# #15 — DEEP DIVE SERIES INTRO: How Big Pharma Lead Us to Call Eastern Medicine ‘Alternative’ Transcript

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## Introduction to Integrative Medicine

[music] Welcome to the trip lab kitchen table conversations about integrative medicine and psychedelics. [music] I'm your host and attending physician Dr. Mariela Wood.

Welcome to the first episode of our deep dive series. In this series, we are going to look deeply into the pathophysiology and the root causes of some of the most common medical conditions. Then with that understanding, we can better learn how our traditional medications and evidence-based alternative or integrative therapies will work to treat these disorders. If you're new to this podcast, integrative medicine is a field of medicine that combines evidence-based alternative or eastern practices with our traditional western model. So rather than only subscribing to one view or the other, we combine both in an evidence-based way to offer our patients more treatment options. And when I say evidence-based, I mean that these traditionally quote unquote alternative practices are being studied so we can determine which ones are actually efficacious and which ones are not. As the field of integrative medicine grows, the divide between eastern and western medicine is closing. But I do want to talk about how this huge divide started in the first place.

## How the East-West Medicine Divide Began

Why do we call western medicine the gold standard and anything else is called alternative. So this divide truly originated when we started to standardize medical education in the United States in the 1910s when the Flexner report came out commissioned by John D. Rockefeller. It was to put bluntly a pretty harsh document that rejected any forms of historical knowledge like herbal medicine. But standardizing medical education sounds like a great idea, right? And if that's all that it was, of course it would be. We need to have standards of care. But there is a caveat to how this happened. So when we look back, we see that Rockefeller had control over 90% of the oil refineries in the United States. This is key because pharmaceutical companies were interested in studying and manufacturing petrochemicals produced by the petroleum industry for their drugs.

For reference, these petrochemicals from the oil industry are used to manufacture antibiotics, analesics, cough syrups, and a whole lot more. So, you might be able to see where this is going. Time for another attempt to gain a monopoly.

This time over modern medicine. So, Rockefeller actually purchased a pharmaceutical company to produce medications from his petrochemicals. And to ensure a monopoly, you have to cut out the competition. So he commissioned the Flexner report under the disguise of quote unquote standardizing medical education. Really, he wanted to just put the emphasis on pharmaceutical development and research and prescribing medications that you can charge big bucks for. So this led to a systematical removal of any plant-based or natural treatments, including even education on diet and nutrition from the medical school curriculums.

## Rockefeller, Flexner, and Pharmaceutical Influence

But we have to ask, why did the medical schools just go along with this? Well, of course, it comes back to money. To incentivize them to make these changes, he gave more than $100 million to medical schools around the country. And that's a lot more money than $100 million is now a day back in the 1910s. So with all this new funding and push to standardize medical education, each new generation of doctors went through medical school focusing only on pharmaceuticals and learning nothing about nutrition. And with this shift, ancient medical practices that have been practiced for centuries with great efficacy and little to no side effects were deemed quack medicine via funding from big pharma.

Doctors were even jailed for prescribing anything other than what big pharma produced. So jump forward a few

decades, we are now finding that a whole slew of these petrochemicals are causing cancer, allergies, and toxicity to the body.

Most notably, you might have heard of parabens, benzene, and DEA. Also with this shift, we saw the rise of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's, and other diseases as this change was implemented. We can't confuse correlation with causation, but it is an interesting point to bring up. More likely, all these diseases came about because of the ceased education around diet and nutrition rather than the shift from only using pharmaceuticals, but I personally think that both play a role. Now, let's look back into the history of these quote unquote alternative or eastern medical practices.

These date back much further than our western medicine around 2,000 or more years ago. And back then, double blind randomized control trials were not a thing. Medicine was studied in a totally different way. These ancient doctors studied the healing modalities of plant medicines through trial and error to find out which ones worked and which didn't. Unfortunately, trial and error just doesn't cut it in today's modern standards. However, if you think about it, this really is a primordial form of our eventual gold standard double-blinded randomized control trials.

## Loss of Nutrition and Plant-Based Medicine

But these ancient practices didn't make it long enough to be studied using these rigorous modern approaches because the study and use of them were banned with the flexer report. Luckily, now all this is changing. We are now starting to study these practices again using our modern lens. And it turns out that a lot of these practices that have worked for thousands of years actually do work when studied today. Not all of them, of course, but a lot of the data is proving to be very efficacious. We're also finding that these practices have less side effects and most notably finally realizing again that diet and lifestyle truly impact the development of virtually any and every disease including cancer. So we took a huge century step back when we rejected any type of historical medical knowledge and allowed big pharma to lead our modern medicine charge. We released any credibility to the thousands of years of knowledge that came before us so that we can manufacture and push pharmaceuticals instead. Now, I'm not trying to say that pharmaceuticals and modern medical education is bad. In fact, we have made many great steps to advance our medical knowledge and in turn lifespan is increasing. Granted, so is the prevalence of virtually all non-communicable diseases.

## Reevaluating Ancient Practices with Modern Science

And these diseases are due to huge lifestyle changes that, as we will find out, actually cause many of the medical conditions the big farm is trying to treat. But alas, we are moving forward.

What I really want to emphasize with integrative medicine is that we're not going backwards and just using ancient practices. We are now studying them using our modern medical standards and incorporating them or integrating them into the western medicine that has developed over the past century. And this is integrative medicine. So going back to our series, in this series we are going to take a deep dive into the pathophysiology of some of the most common medical conditions.

We're going to talk about what is actually happening in the body when you have high blood pressure or diabetes. We'll look at what causes this and then we will look at both the holistic natural approaches as well as pharmaceutical or surgical options that we have to treat these diseases.

This series is going to focus a lot on science. And my goal is to make it applicable to both medical professionals and those who have no medical background at all. So, we're going to look into the science of everything. We will not just take an herb as efficacious purely because it's natural and has been used for thousands of years. We will talk about the ingredients in the herbs because now we have an understanding of how they work. And we'll do the same for pharmaceuticals.

## Series Preview and Closing Remarks

So, I'm hoping that this series will give us a better understanding of how and when to choose an herb or mindbody technique over a pharmaceutical or vice versa. I'm personally very excited about this series because this topic is why I became so interested in integrative medicine in the first place. It really forces you to truly understand the body and the pathophysiology at a deeper level rather than just following guidelines that are funded by big corporations. So with all that, we'll kick off the series in the next episode by looking at the most common primary diagnosis in the United States, hypertension or high blood pressure. And if you have any suggestions for other conditions or diseases that you want to see in this series, shoot me an email at the triplab podcast@gmail.com.

I hope you enjoy the series. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to the trip lab. If you liked this episode, please subscribe and share so we can get the conversation started about integrative medicine and psychedelics to destigmatize it and fully explore what this could mean in the world. [music] [music]