Assessing Your Beliefs about Your Health: Considerations for Clinicians

The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and contemplation rather than upon mere survival.

-Aristotle

You do not apply your medical knowledge and skills in a vacuum. Decisions related to patient care are informed by values and beliefs – both yours and your patients’. One way to be prepared for those inevitable moments when your beliefs are in conflict with others’ is to be as familiar as possible with what you believe (refer to “How Do You Know That? Epistemology and Health”). This assessment is designed to help you become more familiar with your beliefs related to different Integrative Health-related topics.

Below are 111 questions in 7 different categories. Take the next 20-30 minutes to review and answer them. The more time you spend thinking about your answers, the more rewarding this exercise is likely to be. Consider each statement, and then circle your response on the scale that follows it. If it seems unlikely that you would ever have to answer a given question based on the type of work you do, you can skip it. If you do feel unsure about your stance on something, or you simply do not know your answer, you can just circle “Neutral.”

There are no right or wrong answers; this is primarily a mindful awareness exercise. There is also no expectation that you share your answers with others, unless you wish to do so. The main intent is to provide food for thought and to help you feel more prepared, should real-life circumstances put you in a situation where it is necessary to have clarity about what you believe.

Pay close attention to the feelings the different questions evoke – these may be just as instructive as the answers themselves.

Section I. Beliefs and perspectives that shape your overall practice
1. I believe there is a place for religion and/or spirituality in my work.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

2. My own spiritual and religious views inform how I practice.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

3. My patients’ spiritual and religious views shape how I practice.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
4. I believe in a higher power that influences patient outcomes.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

5. I believe that consciousness persists after death.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

6. The majority of the time, I assume patients will follow my recommendations.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

7. I expect people's health to improve because of my care.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

8. I believe the work I do is meaningful.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

9. The work I do energizes me.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

10. I display compassion and empathy in my work.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

**Section II. Beliefs and perspectives that guide your medical decision-making**

11. Whenever possible, I rely on evidence-based medicine to guide my practice.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*

13. It is essential to have a conclusive diagnosis prior to beginning treatment.  
*Strongly Agree*  *Agree*  *Neutral*  *Disagree*  *Strongly Disagree*
14. Intuition informs my work.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

15. Individualizing care from one patient to the next is important.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

16. Patients are usually correct when they say what is wrong with them.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

17. I believe that the mind and body are closely connected.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Section III. Beliefs about relationships with patients
18. Continuity is an important aspect of patient care.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19. It is okay to think of patients as friends.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

20. It is inappropriate for patients to look for medical information online.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

21. I have stereotypes about patients based on race or ethnicity.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

22. I have stereotypes about patients based on their gender.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

23. I have preconceived notions about patients based on their age.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

24. I have preconceived notions about patients based on economic status.
Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
25. I have preconceived notions about patients based on level of education.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

26. I make assumptions about people based on appearance.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

27. I have stereotypes about people based on their age.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

28. I have biases against my patients if they express different political views from my own.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

29. I am open to collaborating with traditional healers if a patient requests that I do so.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

30. I am comfortable asking patients about their spirituality.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

31. I believe that all illnesses can ultimately be explained through biochemistry.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

32. I am comfortable asking a problematic patient to stop seeking care from me.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

33. It is important to know a patient’s life story.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

34. I am comfortable asking someone who is not getting better in my care to seek a second opinion.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

35. I am comfortable attending large social gatherings when one of my patients are present.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
36. I would feel comfortable inviting one of my patients to a large social gathering.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

37. It is okay to give patients your mobile phone number.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

38. I am willing to disclose my own nutrition practices with my patients.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

39. I am willing to discuss my own weight struggles or weight management practices with patients.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

40. I am willing to discuss my own exercise/physical activity practices with patients.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

41. I am willing to offer informal health advice for a patient’s family member if they request it.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

42. It is okay to refuse to see a patient if they won’t quit smoking.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

43. It is appropriate to attend a patient’s funeral.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

44. I would be willing to pray with a patient if they asked me to do so.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

45. I am comfortable shedding tears in front of a patient.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

46. If you make an error, you should always disclose that error to the patient it affected.

   Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
Section IV. Beliefs and perspectives that influence colleague interactions

47. I would report a colleague with a substance abuse problem that compromises patient care.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

48. I would report a colleague with a substance abuse problem that did not seem likely to compromise patient care.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

49. I would always report a colleague who sexually harasses a coworker.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

50. I prefer to practice as part of a team.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

51. Quality metrics improve care.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

52. Electronic medical records improve care.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

53. It is important for medical colleagues to have social gatherings.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

Section V. Beliefs and perspectives related to making a diagnosis

54. Fibromyalgia is a real (legitimate) diagnosis.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

55. I am willing to support someone with fibromyalgia in their efforts to apply for disability benefits.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

56. Chronic fatigue syndrome is a “real” disease.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
57. I am comfortable with the idea of supporting someone with chronic fatigue in their efforts to apply for disability benefits.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

58. Multiple chemical sensitivity is a legitimate diagnosis.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

59. Myalgic encephalomyelitis is a real disorder.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

60. Adrenal fatigue is a legitimate diagnosis.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

61. Disseminated Candida infection is a legitimate diagnosis.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

62. Chronic Lyme disease is a legitimate diagnosis.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

63. It is reasonable to order a lab if a patient requests it, even if I do not believe it will help with making a diagnosis.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

64. It is appropriate to enter “empacho” or another culturally-based diagnosis on someone’s problem list.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Section VI. Views on conventional therapies**

65. I believe medications and surgery are superior to other therapies.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

66. It is best to minimize the use of medications whenever possible.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

67. Emphasize prevention with patients whenever possible.
68. It is okay to prescribe a placebo without telling a patient.

69. I would prescribe a placebo and tell the patient I am doing so.

70. It is important for clinicians to do home visits.

71. I enjoy/would enjoy leading group visits.

72. Health coaches should be a core part of a patient care team.

73. It is usually wrong to prescribe opioids for non-cancer, chronic pain.

74. A patient should not refuse a vaccination on philosophical grounds.

Section VII. Views on complementary therapies

Note: This section is divided based on the five domains of complementary therapies used by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH). If you would like more information about any of the therapies mentioned or about complementary approaches in general, refer to the “Implementing Whole Health in Your Practice, Part III: Complementary and Integrative Health.”

Biologically-based practices

75. I would support prescribing bio-identical hormone therapy if a patient asked for it.

76. It is appropriate to prescribe/recommend vitamins and minerals.
77. It is appropriate to prescribe dietary supplements other than vitamins and minerals.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

78. Herbal (botanical) remedies are safer than medications.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

79. It is best to prescribe dietary supplements over medications whenever possible.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

80. I am comfortable supporting the use of dietary supplements even if that use is not conclusively supported by evidence-based medicine.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

**Mind-body medicine**

81. It is appropriate to recommend hypnotherapy.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

82. It is appropriate to recommend biofeedback.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

83. Therapeutic journaling is worth recommending to some patients.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

84. It is appropriate to recommend cognitive behavioral therapy to a patient.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

85. It is appropriate to recommend meditation to a patient.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

86. I am comfortable practicing mind-body approaches myself.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

87. Mindful awareness is an important aspect of healing.

    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
88. I am comfortable teaching my patients one or more mind-body practices.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Manipulative and body-based practices
89. Chiropractors can be helpful members of a patient’s care team.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

90. I would be comfortable receiving care myself from a chiropractor.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

91. I am comfortable referring patients for osteopathic manual medicine.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

92. I am open to receiving osteopathic manual medicine myself.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

93. I would be willing to practice some form of manipulative therapy (osteopathy, chiropractic) myself.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

94. Massage has therapeutic benefit.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

95. I am comfortable receiving massage therapy myself.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

96. I am comfortable referring patients for tai chi or qigong class.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

97. I am willing to recommend yoga to my patients.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

98. Yoga is/would be beneficial for my self-care.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree
### Energy medicine

99. Subtle energy, or qi, exists.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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100. I am okay with my patients using energy medicine therapies.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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101. I am comfortable with referring someone for energy medicine (Reiki, healing touch, etc.).

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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102. I am comfortable with experiencing energy medicine myself.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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103. I would be willing to offer energy medicine as part of my own practice.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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### Whole medicine systems

104. Acupuncturist should be included as part of a patient’s care team. I would refer to an acupuncturist.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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105. I am comfortable with experiencing acupuncture myself.

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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106. I would consider training in and practicing acupuncture myself.

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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107. Homeopathy is a legitimate therapeutic approach.

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</table>

108. I am comfortable with trying homeopathic remedies myself.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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109. I would be willing to treat patients with homeopathy myself.

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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110. Naturopathy is an effective therapy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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111. I would be willing to see a naturopathic physician myself.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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**Wrapping up**

Now that you have completed this questionnaire, take a moment to reflect on the process.

- How did it feel to do this? Did any of the questions elicit strong emotions for you. If so, why?
- Were you surprised by any of your answers?
- The intent is to have you reflect on these questions before you are ‘put on the spot’ in a conversation with a patient or colleague. Is this useful? In the past, have you encountered any of these questions in your practice?
- Which questions stand out for you, now that you have been through them all? Why?
- Are there any topics you wish to learn more about, in order to have a more informed response to a question or questions?

Are there questions or topics that were not covered that you think should be?

**Author**

This handout was adapted for the University of Wisconsin Integrative Health Program from the original written for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) by J. Adam Rindfleisch, MPhil, MD. (2018). Modified for UW Integrative Health website in 2020.

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