

## Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine

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Alternative and holistic medicine is very popular for both humans and their pets. There are many different areas of alternative medicine but many of them concern me because an unskilled person using treatments with no real background or proof of benefit may perform them. Many people, including veterinarians are skeptical of these areas of medicine. I believe that people have the right to pursue an alternative for their pet, so I try to guide them to a qualified practitioner. First and foremost I believe that the person should be a veterinarian who has undertaken extensive training in the alternative modality. I have listed explanations of several different therapies that I believe have some merit. Physical or “physio” therapy and chiropractic are probably familiar to most people. Acupuncture and homeopathy are very different concepts that I do not even understand. The bottom line is, that in the hands of properly trained individuals these therapies can work. But just like conventional medicine they do not work for every patient.

**Physical Therapy (PT)/Rehabilitation** is directed at evaluating, maintaining and restoring physical function and movement. Veterinary rehabilitation is defined as the use of non-invasive techniques, excluding veterinary chiropractic, for the rehabilitation of injuries in non-human animals. Veterinary physical therapy performed by non-veterinarians uses the techniques of range of motion, rehabilitation exercises, hydrotherapy (swimming pool or underwater treadmill), applications of heat and cold, and massage therapy. Electrotherapy, by the use of stimulation by low-level lasers, electrical sources, ultrasound and magnetic fields can be applied as required.

**Veterinary Chiropractic** can be used to treat a broad spectrum of conditions in animals. It works for any patient with a spine, bones, joints and muscles. There are healing potentials achieved through chiropractic that are not achievable by other forms of therapy. In chiropractic, the subluxated or fixated vertebra is identified and through hands-on specific adjustments the problem is alleviated and homeostasis is restored.

**Acupuncture** has been used in China for 3500 years. It is the main treatment for a quarter of the world's population. Thousands of years of acupuncture treatment prove its efficacy. The primary aim of veterinary acupuncture is to strengthen the body's immune system—to stimulate the body's adaptive–homeostatic mechanism. Acupuncture is a technique for relieving pain and for improving the function of organ systems by stimulating acupuncture points on the surface of the body.

**Homeopathy** dates back to the Father of Medicine, Hippocrates. Samuel Christian Hahnemann, a German medical doctor in the mid-1800's, developed the system we are using today. Homeopathy works on the principle of "Similia Similibus Curentur", or "like cures like." When a large dose of a toxic substance is swallowed, it can produce death, but when a homeopathic, diluted, minute dose of the substance is given, it can save the poisoned animal. Homeopathic remedies contain vibrational energy essences that match the patterns present in the diseased state within the ailing patient.

If you are going to pursue an alternative therapy for your pet make sure that you understand all of the options. There are some diseases such as certain cancers that are very treatable in the early stages by conventional medicine. If a person were to decide to try alternatives first, the cancer may be too advanced if the alternatives do not work. The best alternative is a veterinarian who uses a combination of conventional and alternative therapies. A good place to gain more information is the Complementary and Alternative Medicine web site at (<http://www.altvetmed.com>).