horse, especially if it has locomotor or back problems, without taking saddling and shoeing into account, is likely to end in partial success at best.

Whereas conventional medicine often views symptoms of illness as the object of medical attention (e.g. headache in a human), in holistic medicine the symptom is interpreted only as a product of the body's reaction to disease and only part of the whole picture. Whereas a conventional drug is usually selected and used to try to counteract a particular set of symptoms (i.e. having a direct or

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primary effect), holistic medicines are expected merely to stimulate the body's own intrinsic and powerful healing mechanisms, thus only having an indirect or secondary effect and working via the body's natural processes.

If seeking help for an animal, via holistic (natural medicine) techniques, you are strongly advised to consult a [veterinary surgeon](#) with appropriate qualifications or experience and who uses such techniques in an integrated and holistic fashion. In this way, you keep within the law, have indemnity insurance cover and, most importantly, have the best chance of a successful outcome.

Christopher Day – September 2001

*Christopher Day is a holistic vet and specialist homeopathic vet, in practice since 1972.*

See also: <http://www.holisticvetmed.co.uk>

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