

A history of the institutionalisation of complementary medicine in Switzerland : the case studies of yoga-therapy & mindfulness

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The institutionalization of yoga as a therapeutic practice in Western countries is the result of a secular cultural transformation. Patients' expectations and changing demands cause modern medical doctors to start questioning the biomedical paradigm and searching for new methods to treat chronic diseases, stress, cancer, and ultimately reflecting on the way they intend prevention. This research endeavours to trace the yoga historical trajectory in Switzerland from 19th century to our days when the Swiss healthcare system has inscribed yoga among the wide range of alternative therapies institutionalising complementary medicine within the Swiss Federal Constitution (art.118a_2009). Beyond the historical research related to ancient and modern literature on yoga and yoga-therapy, the data discussed in this paper are extracted by hospital archives, extensive interviews with yoga-therapists, mindfulness practitioners, modern MDs, all based in Switzerland, France, Italy and USA. Furthermore, the results presented in this study are based on the analysis of the PhD thesis of the French medical doctor, Bernard Auriol, *Prolegomène à une Yogathérapie de groupe*, University of Toulouse, 1970. Dr Auriol followed the traces of his Swiss colleague Dr Roger Vittoz who modeled his own therapy called *Traitement des psychonévroses par la rééducation du contrôle cérébral*, 1911, giving a starting point to yogatherapy to be considered as « Salvation through Relaxation » (Singleton 2005). Giving birth to an extended protocol of yoga therapeutic practices that capture the medical cultural changes in the representations of health care, wellness and well-being, Dr Auriol's work helps provide a better understanding of increasingly numerous links forged between Western medical culture and health-care medical approaches of Eastern inspiration. Ultimately, this study hopefully contributes to Singleton's cited paper analysing the 'westernization' of yoga as an anthropological and social process of metamorphosis massively impacting not only the Western medical culture but the biomedical paradigm as a whole.

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