

Shaman on the Ward:
Integrating Spirit into the Western Medical Ideology

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, PhD

Specialising in Holistic Life Coaching

On behalf of
the Department of Graduate Studies of
the University of Metaphysics

This dissertation has been accepted by

Dissertation Supervisor

IMM PRESIDENT

February 11th, 2019

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Caelon, Meric and Annabelle, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible.

May our vision be greater than our pain. Thank you to the All-Father, Creator, Spirit and the Expression of Creation: the Word.

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Introduction

This dissertation will demonstrate that contemporary Shamanism is emerging as a powerful and necessary discipline in the field of medicine, and should be included in the treatment teams of healers (doctors, nurses, psychologists, naturopaths, allied health practitioners etc) that work in the management of complex diseases, chronic health conditions, and psychological disorders. The Shamanic Call is to aid the patient through the process of healing and into the recognition of their own connection to Spirit and ability to heal. Through the guidance of the Shaman, the patient and the Shaman work together to co-create healing, wellness, recovery and a path to self-actualisation of the patient's divine potential. Through ritual, self-expression, and other relevant Shamanic tools, the integration of a Shaman in the patient care plan can be demonstrated to make significant progress in the healing of a patient, and restoration of health and wellbeing, irrespective of the disease, disorder or diagnosis.

The connection between the mind and the body, and how the mental state has a direct causality on health is being evidenced through clinical research. With the existence of belief systems such as atheism, or agnosticism, the question of the validity of having a ward Shaman amongst many academics and medical professionals as having a place within the bio-psycho-social model of western medicine would be severely tested.

There is a general acceptance of mental state's direct effect on health within general medical practice. The challenge however, for Shamanism to be embraced in the western hospital system is akin to challenge complementary therapists face, to dissuade the cognitive dissonance

of the general medical fraternity against the legitimacy of their own practice. Ergo, clinical research, and scientific methodology must be applied in presenting the case for implementation of having a Shaman on the hospital ward, or accepted in a general medical practice in an urban environment.

This is the central purpose of this paper, that indeed there is clinical and scientific validity for the availability of patients to have access to a Shaman, and for this to receive widespread acceptance. In the world of post-Darwinism, people are looking to see more meaning and purpose in life, and to enter into the concept of Spirit and metaphysics, but this must be applied against clear and appropriate methodologies in order to gain acceptance in a culture of western reductionism.

This paper will legitimise Shamanism, and the concept of Spirit, even to be palatable to those who practice atheism, and agnosticism. Shamanism is free from dogma, and simply recognises the truth of what is, and this is being sourced from another well known modicum of science: quantum theory.

The marriage of quantum theory, clinical and medical research, and Shamanic principles will form a solid foundation for the suggested modus operandi of Shamanism as as viable western medical practice. This paper demonstrates validity of the Shaman as medical practitioner, and also proposes an acceptable outline of suggested safe, patient centred practice.

Review of Literature

The general population is demanding more control over their health and wellbeing, and international governments are working with the World Health Organisation to co-create a health care system where expenditure is pushed towards equitable systems and sound economic management, for best patient outcomes¹. Clearly this is being directed towards disease prevention, and health promotion activities. Shamanism is a healing practice that promotes holistic immersion of the person in all facets of health, including body, mind, spirit, mental health and community.

For millennia, Shaman have worked as the healers within their tribal communities, using various herbal medicines, and metaphysical practices to engage the patient in the healing process. Alberto Villoldo, a medical anthropologist, in his book *One Spirit Medicine* talks about how creating wellness is about engaging the patient in full immersion of a healthy lifestyle. He works not just with the mindset of his patients, but encourages them to eat a diet rich in phytonutrients, and taking action to heal the gut and digestive system. He also talks about interpersonal therapy and counselling and methods to heal the mind. He then talks about how in Shamanism he works to heal the consciousness (or as he refers to it the *luminous body*).

Brower has attributed the move towards mainstream acceptance of mind-body medicine as the cumulation of a variety of driving forces:

¹ WHO

‘Several factors have driven this steady growth: most prominent is patients' increasing interest in self-care, wellness and alternative medicine, and their concomitant dissatisfaction with the success of allopathic medicine in preventing and treating chronic illnesses. The consumer demand for and use of complementary and alternative medicine has also prompted the US government to become involved.’²

Western allopathic medicine focuses on assessing the variety of signs and symptoms presenting in a patient, looking at the body’s functioning of the individual systems (digestive system, nervous system, mental health, cardiovascular system), and addressing the symptoms by either medicating to alleviate symptoms, or treat underlying causes.

Integrated medicine focuses on looking at the presenting signs and symptoms, and not just addressing the specific cause of this, but looking at creating a holistic view of the patient and working with the patient to empower him or her (or they³) to engage in health supporting choices. Shamanism is an extension of the work of the western allopathic medical practitioner, and an adjunct to patient care, as would be any other allied health practitioner. Once the validity of Shamanism is recognised for its importance, it is envisaged that patients will be able to receive referrals from their general practitioner or specialist to the Shaman.

Halveka et. al. have purported that the current western ideology of the biopsychosocial model, although historic in its application, is insufficient for the adequate treatment of modern patients. It fails to integrate a holistic approach to patient care:

‘... its efficacy has not only become questionable, but also the issue has been raised of its economic justification. The extension of biomedical approach and attribution of equal

² Brower

³ Use of third gender to represent LGBT or gender fluid individuals for equity purposes

importance to psychosocial factors have become an imperative in the improvement of treatment efficacy and disease control, together with humanisation of relations between health staff and patients.'

Historically, in Ancient Egypt, and during the Roman Empire, use of medicine included a prayer or petition to one of the deities in order to invoke protection over the patient and further efficacy of the prescription. The Rx symbol used by the Romans is thought to be derived from the Eye of Horus. Historical use of calling upon a deity was acceptable in medicine and in educated society, and it was not until the presentation of Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution that Spirit was removed and replaced by scientific reductionism.

After discussion with atheists and agnostics, it has been viewed as perfectly acceptable to encourage meditation and appeal to the 'higher consciousness,' so the Shaman as would be experienced in western medical facilities could indeed quite easily provide services to those without a belief in a deity, as the field of scientific enquiry is now elaborating on the power of mind and consciousness over the state of health of the physical body. Meditation is also viewed by many rigid academics as an acceptable and justifiable practice, even among atheists, and for what began as an inherently spiritual practice it can now be justified through the channels of scientific method.

We have now reached a point in history where it is no longer a point of debunking the existence of our higher consciousness affecting the world around us, and reducing ourselves to mere physical matter as the Darwinists had done. Patients are demanding more; Darwinism dehumanised society, and albeit a controversial statement the dehumanisation of society could have been indirectly responsible for the justification of mass genocide in previous World Wars.

Without the compassion inherent within what defines us as human, and more than we are, then the destruction of millions of people historically has been seen as a rationale to those who have no other view than of people as merely evolved physicalities.

Even post-modern atheists are seeking more out of their healthcare than surgical or pharmaceutical interventions, and perhaps we have Carl Jung and other similar innovators in the field of the mind to be grateful to in the fusion of Spirit back into the western ideology.

Science has evoked a deeper understanding of consciousness as separate from the body. This has been established through the application of clinical research and medical investigations. Church, in the journal article 'Is the Mind the Brain?' cites Dr Bruce Grayson who has done a study on his patients who have had near death experiences (NDE), stating, "*No one physiological or psychological model by itself explains all the complex perceptual processes during a period of apparent clinical death challenge the concept that consciousness is localised in the brain.*"

Neuroscientist Moran Cerf, in the episode of Impact Theory, explains that with neuroscience, the brain can be rewired. During sleep, he has put patients through various procedures while he is recording dreams, and then intervenes in particular moments of a dream, and then rewires the brain (such as using scents sprayed in the air while the patient is dreaming a particular experience). He has been able to ensure people change their behaviours through these scientific studies. He says that the narrative that we have collected through memories and experiences are what has been gathered by the brain in order to create a recursive type function, and we are deceived by our brains.

He has demonstrated that through emitting various electromagnetic frequencies, he has been able to make test subjects make certain decisions. This brings the difficulty of what freewill is, and that we are subject to some of our choices without even being free to choose, as there are so many external forces (and internalised habits) that on a moment to moment basis creates the decisions that we make.

The only way that we can genuinely make choices, is via programming our brain to behave in certain ways. Moran Cerf indicates that there are now microchips being created to insert into the brain to rearrange an outcome (such as for Alzheimers) or there are other methods such as through pharmaceutical interventions, Shamanic type work, and deliberate habit formation through counselling guidance.

Dr Joe Dispenza⁴, interviewed on Impact Theory, explains that a habit is something that is repeated on such a regular basis that your body then knows how to perform an action better than the mind does (concept of automaticity). He explains that as we go about our day, we follow through on our days, and follow the circuits that are wired in the brain. He says when memories are triggered, they create our emotions, and what creates our state of being is our thoughts and emotions.

‘The familiar past becomes the predictable future,’ says Dr Joe Dispenza, and in order to remove the dysfunction, thinking has to become completely deliberate, and habit formation has to become deliberate. Meditation helps to change the brainwaves, separating the conscious mind from the unconscious mind, and assists in getting beyond the analytical mind. When a medical

⁴ YouTube. (2019). *How to Unlock the Full Potential of Your Mind | Dr. Joe Dispenza on Impact Theory*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La9oLLoI5Rc&t=82s> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2019].

practitioner takes a person through a program of meditation, and assists a person in creating a new series of habits, they are able to rewire their neurobiology. The constraints of working within with a Shaman (or psychologist or medical practitioner) provide safety, and adequate guidance across a number of healing modalities.

Change is about making different choices, and it creates cognitive dissonance in the mind, creating new neural circuits. When emotional circuits are wired together with thoughts, a neural pathway is created, and these circuits become stronger. In order to circumvent these stressful thought processes, it takes time to eradicate these also from the subconscious mind and its effect upon the body.

Moran Cerf has been able to create changes that are lasting in people, by identifying a person's break point where they give up a new habit formation, and researched what type of environment is going to be conducive to persisting with new healthy thought processes. As people have their break points stretched, they are more able to progress towards being successful. Repetition is key, and ongoing repetition. This creates the key to lasting change.

As Dr Joe Dispenza explains, people who have addictions (and other health problems such as mental health issues) are stimulated by the environment in order to feel emotions, they are unable to go inwards. The use of substances can aid in creating the feelings of emotions, but not to have a directed outcome towards healing, merely an amelioration of the pain experienced due to trauma.

He suggests meditation, as a way of disconnecting from external forces of influence, and a way to go inward and be able to process inner emotional states. The Shaman can be a part of

this, and with the work of the patient, and with the use of pharmacological preparations, and botanical medicines, a healing may take place.

Special Consideration: Mental Health, Addiction and Drug

Abuse

Traditional western modalities treat the symptoms of such things as hallucination and delusions as a form of illness and dysfunction, whereas other traditional societies view these as a sign of spiritual awakening. It is the belief of the author that should a patient be experiencing symptoms of hallucinations, that they be placed in a supportive environment, monitored by a psychiatrist, psychologist (and allied health team) and information provided to the patient about the addition of a Shaman to the treatment team in order to provide specific advice on the symptoms.

Mental illness should be positioned more in terms of whether or not the symptoms being experienced by the patient are causing him or her distress, and are they impacting on the person's day to day ability to function.

Under Shamanic guidance, a person can be assisted to regain full function, to handle the hallucinations and self-determine what they mean to that person spiritually. Carl Jung is written about in John Grohol's feature article on psychosis, where Jung would deliberately induce himself into a psychotic state for two hours after his evening meal, and write his experiences into a recorded journal. It was noted that he was still able to see patients, and function in his day to day existence. A controlled environment where psychosis is permitted, such as in a spiritual journeying state, or a Shamanic Circle, in a meditative retreat, or where advocated using various

pharmacological preparations can assist a person who exhibits psychotic type symptoms to allow these to occur, but to do so in a controlled manner.

There exists a clear boundary and delineation for the existence of the spiritual, the hallucination and the delusion within the clear context of that safe space. For outpatients seeing a practitioner for appointments, these should be monitored and at all times compliance with safety should be ensured. This is where the Shaman can have the most use within the context of treatment of symptoms that a patient finds distressing and can usefully channel any symptoms into a place where they are confined, without affecting day to day functioning. The continuance of monitoring of the patient should be prescribed, ensuring that the patient is able to maintain daily functioning.

Daily functioning is not merely the absence of disease but the presence of wellness.

Patient safety and the highest order of medical practice, and excellence, and commitment to patient centred care should be the focus of Shamanic medicine, and the following considerations placed in context. The context of being able to function in modern society, as Jason Louv⁵, a Magus from Magick.me has frankly explained when working with magick, esoteric modalities (or Shamanic practice):

“(The) first thing necessary is to become grounded and have a regular mundane life so you don’t freak the fuck out of people.”

Shamanism, an overarching discipline of magick, can be incorporated as a tool for mastery over the mind. Jason Louv further explains:

⁵ Jason Louv, <https://www.magick.me/>

“Magick is a set of tools for mastering your mind, and therefore mastering your life. As martial arts train your body, Magick trains your consciousness—transforming it into an engine for achieving your goals and creating the future you want.”

Safe practice of Shamanic, or traditional medicine healers has already been demonstrated as a proven model in Australia⁶ where healers are being placed in western medical clinics. A number of different modalities are being used by Traditional Indigenous Healers, finding great acceptance amongst patients, and increasing the overall rate of compliance with other medical interventions from patients who also utilise a healer.

It is a welcome practice amongst both the western medical clinics, the Traditional Healers and patients. It recognises and respects Traditional Beliefs, whilst integrating evidence based practice. Indeed there is a growing body of evidence for the role of healers in medical facilities, as much as there are for doctors, nurses and allied health practitioners. It extends the medical model from merely the bio-psycho-social model to that of one incorporating Spirit.

When interviewing people of various beliefs, including agnostics and atheists, it was recognised that there were significant advances and enough public awareness to introduce the concept of the quantum field (based in science and experiments) when providing health care services to people who hold these beliefs. Therefore, Shamanism can be adapted between the ideologies of both science and spirituality without compromise.

Shamanism is both a millenia old tradition, and also the adaptation of it using traditional healing methods into modern evidence based medicine is necessary, to expand the scope of patient centred care, particularly in the western ideology.

⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-28/aboriginal-healers-complementary-medicine-finds-its-place/9586972>

Use of Pharmacology and Traditional Medicines in

Shamanic Work

Marijuana

The international fight for the right to use marijuana as a medication for both pain, and to treat post traumatic stress disorder symptoms has had an uphill battle due to the persistent refusal of the medical fraternity to recognise any benefits of the substance. There is due concern from medical practitioners regarding the use of cannabis, particularly amongst recreational users, and young people who have no pre-existing indication for the use of this substance.

Cannabis can have a negative impact on the growing brain, particularly amongst youth, and can adversely affect learning and performance⁷. In particular, recreational users who ingest a high dosage of the substance attain an intoxicated, dissociative state. With the variations of both CBD, and THC, both active ingredients within cannabis, there could be some controls over the intoxicated dissociative state.

THC is responsible for the induction of hallucinogenic states, and the removal of THC from hemp related products has allowed for CBD oil products on the market, which have been tested for such things as topical pain relief, and massage oils. These have had demonstrated health benefits without adverse effects.

THC, conversely, should be a severely restricted substance, taken under direct supervision by a medical practitioner, and administered within an appropriate professional such

⁷ Hall, W., Hoch, E. and Lorenzetti, V. (2019). Cannabis use and mental health: risks and benefits. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*.

as a Shaman with an awareness of proper medical training and procedures regarding pharmacology and medicine safety. The side effects of intoxication and dissociative states can be monitored by the Shaman, and when done in a controlled environment where safety is paramount, any harmful effects can be mitigated.

In the study by Elms and Shannon (et al)⁸ CBD was demonstrated to have a clinically significant effect on the reduction of symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, when combined with routine psychiatric care. It may be that the addition of hallucinogenic inducing substances in vulnerable populations could potentially have adverse effects, but some of the milder substances have been shown to be effective for various types of mental health issues. Again, it is worth the psychiatrist working with the team of nurses, allied health and Shamanic practitioners to create a care plan that integrates the best possible outcome, given the symptoms displayed, and to first cause no harm.

In some of the pseudo Shamanic clinics in the film '*Crazy Wise*,' patient safety was compromised and it was noted that some individuals died as a direct result of substance ingestion, without being properly pre-screened by the Shamanic practitioners. This is where due diligence, and proper medical protocols and applied safety precautions help to sort out legitimate modalities of healing from quackery.

⁸ Elms, L., Shannon, S., Hughes, S. and Lewis, N. (2019). [online] Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers. Available at: <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/acm.2018.0437> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2019].

MDMA (Methylenedioxyamphetamine)

Illegal in most countries, MDMA is a psycho-active substance primarily for recreational use. It was popular on the rave scene, due to inducing a somewhat spiritual and transcendent experience. It combined both the craving of the ritual and the connection to the other.

The spiritual element of the EDM festival mentality can explain why MDMA use is at its core.

“The link between drugs and spirituality, Doblin said, comes from two fundamental human needs: the need for rituals that connect us with others, and the need to operate “with the full range of consciousness.”⁹

Of course, it was inevitable that due to the illegal supply of MDMA, and the chopping of it with various other substances in order for the manufacturers and suppliers to simply make a profit off consumers, overdoses and deaths due to ecstasy use were inevitable.

It is however, being investigated as a treatment modality for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. With the combination of a patient participating in a Shamanic drumming circle and safely being administered a substance such as MDMA, a spiritually transcendent and healing experience could be had. If there were any adverse effects, these could be monitored for and also treated and mitigated when provided in an appropriate environment.

⁹ Jenkins, P. (2019). *Electronic Dance Music’s Love Affair With Ecstasy: A History*. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/09/electronic-dance-music-s-love-affair-with-ecstasy-a-history/279815/> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2019].

Should it lead to the natural conclusion that the Shamanic offices are located on site at the local hospital with a Spirit Garden and access to the psychiatrists and dispensary at the hospital?

Likely, yes. This is the safest environment for this type of scenario.

DMT & Ayahuasca

DMT is the molecule that is produced within the pineal gland, and it is thought that it is responsible for both dreaming and making the brain thinking that it is dying. It is used to produce a near death experience, and users claim it is a tool to use to experience other dimensions. The scientific research that has been done by Dr Rick Strassman¹⁰. He indicated that half the patients that he experimented on reported experiences with entities from other dimensions such as extra-terrestrials, other humans, spiders or strange creatures.

The other half of the patients described an experience where they saw Aztec type geometric patterns. He believed that DMT was released into the brain from the pineal gland near death, and is responsible for dreaming and the regulation of production of melatonin (responsible for sleep).

Participants in Ayahuasca sessions are ideally offered a thorough medical checkup prior to a medically facilitated session; in the International Centre for Ethnobotanical Education Research and Service, there are a series of protocols for safety outline. These include a full medical checkup, and medical history including any types of contraindications to participation, or previous adverse reactions to any particular medications. The facilitator should be a person

¹⁰ Oceanbreezerecovery.org. (2019). *DMT Trip: The Experience and Effects of the Most Powerful Psychedelic*. [online] Available at: <https://oceanbreezerecovery.org/blog/dmt-trips/> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2019].

with a medical, pharmacological or nursing background, with extended studies in Shamanic practice in terms of the context of what this paper is putting forth as best practice.

The best practice document outlines that Ayahuasca is a substance that is not a substitute for medical, psychiatric or psycho-therapeutic treatment, but that it can be administered as an adjunct or complementary therapy, for the purposes of self-development and the opening of insight. Any number of medical conditions that would benefit from a person undergoing some mastery of mind in facilitating the healing process could be considered for an Ayahuasca treatment session.

When more acceptance of prescribed medical safety, and training of medical Shamanic practitioners becomes more widespread, and the fear of psychoactive substances is removed through systemic cultural change and education many more people will be able to benefit. Post traumatic stress disorder is all too pervasive, and these substances have been clinically demonstrated to provide relief to the symptoms of this condition.

Other Psychoactive Substances

Psilocybin and other hallucinogens have been used recreationally, and will perhaps still have some underground illicit use amongst people who desire to experiment with these. One of the other more promising pharmacological substances is Ketamine. Ketamine has shown promising progress in the treatment of severe depression that has been unresponsive to other treatment. In a study currently being conducted by Professor Colleen Loo¹¹, which backs up and

¹¹ Blackdoginstitute.org.au. (2019). *Ketamine for adult depression study* | *Black Dog Institute*. [online] Available at: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/research/participate-in-our-research/for-people-with-depression/ketamine-to-treat-depression> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2019].

investigates previous treatment studies of depression with Ketamine, the clinical information will be verified and released by the Black Dog Institute (2019).

Ketamine has been subjected to other studies internationally, dealing with severe post traumatic stress disorder and unrelenting depression, with promising results. As it is still being subject to study it will be going through the process of clinical trials prior to prescription release for treatment purposes.

Safety Imperatives and Future Perspectives

The existence of shoddy practitioners has decimated the reputation of traditional medicine, and it is time that backyard operators were eradicated. To protect consumer choice, and maintain patient centred care, it is imperative that traditional medicine, in the form of Shamanism and its associated modalities be placed into modern safe medical practice.

Shamanic medicine can be taught in postgraduate programs, after undergraduates from any particular medical discipline, including allied health (dietetics, occupational therapy etc), nursing, biomedical science, biology, medicine, pharmacology and other similar modalities focused on the wellness of the human population could be afforded entry into a graduate program.

A solid and grounded western medical background prior to post-graduate entry into Shamanic medicine would give the credibility and sustained commitment to safety and patient centred care that has been consistent with western best practice. These undergraduates would understand the imperatives of solid science, yet be open to new types of treatment modalities that are being investigated in various academic circles, and the research is revealing its validity.

Finally, for example, a technology such as Wilhelm Reich's Orgone Accumulators¹², which accelerate the healing process can be an option for a patient in hospital post surgery or administration of radium. There are the scientific and clinical studies that clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of these treatments. Patients would likely be more compliant with treatment if they were afforded the choice of also consulting with the Shaman within the context of the hospital or clinical environment.

For parents or individuals who have the choice of wishing to engage alternative medicines, they would be able to participate in usual regulated medical environments without having to justify themselves and their belief systems, and if any issues of serious concern were presenting, the Shaman could refer him or her to the relevant medical individual.

At all times, within the context of Shamanic and traditional medicine, when it is merged with modern medicine, no longer does it become antagonistic or hostile towards western medical professionals, or be viewed as something to be debunked, but accepted as a genuine modality. As more robots and artificial intelligence are looking to take over traditional surgical roles, the pathway to becoming a healer, and adding the human element to the treatment regime naturally becomes the next path for the medical practitioner.

Other Shamanic Modalities

The following list of treatment modalities can be applied dependent on the undergraduate discipline, and whatever undergraduate specialities were taken, these can be offered as legitimate treatments to patients, dependent on the patient care plan. They can also be referred to other practitioners, and supervised in conjunction with a team leader such as a specialist, or a case

¹² Reich, Wilhelm et al. *The Discovery Of The Orgone*. Vision Press, 1974.

manager. Shamanic healing would be suitable for long term chronic health management, as it focuses primarily on the mind and the psyche first, and from there the outward health of the body, and treatment of the person as a whole, and in their social context.

- Massage
- Energy Healing (including Reiki)
- Metaphysical Healing
- Aromatherapy
- Naturopathy
- Diet and Exercise
- Holistic Lifestyle
- Orgone Accumulators
- Art Therapy
- Shamanic Drumming Circles
- Shamanic Narrative
- Vision Quests
- Meditation
- Cacao Ceremony
- Dance
- Nursing Holistic Care Plans
- Palliative Care Plans
- Spiritual Care Plans
- Hydrotherapy
- Sound therapy
- Play therapy
- Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture
- Social work
- Ritual therapy
- Prayer
- Interpersonal therapy
- Counselling
- Dream work
- Psychopomp
- Shamanic circle work
- Soul retrieval
- Indigenous or culturally relevant treatments
- Guided meditation
- Pharmacological treatments
- Journalling
- Crystal therapy
- Pastoral care
- Shamanic journeying

Not all of these treatment modalities are used in the traditional context of western medical ideology, however they do integrate true patient choice when it comes to elective treatment, and when a Shamanic medical healer is working with a patient in order to develop an integrated care plan, a lot of these types of healing modalities can be offered as options, so that the patient is no longer simply receiving treatment, but taking part in supervised active participation. This means that treatment response can be documented by the Shaman, and any concerns can be discussed with the rest of the treatment team.

A number of different spiritual practices are included in the above list, and all are to be practiced in the context of a safe and supportive environment that facilitates healing, the value of the person, and encouragement of self-expression in terms of the healing journey. Shamanic work helps a person become more empowered in their treatment.

Some of these particular modalities have been unique to traditional Shamanic work, but in order to facilitate acceptance across a wide range of patient populations it is important to be able to offer more traditionally pervasive holistic practices. A Shaman may initially offer interpersonal therapy (counselling) for example, and then discuss with a patient the immersion into the sacred circle. The various types of Shamanic modalities will be elaborated on here.

Psychopomp

The Shamanic discipline is the ceremony performed for the living relatives of a family, whose loved one has passed away. Usually a ceremonial circle is created in an outdoor area, or inside in a sufficiently large enough room, and the family members invited to participate in the ceremony in their own meaningful way. The Shaman leads a funerary type ceremony, where the family

members are able to let go of their family member, and help that family member cross over into the light.

Psychopomp has been held as a tradition for thousands of years, and may be able to be applied to situations where agnostics and atheists are able to participate in a meaningful ceremony where they are able to say goodbye to the “energetic field” that was their loved one.

Soul Retrieval and Integration

Soul loss in Shamanic work, refers to the fragmentation of the bio-geometric structure of the filaments that make up the soul of a person. When a trauma such as bereavement, separation from a loved one, accident, pervasive period of difficult circumstances or other stressful event, a soul fragmentation can occur.

In a soul retrieval ceremony, the patient sits comfortably in a chair, and the Shaman talks to the person after they are in a relaxed and meditative state. The person is then able to recall a particularly traumatic event, and then the Shaman talks the person through it. The Shaman can then enter into a narrative with the person, helping to detach painful emotions from the event, and bringing that person back into the now.

The Shaman will then ask if the person wishes to be whole and integrated, and with the person saying yes, they will to be whole and integrated, those parts of themselves are really then restored by the person who is undergoing the procedure. It is a non-invasive form of interpersonal therapy, and best done quite gently, and when the person is ready to deal with a particular trauma.

Each trauma in a person's life is taken in a case notes history by the Shaman, and as the person is ready to deal with the handling of the trauma, and to be restored, he or she can discuss the healing with the Shaman and undergo soul retrieval.

Shamanic Journeying

Shamanic Journeying is the method whereby a Shaman will work with a patient in order to help him or her come to terms with some life events that had caused trauma. A Shamanic journey (with or without entheogens such as DMT or ketamine) is commenced by a patient under the supervision of a Shaman, in a therapeutic and safe setting. Usually the occasion is outdoors, where the patient may sit quietly by a fire, and then move about a circle. In each of the four points of the compass, the patient is led by the Shaman to determine what aspects of his or her life the patient wishes to come to terms with.

There are parts of ourselves, including our shadows that have to be dealt with in order to aid in healing. Often the confrontation of ourselves, and the lesser loved parts of ourselves can be important, in order to facilitate self acceptance. Each of the symbols or icons that are placed at each corner of the compass are determined between the Shaman and the patient. These can be animal totems (particularly useful).

If a person would like to use other icons that have particular personalities or archetypes that will be able to assist in the Shamanic journeying ritual, these may also be useful. In terms of children, it can be family members who are with that child as he or she is gently drawn around the points of the circle.

The journey around the circle is followed clockwise, and if family members and loved ones are involved, and if they are chosen by the patient to represent particular totems, then the family member represents that to the person. Alternatively, the Shaman can facilitate this.

Alberto Villoldo outlines his Shamanic journeying procedure in his book, *One Spirit Medicine*.

What is not so much important is the detail of the narrative, but how the patient weaves their narrative with the Shaman in order to come to a better outcome. For example, at the northernmost point in the compass of the circle, the patient may wish to work with the Shaman to designate that as the north star.

The north star can represent always following what is right, and chasing after that which is good. It can also mean a representation of a light that shines in the darkness, and in releasing fear.

The Shamanic journeying should be a very gentle procedure, and facilitate a healing narrative for the person.

Dr Thomas Crowther, in his article, 'The Field: Mastering the Matrix in Life's Battlefield,' outlines how our minds are constantly filtering information from the source field, and how we are born into a particular situation where we are fed our beliefs, according to the demographics and society that we are born in. He discusses how important it is, and that it is part of our experience here to form our own meaning.

It is important to develop our own belief systems, and then remove any filters that are dysfunctional about our lives, in order for us to be able to transcend the traumas, hurts, pains, upsets and negative experiences that have been forced on us since before we were born. Even in

the womb, we are being forced to receive various signals from the environment around us about what sort of narrative we should have.

The group mind (our family) can force us to retreat back into their normality, even when this normality is dysfunctional. People can be disowned, disinherited and become a disgrace to their families when they transcend beyond particular belief systems or rise up away from dysfunctional patterns, but that ultimately is our task. If a person seeks to create their own narrative that serves to create in them a healthier happy mindset, that contributes to the greater welfare of all, without the exploitation of others, then a Shaman should be very pleased indeed to offer that assistance.

This is the fundamental truth about Shamanic journeying: it helps a patient create a new narrative, and a new belief system, irrespective of the cultural beliefs held.

Herbal Medicine and Naturopathic Medicine

There are a number of ways that traditional medicine has been used to effect wellness in the individual. Through the use of nutritional supports, holistic counselling and a number of different modalities (including Chinese medicine) people have sought assistance from naturopathic professionals, who have been regarded largely by allopathic practitioners as quacks.

This has been unfortunate, as naturopathic practitioners have sought to create a more professional image, by using a lot of evidence based practice in their clinics, and it is gaining far more trust within the community as many people are moving away from traditional western medicine and the negative side effects that a lot of pharmaceutical preparations, or even worse, medical interventions have upon a patient.

The aversion to western medical practice has created a culture of deviance, and some people have been ostracised and viewed as radicals by the more pervasive culture of those who still regularly attend and trust their doctors. Doctors however, have a singular lack of training in such basic areas such as nutrition (see a typical structure of a medical degree) as it is not regarded as a necessary area. There is some discussion and presentation of basic lifestyle outcomes, but when clinical studies are being funded in Sweden for the necessity of fruit and vegetables (and other micronutrients) in the diet, there seems to be something fundamentally wrong with the outlook of allopathic medicine.

The Shaman helps to bridge an integrated approach, particularly in the way that the training is desired to be presented to a potential practicing western Shaman in this paper. An underlying medical (or allied health) qualification, along with a scientifically validated naturopathic degree with a recognised professional association, and understanding of fundamentals of evidence based practice are both equally feasible. Further extensive study in both areas, as well as a commitment to ongoing professional development (as is standard requirement for continued registration) in relevant medical fields should also be mandated.

An understanding of natural medicines, and also particularly pharmacological studies should be undertaken (particularly for patient safety) as this would therefore make this an acceptable and radically rational field of discipline in modern medical circles. The Shaman can then be a model for western practice of alternative medicine that is in demand in western hospitals and medical clinics, as much as the community nurse is.

Discussion

The mind body connection has been reported extensively upon in scientific studies. Sandy C. Newbigging discusses his experience with Mind Detox to uncover his lack of ability to be able to love people, in that he was able to challenge his limiting beliefs that were carried around since birth. He was able to create for himself a new narrative.

The field of quantum theory is becoming far more aware of the science behind thought, and how as we start to proactively choose to partake in ways to heal the brain, that our neurobiology becomes far healthier and less toxic. In an article by Michael Brooks, he discusses quantum theory and thought. Matthew Fisher is a scientist studying the quantum properties of materials, and his scientific research has determined the potentiality of different molecules in the brain being affected by quantum activity:

*'the brain's extracellular fluid could be awash with complex clusters of highly entangled Posner molecules. Once inside the neurons, these molecules could begin to alter the way the cells signal and respond, starting to form thoughts and memories.'*¹³

Dr Caroline Leaf, a leading researcher on cognitive neuroscience, in her book *Switch on Your Brain* posits that there are two positions on how the brain and thoughts interact. One being that the brain creates what you are doing, and what you are thinking. The second realm of thought being that around Eric R. Kandel's work, where he believes that as we think and

¹³ (Brooks, 2019)

imagine, we are able to cause epigenetic changes in our DNA, and align the brain to where we wish it to be.

This supports the fusion of quantum theory with the causality of how the mind is affected by the will. In a paper by Schwartz and Stapp (et al), the causality of brain changes are discussed:

‘The cases in question are those in which the conscious act of wilfully altering the mode by which experiential information is processed itself changes, in systematic ways, the cerebral mechanisms used. There is a growing recognition of the theoretical importance of applying experimental paradigms that use directed mental effort to produce systematic and predictable changes in brain function (e.g. [Beauregard et al. 2001](#); [Ochsner et al. 2002](#)). These wilfully induced brain changes are generally accomplished through training in, and the applied use of, cognitive reattribution and the attentional re-contextualization of conscious experience.’

As a person conscientiously decides to change his or her brain, it requires simply making choices, upon choices, forming habits until these things become integrated into the nervous system. It requires not only the conscious changing of thought, the deliberation of choices to engage in more functional behaviours, and to partake in more healthy behaviours, but will result in extensive behavioural change.

As it is possible for a person to lose weight and keep it off, as they change their habits to become healthier, so too it is possible to actively engage a person’s mind in the choices that they make in order to become far healthier in his or her outlook.

So it seems to be as this ancient wisdom describes from the Bible (Proverbs 23:7) *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*. Modern science seems to be describing this from validated clinical and empirical research.

Conscious cognition is a distinct brain event. The conscious interaction and attention in the mind given to a particular event (or interaction of a complex organism with the environment) given the particular filters and pre-existing neurocognitive circuits can determine the interpretation of an event, and therefore the response. In a human being, the interaction of consciousness (as described by Baars and Edelman) upon the brain (from a quantum level) results in the mapping of the neural circuitry.

The consciousness can actively participate in directing the structure of the mind, and interact with experiences. From a quantum level, we choose our thoughts, and we can become the causality of how we then are able to form our life around us. When we choose to transcend beyond the narratives that have been given to us in the context in which we were born in, we are able to become that which we choose to be.

It depends on the further intervention therefore, where people are constantly presented with choices in order to be able to change. The facilitation of that change is similar to the experience of Pavlov, with classical conditioning. We are at a foundational level products of our environment. When we are presented with a stimulus we either respond to it, or become averse to it. When a person receives enough negative stimulus from a particular context hopefully that would cause that person enough impetus to change.

Somehow we should hope to be more than simply base creatures slave to our natural appetites? Our ability to create art, philosophy, imagine and to form mathematical theories, and

to invent, and to engage in spiritual practices helps us to rise above being slave to our base natures. Yes, we are animal, we have drives, but these can be superseded by our higher consciousness, and choice to become more than we are.

The intervention of society becomes important therefore, in terms of what supports it offers to people. Generally a well functioning society is one that is supportive of freedom of choice, and assisting people to live peaceful, happy and fulfilling lives. Where we do not encroach on the will of another, yet are able to influence another to be well, to experience a life where the mind is healthy and functioning, then that is truly where we desire to head with the intervention of therapeutic professionals on the level of medical interventions.

The Shaman either in the hospital ward, or present at the local community medical clinic, with a background in western medicine, and able to integrate after a solid foundation of patient centred care, the role of healer can be a gentle introduction to those who desire a better life.

Even in roles where people have been removed from society due to being antisocial, or performing violations of another (such as through criminal acts) there can be a way for rehabilitation to occur, and perhaps having a Shaman in both the prison, and even the educational environment will provide a useful intervention.

When the conscious choices of a person actively involves choosing to engage in far healthier behaviours, more altruistic behaviours, then there is every chance for that person to become a far more fruitful member of society. The science is there to demonstrate better outcomes for people who consciously are active in their choices to become well, and develop far healthier biologies in their minds and behave better socially.

Conclusion

What does an ideal society look like, and how do healthy individuals behave? Michael Tellingier, the founder of the Ubuntu Movement, where people join small societies in order to have everyone participate (contributionism) sees this as a place where everyone is able to work according to their *ikigai*, or dharma (life imprint) and personal preferences, and live a peaceful existence.

In the book *Ikigai*, Hector Garcia speaks about the villages where the blue zones exist in Japan. Every individual lives a long and happy life, and part of the reason for this is that those who participate in the villages where they practice their *ikigai* are incredibly happy, and they are also people who are community oriented, and live to be aware of other's needs. There is no encroaching on the privacy of others, simply a supportive and generous community.

Michael Tellingier's utopia is already in existence in modern Japan, and places where a community minded village exists. Perhaps what is needed is cultural change, and particular in western society where we have been so founded on individualistic self-determinism, then perhaps somewhat of a restraint on individualism, and more contribution to the greater good is warranted.

There seems to be an epidemic of narcissistic abuse survivors on social media, and how to channels on how to identify sociopaths and psychopaths on YouTube channels. Is this a result of our over identification with the self? Are we able to cohesively pull together and form a community mindset with each other, and overcome a society endemic with trauma from abuse,

with a group mind and cultural change towards overthrowing the overly narcissistic culture of how we have become?

Once upon a time, the 'selfie' didn't exist. Now there is a mental health diagnosis, called selfitis for it. However, if we go too far back the way of socialism, or communism, then society can also experience corruption. Communism was viewed as evil, and the controls placed on society became far too restrictive. There was a ban on religion, beliefs, books were burned, in China it became outlawed to have manners as these were seen as marks of the aristocracy. There are hallmarks from history of society going too far in either way.

An integrated balance, where we neither focus too much on individual wellbeing, but as a person, we also integrate the needs and wants of others, and how our decision will affect the community. These meanings are always formed within subgroups within societies - the deviant cultures. The LGBT community was able to lobby for marriage equality, and then receive the support of the community when it appealed (and even railed against) a dominant hegemony where the laws of various governments made it illegal to have a marriage between a homosexual couple, or a couple where each individual was gender queer.

This is a lesson in people forming sub-groups within a dominant ideology, and a group mind starting to recognise that there is a need for greater societal change. Perhaps the demand for the Shaman as part of western medicine is another part of the need for social change. Perhaps the Shaman can help more of us get well, and as we recognise the form of spirit (or consciousness) over matter, then we will be able to become a more harmonious (not homogenous) society.

A society where the rights of each person to individual self-expression, without the encroaching on the rights of others to self-express, and to earn a peaceful living, and to be

accepted in our points of view are our common birthright as members of the human race living during this time.

Perhaps the ancient views of the Aztecs of Teotl, where everything has a facet of the divine consciousness can be the superlative thread for the expression of the modern Shaman: as consciousness and the quantum field permeate all matter, and we all interact with one another, so we create an effect on the other.

Where we are guided back to treat matter with due respect (even waste material can be treated in ways where it becomes useful) and start with ourselves in that equation, the role of the Shaman can also be extended to that of a community spokesperson for the way of wellbeing in the community. This becomes a practical rationale for health promotion. The Shaman can attend community wellness workshops, help facilitate in the creation of community gardens, and as a state sponsored professional, it is viewed that this role can be facilitated, regardless of the person's belief system.

The Shaman can however hold his or her own individual belief system, whilst being able to be supportive of others within the community context. Sal Rachele talks about how the individual can retrieve his or her (or non-binary they) parts through consciously choosing to become a whole individual. Perhaps like the power of snowflakes, as a community Shaman actively works to bring people to wholeness, as a collective we can become a force for change, and a force for power.

There are those people who throughout history, as individuals, have changed the world. They leave us with no doubt as to the power of change through being open to the power of seeing beyond the barriers of their mind. These people include Einstein and Nikola Tesla. These

remarkable people admit that they downloaded from the infinite source field. There is more to us, surely, even for the atheist belief system, quantum theory maps out more than just the physicality of this plane of existence.

In this paper we have looked at what the Shaman can be, and how the concept of a Shamanic medical therapeutic practice can be applied in a normal western medical context, and also extend work in the community. The education and necessity for evidence based practice, and a solid foundation of medical practice, and patient centred care has been emphasised, as has the disassociation from any one particular belief system. The Shaman exists for both the good of the individual, the family, the community and the culture in which he or she (or nonbinary person) exists. No longer relegated to the field of periphery, or esoteric belief systems, solid science backs this up, and there is a demand for this amongst members of the community.

As the minorities who rise up and demand that this service be provided, and that we have recognised that we are more now than simply evolved creatures in a post-Darwin existence, we want more to be involved in the way we are treated in the realm of our healing. We want our bio-psycho-social model to be extended to meet the needs of us at a consciousness level, or level of spirit, depending on our belief system. As we make greater demand on healing ourselves and our communities, social cohesion through an ancient healing art can be brought to the masses through the work of individual Shamanic practitioners who view healing through the context of healing the individual, for the overall good and benefit of society.

So, can we, through the gift of the Shaman, that has existed for thousands of years, as the bridge between Spirit and the Physical World hope to help individuals heal from trauma? And as we collect more people who are healed, and start to transform their own circles around them,

surely this can cause a cascade effect, where the net result becomes like a beautiful blanket of pure white snow, each individual such a precious imprint, part of the matrix of existence, and each necessary. Each, unblemished, and each functioning as an incredible part of the soul.

Can we, in western society start to form healthy bodies, by working on our own selves, and seek the assistance of therapeutic professionals as part of the soup of our wellness? Then, we can go forth into the new utopia, and a promised golden age. Perhaps we can. It simply starts with the power of one.

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