

MPs recommend complementary, traditional and natural medicine to help overstretched NHS

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A new report, by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Integrated Healthcare (PGIH), urges the NHS to embrace complementary, traditional and natural medicine to ease the mounting burden on service provision.

The report, “Integrated Healthcare: Putting the Pieces Together”, recommends a whole person approach to health delivery focusing on prevention and tackling the root cause of illness. It highlights the fact that 70% of total health expenditure in England is associated with treating the

30% of the population with one long-term condition or more. The result of these complex health conditions being the growing problem of polypharmacy (the use of several drugs at the same time) coupled with largely unknown effects of combining drugs over a sustained period of time.

The PGIH paper, the first of its kind, was produced in consultation with 113 complementary and alternative medicine organisations – including the British Homeopathic Association. It goes on to argue that Government needs to devise a strategy to fully assess the degree of drug interactions, determine the long-term health effects on patients, and arrest the trend of over medicating the population.

A significant part of this strategy would be to treat patients as whole persons, with individual needs, rather than with a variety of illnesses that are treated separately.

This strategy should make greater use of natural, traditional and complementary therapies, which are widely used for a variety of conditions and represent an under-utilised resource which could work in tandem with conventional medicine to improve patient outcomes.

David Tredinnick MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group said:

Despite positive signs that ministers are proving open to change, words must translate into reality. For some time our treasured NHS has faced threats to its financial sustainability and to common trust in the system. Other European governments facing similar challenges have considered the benefits of exploring complementary, traditional and natural medicines. If we are to hand on our most invaluable institution to future generations, so should we.