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Review

Esoteric Healing Traditions: A Conceptual Overview

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This paper presents, for the first time, a comprehensive scholarly examination of the history and principles of major traditions of esoteric healing. After a brief conceptual overview of esoteric religion and healing, summaries are provided of eight major esoteric traditions, including descriptions of beliefs and practices related to health, healing, and medicine. These include what are termed the kabbalistic tradition, the mystery school tradition, the gnostic tradition, the brotherhoods tradition, the Eastern mystical tradition, the Western mystical tradition, the shamanic tradition, and the new age tradition. Next, commonalities across these traditions are summarized with respect to beliefs and practices related to anatomy and physiology; nosology and etiology; pathophysiology; and therapeutic modalities. Finally, the implications of this survey of esoteric healing are discussed for clinicians, biomedical researchers, and medical educators.



Key words

Healing; religion; spirituality; pathophysiology; treatment; health; medicine

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