



Research Summary: Healing Models #1

As featured in Dr. Kenny Mittelstadt's video:
"The Medical Model vs. Holistic Medicine: A Root Cause Perspective"
Date of Publication: 03/07/2026

Research Context:

Many people feel caught between two worlds of healthcare. Conventional medicine often focuses on diagnosing and treating defined diseases, while holistic or functional approaches ask broader questions about how different systems in the body interact over time.

This week's topic explores how chronic symptoms are often not caused by a single problem. Instead, they tend to emerge from patterns across multiple body systems. The research below helps illustrate why asking different questions about physiology can sometimes reveal clues that traditional models miss.

Key Findings from the Research:

Study 1 (PMID 31651966):

Researchers compared patients receiving an integrative care model with those receiving conventional medical care. Integrative care included lifestyle medicine, systems-based evaluation, and collaborative treatment approaches. Patients in the integrative group reported meaningful improvements in overall health status and symptom burden compared to standard care.

In plain language, this study suggests that when healthcare looks beyond one isolated symptom and instead considers multiple lifestyle and physiological factors together, people may experience better outcomes. It supports the idea that health problems often involve interacting systems rather than a single malfunction.

Study 2 (PMID 41207299):

This study examined how complex chronic diseases develop across multiple biological systems rather than one isolated pathway. The researchers highlighted how metabolic signaling, immune responses, stress hormones, and inflammation often interact in networks.

For example, chronic stress can influence cortisol (your primary stress hormone), which then affects immune balance, blood sugar regulation, and inflammation. Instead of one cause leading directly to one disease, the body shows patterns of shifting physiology across several systems at the same time. This systems perspective helps explain why people can experience fatigue, gut problems, or hormone symptoms even when standard disease markers appear "normal."

Study 3 (PMID 33031458):

This research explored the concept of systems biology in medicine. Systems biology studies how networks in the body communicate with each other rather than focusing on a single gene, enzyme, or pathway.

The researchers showed that many chronic conditions emerge when multiple small changes accumulate across biological systems. Think of it like several small stressors slowly adding load to the body's internal communication networks. No single shift may trigger a diagnosis, but together they can create symptoms such as low energy, digestive issues, or metabolic changes



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Functional Medicine Connections:

Your body is not a collection of separate parts working independently. Instead, it operates more like a communication network. Hormones influence metabolism. Metabolism affects inflammation. Stress chemistry shapes immune function. The gut microbiome communicates with the brain and even the skin.

When several of these systems start drifting at the same time, symptoms can appear long before a disease label exists. This is why someone may feel exhausted, struggle with digestion, or experience hormone changes even though conventional lab work appears "normal."

The research above helps explain why different medical models sometimes ask different questions. Reductionist medicine is excellent at identifying a clear disease and targeting it directly. Systems-based thinking, on the other hand, looks for patterns in how multiple physiological signals interact.

Both perspectives can be valuable. But when symptoms involve multiple body systems, expanding the lens of investigation can reveal clues about how those systems are communicating.

Practical Reflections & Takeaways:

Think about your own health story for a moment.

Do your symptoms appear across several areas at once, such as energy, digestion, sleep, or hormones? Or have you ever been told that your labs look "normal" even though you still feel like something isn't right?

These experiences are not uncommon. They may reflect patterns in how different systems in your body are communicating rather than a single isolated problem. Sometimes the most helpful step is simply asking different questions about what your body might be trying to signal.

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