
What is Applied Kinesiology?

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Applied Kinesiology (AK) is a relatively new field, and is patterned after the ancient Chinese medicine. It was developed in the early 1960s by Dr. George Goodheart. Its practitioners have the option to use a variety of alternative disciplines in the treatment of the patient. But first, there is a major focus, one which has been lost in traditional care, the full assessment of the patient, including functional status. Part of this initial process utilizes traditional muscle testing, which helps assist the doctor in evaluating the patient. Once this evaluation is made, and only then, can the applied kinesiologist administer individualized treatment which matches the patient's need. The goal of treatment is to relieve the cause of the problem, and slow the universal degenerative process, thereby delaying the onset of end-stage diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

A visit to an AK doctor should result in three important events:

1. A complete assessment for functional problems, not just disease.
2. Administration of therapies that specifically match the patient's needs to improve or correct any dysfunction found.
3. Recommendation of specific lifestyle changes which may correct and/or prevent the previously found dysfunctions from recurring.

Let's discuss these three key aspects of care in more detail:

1. Assessment

Applied kinesiology is a method of evaluating a person's functional state. In medicine, the patient is evaluated from a disease standpoint: "Is there any disease yet?" is the question asked by the

mainstream doctor. The AK doctor will ask, "Is the body headed for a disease state?" Ruling out any existing disease is a first step in this process.

The method of assessment occurs in two ways. The first is the use of some of the standard medical diagnostic techniques. These may include measuring blood pressure, blood and urine tests, breathing tests, including a neurological and orthopedic examination. It also includes a complete history of the patient's life, including diet and exercise habits and stress factors.

Some of the tests such as x-rays and blood and urine tests only help rule out disease. But others, coupled with an expanded interpretation not used in traditional medicine, provide the AK doctor with added information. This is where the art of medicine, gathering subtle clues about a patient's health, is often ignored by mainstream diagnosis.

This information is combined with a second form of assessment, evaluation of the muscle system, called kinesiology, including analysis of posture, gait (moving posture) and the use of manual muscle testing. Most muscles of the body can be tested by having the patient physically counter pressure exerted by the doctor. This assessment has also been used for years by orthopedists and neurologists, but the AK doctor goes a step further and adds a functional dimension to the tests.

Since the early 1960s, the clinical research in applied kinesiology it's been shown that certain muscles may "weaken" or "turn off" when they shouldn't. Muscles "turning off," called inhibition, actually takes place all the time under normal circumstances. During walking, for example, when one leg is forward, the muscles on the front of the thigh, the quadriceps, are "turned on," pulling the leg and thigh forward, while the muscles on the back

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of the thigh, the hamstrings, "turn off." This normal inhibition of certain muscles is easily demonstrated using manual muscle testing.

A problem may develop in which muscles "turn off" when they shouldn't. This may be due to a mechanical problem in the foot, pelvis or spine. For example, excess foot pronation may cause the psoas major muscle (which supports the low back) to "turn off." The low back may then lose support, eventually causing discomfort, pain or even disability.

Treating the back pain – the end result symptom – in this example won't solve the problem because the cause is in the foot. The psoas muscle "weakness" is a clue to the AK doctor there may be a foot problem, even though the patient often doesn't complain about the foot. (Taking this a step further, the doctor must look at what is causing the patient to pronate excessively and seek to eliminate it.)

These weak muscles don't usually need rehabilitative exercises to return them to normal, because the problem is usually not in the muscle itself. Once the cause is found and corrected, the muscle function is immediately restored to normal.

How does the doctor find all the weak muscles? When a muscle loses normal function, when it "weakens," it changes your posture. That's why the AK doctor looks carefully at your posture and even the way you move. It's often the first clue about what's wrong. A certain tilt or curve may indicate a specific muscle may be weak. The doctor can then manually test the muscle in question.

A weak muscle on one part of the body usually creates an opposing muscle tightness. This spasm-like tension is often uncomfortable and sometimes painful, and usually obvious to the patient. Unfortunately, the weak muscle is usually symptom-free.

These mechanical aspects are fairly well understood and accepted. But there is another part to the AK assessment involving changes in muscles not as well understood, and therefore not as accepted. Nonetheless, they have proven quite useful clinically in a wide range of patient conditions. In the example above, the foot pronation caused a weak psoas muscle to affect the low back. Muscles can weaken abnormally from a variety of problems throughout the body. In this example the weakness

was due to a mechanical problem in the foot. Through clinical research and empirical findings, we have found that many muscles will weaken when a specific organ or gland is not functioning optimally. For example, an adrenal gland stress may cause the tibialis posterior muscle to weaken. This is the muscle that maintains stability in the foot. In our example above, perhaps a functional problem in the adrenal glands has caused a weak muscle in the calf and foot, causing a mechanical problem in the foot, which weakens the psoas muscle causing the back to hurt. This is a typical scenario an AK doctor may go through in the evaluation of a patient complaining of back pain.

2. Therapies

Manual muscle testing also offers clues about the patient's therapeutic needs. Using the same case as above, if the doctor stimulates an acupuncture point related to the adrenal glands, he will know if it is successful by re-testing the weak muscle. If it's now strong, that therapy was probably correct. But if the therapy did not change the weak muscle, the doctor knows that some other treatment is still necessary. In the course of one visit to an AK doctor, you may have a number of areas worked on therapeutically. Correcting these problems helps deter their unhealthy direction towards further imbalances and in many cases, disease. Therapy may include nutritional supplements, dietary changes, hands-on therapy such as chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation, acupressure or other meridian therapy techniques, and exercise.

The AK doctor is like a detective, putting many small but important pieces of a puzzle together, with the eventual solution of your health problem.

3. Lifestyle changes

But our AK doctor is not yet through with his task. The doctor must consider why the adrenal glands got into trouble to begin with. Perhaps the patient wasn't eating properly, drank too much coffee or sugar, and was under excess stress. The doctor can then make some lifestyle recommendations to help prevent the problem from recurring.

Hypothetically then, our patient with the back pain (who really had an adrenal dysfunction), could avert a future problem, such as a disc problem, which requires more radical medical intervention at a much higher cost.

Essentially, this book describes many lifestyle procedures I used and prescribed to patients regularly. And for many people, the proper lifestyle changes can have dramatic, positive effects on overall health and fitness. In many cases, the right lifestyle changes could correct almost all the problems the patient has.

The International College of Applied Kinesiology (ICAK)

Professionals in all disciplines, including chiropractors, osteopaths, medical doctors, podiatrists, dentists and psychiatrists, make use of AK. The ICAK is a worldwide organization which researches and teaches AK to doctors. The types of problems treated by these doctors typically reflects the style of practice in that particular professional's background. For example, in the U.S., many AK doctors have chiropractic licenses. These doctors merge the structural approach with nutritional and other biochemical factors. Dentists incorporate many AK techniques, including balancing the jaw joint – the TMJ – and using nutrition, whereas a psychologist may incorporate acupuncture for assistance in the treatment of patients with phobias.

What kind of problems do AK doctors treat? That question is perhaps best answered this way: We don't treat knee pain, headaches, digestive disturbances, weight problems, back pain, PMS, low blood sugar. We treat people: people who have knee problems, people with digestive symptoms, etc.

An applied kinesiologist can be likened to a race car mechanic. The race car, like the human body, is a highly complex, finely tuned machine. The structure of the car (the tires, body and gas tank) must work in conjunction with the chemical aspect (gas, oil and grease). The conscious, mental part of the car (the driver) is as important as any other part. Some of the factors that influence the car's performance include the track, other cars and the weather – in other words, the environment. During a race, the car is subjected to great stress on all its parts. As a result, it regularly makes a pit stop, during which the mechanic evaluates the car and driver, makes any necessary modifications or changes, and the rejuvenated car is off again to the race – more balanced and more capable to handle whatever stress confronts it.

In this way, the car and driver can continue throughout the race with the maximum efficiency. Similarly, you can continue through your "race of life" with a properly working system. The AK doctor is one professional who can assist you in your endeavor.