

“Wellness” an Introduction to Concepts and Principles

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Currently, the main keywords used in Thailand's health and wellness business and tourism are “wellness”. Several services, businesses, conferences, articles and new technologies use this keyword to promote. The term is used in various ways, such as the Wellness Centre, the Wellness Business, the Wellness Economy. This paper aims to explain the definition, concepts and principles of “wellness” so that readers can recognize terms and engage further in a deeper detail.

Is wellness a new term or new word? If we look back, we can trace wellness back to the ancient foundations. Preventive and holistic health can be considered related to the development of religious and conventional movement from the east to the west since the 19th century. At the time, wellness uses natural approaches, self-healing and preventive care, which are the basic foundation of today's wellness. Since the 1970s, the term wellness has gained greater recognition, and many wellness models have been found, including Jack Travis (1972), Bill Hart (1976), Don Ardell (1977) and others (Arloski 2014).

The illness-wellness continuum is a graphic illustration of Travis's concept of health first proposed in 1972. In this model, the right reflects a level of well-being and the left shows a level of illness (Fergusson, 2013). The model describes how individuals who suffer from depression, anxiety, and other disorders are described in the absence of physical disease (Tomas, 2009).

Travis explained that medicine usually treats symptoms, injuries, and disabilities, bringing the individual to a “neutral point”. The Illness-Wellness Continuum proposes that one can move forward to healthier and happier people by passing through the stages of consciousness, education, and growth (Thomson, 2007). The worsening health state is reflected in symptoms,

and disability. In addition, the wellness paradigm requires a transition from a neutral point to a wellness point, a continuum towards an optimal state of emotions and mentality (Jobson 2003 and Hunh 2007). The concept explaining wellness as a dynamic process.

Further explanation of the illness-wellness continuum: People who do not show symptoms of disease but are constantly complaining will be on the left side of the continuum, far from high-level well-being. On the contrary, those with disabilities, but who maintain a positive perspective, will be oriented to the right in the direction of a high level of wellbeing (Tooman, 2014). It is of less importance at what point one is in the continuum than the direction it is headed. The disease-wellness continuum is used as a visual diagram to explain the concept of treating, preventing, and promoting health, educating individuals on the signs and symptoms of illness, and protecting themselves from pathology and premature death (Thompson, 2007).

Currently, the term "Wellness" is widely used, beyond the concept of health and health promotion. After the world was badly affected by the Covid-19 epidemic, people are more concerned about optimal health. GWI (2023) changed Travis J's concepts to explain the differences between the reactive medical paradigm (feel better; treat and cure illness; corrective; episodic; clinical responsibility; and compartmentalized) and proactive wellness paradigm (thrive; maintain and improve health; preventive; wholistic; individual responsibility; and integrated into life).

There are few other definitions of wellness:

"The quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort." (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wellness>; accessed 2023).

"An approach to healthcare that emphasizes preventing illness and prolonging life, as opposed to emphasizing treating diseases." (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/wellness>, accessed 2023)

"Wellness is an active process, it is a conscious, self-directed and continuous process of achieving full potentials as individuals. Wellness is directed towards a positive and affirming life. Wellness considers multiple components, which involves lifestyle, spiritual well-being, mental wellbeing, and the environment." (https://www.physio-pedia.com/The_Concept_of_Wellness#,

accessed 2023).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines wellness as “the optimal state of health of individuals and groups” and it is expressed as “a positive approach to living”[2021]. According to the WHO, “wellness has two cardinal concerns, which are the achievement of individuals’ fullest potentials physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually and economically, and carrying out individuals’ expectation in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings.” (WHO, 2006).

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) defines “wellness as the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health, including an 1) ‘active pursuit’ that is related to intentions, choices and actions of a person to achieve toward an optimal state of health and wellbeing and 2) wellness is linked to holistic health that incorporates many different dimensions that should work in harmony.” (www.globalwellnessinstitute.org).

Most concepts of wellness include at least six dimensions, including 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) emotional, 4) spiritual, 5) social and 6) environmental: Fostering positive interrelationships between planetary health (GWI, 2023)

Other two dimensions considered to be quite important and supporting these 6 dimensions, such as economic and financial stability, personal growth and development. For social dimensions, in many text books or wellness tools, the interpersonal relationship, which can be divided into two components 1) friends, colleagues and family members, is called interpersonal relationship.

Why is wellness becoming so important?

The objective of health promotion and disease prevention is to make people live a healthy life. In addition, maintaining an optimal level of health is essential for living a quality life. Wellness has become very important because everything we consume, how we act and how we feel in our lives is related to our well-being. On the other hand, happiness also has a direct impact on actions and emotions. Thus, it is essential for everyone to achieve optimal wellness in order to ensure positive interactions between the body and the mind. The following eight dimensions that are interconnected and are equally vital in the pursuit of optimum health include: emotional

wellness, environmental wellness, financial wellness, intellectual wellness, occupational wellness, physical wellness, social wellness, and spiritual wellness.

While the number of enterprises is growing in all aspects and the population around the world is increasing the expenditure on wellness, and also in Thailand. This development and economic growth must be guided by strong scientific evidence that leads to the position that Thailand is the capital of the world of well-being. The three sectors should design services and products based on evidence of long-term positive health outcomes for users and customers. The quality and products of the wellness industry must be controlled, regulated and evaluated in order to maintain long-term economic development in Thailand. Therefore, academics and researchers must understand these three parts (academic, government and commercial) and who can lead the field of wellness research in the development of evidence-based services and products. Meanwhile, it is important to join existing academics, researchers, developers, entrepreneurs, investors, governments and policy makers to collaborate on research and support the establishment of a working team for strategic research directions for the country.

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