

The Right to Receive Alternative Health Care as a Part of the Right to Health

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Abstract : The right to health care - usually known as the right to health - is recognized in many national laws and Constitutions, as well as in international human rights documents. The kind of health care that citizens are entitled to receive, especially in the framework of the National Health Service, is usually identified with conventional medicine. However, since ancient times that a different form of medicine - alternative, traditional or nonconventional medicine - exists. In recent times it is attracting increasing interest, as it is demonstrated by the use of its specific knowledge either by pharmaceutical companies either by modern health technologies. Alternative medicine refers to a holistic approach to body and mind using herbal products, animal parts and minerals instead of technology and pharmaceutical drugs. These notes contributed to a sense of distrust towards it, accusing alternative medicine of being based on superstition and ignorance. However, and without denying that some particular practices lack indeed any kind of evidence or scientific grounds, the fact is that a substantial part of alternative medicine can actually produce satisfactory results. The paper will not advocate the substitution of conventional medicine by alternative medicine, but the complementation between the two and their specific knowledge. In terms of the right to health, as a fundamental right and a human right, this thesis leads to the implementation of a wider range of therapeutic choices for patients, who should be entitled to receive different forms of health care that complement one another, both in public and private health facilities. This scenario would demand a proper regulation for alternative medicine, which nowadays does not exist in most countries, but it is essential to protect patients and public health in general and to reinforce confidence in alternative medicine.

Keywords : alternative medicine, conventional medicine, patient's rights, right to health

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