The view of the psychological and psychiatric establishment towards holistic (alternative) medicine treatments: Changes

in the attitude and reflected in 1989-1999 publications/

Korin Shachar

**Abstract** 

This study researches the change of psychiatry and psychology's attitude towards holistic (alternative) medicine between the years of 1989-1999, and the reasons that brought about this change. In order to reach results a bibliometric test, which took into account documents from the relevant period dealing with the psychological-psychiatric field, was conducted. Those documents were taken out

of 22 scientific and professional databases, via DIALOG- the online vendor.

The primary assumption of the research was that an increase in the number of documents would show an increase in awareness and interest in this area by authors representing the psychiatric/psychological medical establishment.

Another assumption was that as the number of phrases and definitions describing methods and conceptions used by the holistic medicine, would grow, this would be an indication of a rising interest in those issues.

4061 documents were found searching "Alternative Medicine" within onesearch category "PSYCH". Those documents contained terminology of holistic (alternative) medicine, out of them, 1511 also contained psychology and psychiatric terminology.

The documents were written on work-boards, and while being sorted according to their publication dates. Relevant terms were chosen as "key-words", classified as descriptors, titles or abstracts, and counted the number of times it appeared as each one.

A comparison was made between the documents found in database 11 (the only one that dealt solely with psychology/psychiatry-following "Database 11 Sample") and documents found in the other databases (that cover various areasfollowing "Remainder Databases"), so that the differences between a wholly psychiatric/psychological database and other databases, would be shown.

The abstracts of documents taken from of database 11 were analyzed, to determine the attitude of the documents' authors towards the issue of holistic medicine. Due to the large volume of the material, it was impossible to carry out such a survey for all documents, and it was necessary to limit the research to a smaller sample- about 200 documents only.

The "Relevant Sample" included 1511 documents, in which 6909 keywords were found; from which 2640 were classified as descriptors, 1677 as titles and 2592 as abstracts.

The growing tendency found in the research period in those 1511 documents was a growth of 24 times bigger in the last year than in the first year, in the keywords – 34 times bigger in the division into the three fields (a growth of 29 times was discovered in keywords of descriptors – 32 times of titles and – 44 times of abstracts). It is obvious that the growth rate was very significant, both in the number of documents and in the keywords found in them.

In "Database 11 Sample", the number of keywords was 9.8 times higher than the number of documents, out of which 39% descriptors, 18% titles and 39% abstracts; compared to 3.7 times higher number of keywords out of number of documents found in the "Remainder Database Sample", out of which 38% descriptors, 27% titles and 35% in abstracts.

Statistical analysis examining appearance of keywords in a single document showed that the ratio between the number of descriptors to the number of documents found in "Database 11 Sample" was much bigger than those found in "Remainder Databases". Similarly, this ratio found its expression in the other statistical calculations examined, such as maximal number and the average of keywords in an item. There were no significant differences between the two samples regarding the titles; as to the abstracts, similar results were found to those found in the descriptors. This data indicate a greater reference to issues related to holistic treatments in documents found in "Database 11 Sample", than in "Remainder Databases".

By dividing the 6909 keywords into themes, 56% were found as dealing with holistic medicine, some 20% dealing with traditional medicine, approx. 7% describing methods accepted by both medical approaches and some 16% describing physical and emotional situations. These data strengthen the

assumption about the increasing reference of the documents to the issue of holistic

medicine and its treatments.

Each abstract of the 206 documents of "Database 11 Sample" was analyzed in

order to determine the autor's attitude to the subject matter of the document. The

documents were graded according to an evaluation ladder ranging from numerical

value 1 (extremely negative) to 7 (extremely positive). Some 32% of documents

received an evaluation of values 6-7. About 56% of documents received

evaluation of values 4-5 and approx. 12% of documents received evaluation of

values 2-3. No documents receiving value 1 evaluations.

The analysis of 206 documents pointed out the great importance the authors

refer to conducting further researches, regarding holistic medicine. This tendency

is distinctly different from the non-recognition of this field, characterizing the

literature representative of the psychological and psychiatric establishment in the

years prior to the research period. 31% of the documents receiving 6-7 assessment

point at a significant change in the attitude of the establishment's representatives

to the issue of holistic medicine in general, and its method of treatment, in

particular.

The reasons that increased the patients' demand of seeking holistic therapy as

reflected in the documents were: seeking for a solution for problems that

conventional medicine failed to provide, medicaments without by-side symptoms,

co-operational patient-therapist relations, were patients receive more information

than in the conventional medicine.

It seems that this process had affected the conventional medical establishment

and has brought about some acts such: founding in 1992 the office dealing with

alternative (holistic) medicine, by the American National Institutes of Health,

allocating funds for researches concerning the efficiency and reliability of holistic

therapy, and introducing various treatments used in holistic medicine into

conventional medicine.

System No.

1090402