

9

Health, wellness, mental and spiritual wellness

Ideally, staff working in the spa industry should have a clear understanding of the meanings of health and wellness and their related concepts.

Health

Promoting and providing opportunities to improve the health of its clients is the essence of what a spa facility should do, and this ideally should be actively driven by the spa manager – health being defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1948) as“as state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In other words, health is not just about being free of disease, it is about being well on all levels – physically, mentally and socially.

The World Health Organization’s constitution also lists two other principles that are of particular relevance to spas:

- 1 The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.
- 2 Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.

(WHO, 1946)

Taking these two principles into consideration, spa managers are in the ideal position of being able to promote the benefits of living a positive, healthy lifestyle and really help their clients to improve their well-being.

■ Health tourism

According to Smith and Puczkó (2018: 63) “health tourism covers those types of tourism which have as a primary motivation, the contribution to physical, mental and/or spiritual health through medical and wellness-based activities which increase the capacity of individuals to satisfy their own needs and function better as individuals in their environment and society”.

Health tourism is seen as umbrella term for 'wellness tourism' and 'medical tourism':

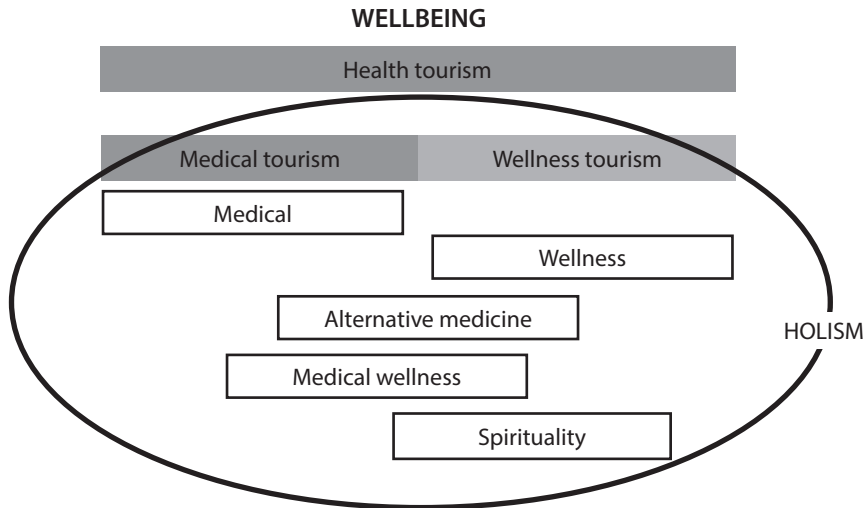


Figure 9.1: The scope of health tourism. Adapted from Smith and Puczkó (2018).

'Wellness tourism' refers to traveling to improve and balance one's overall health and wellbeing through preventative and proactive activities (such as fitness, diet, relaxation and healing treatments), whereas 'medical tourism' is where people travel from one country to another to receive medical treatment. 'Holism' or 'holistic' refers to either the mind/body/spirit connection or if referring to holistic medicine includes treating not just the illness but the root cause and inviting patient involvement (Smith and Puczkó, 2018)

Wellness

For anybody working in the spa industry, particularly internationally, it is important to be aware that like the word 'spa' the word 'wellness' also has different meanings to different cultures. In parts of Europe for example, it infers a sauna area or leisure facility offering pampering and relaxation services, whereas in America 'wellness' will encompass all areas of one's life from fitness, to diet, to relationships to even aging and finance. In the UK, wellness has similar connotations to the USA, but with the word 'wellbeing' being preferred.

With respect to definitions there are literally hundreds - Figure 9.2 gives just a few examples. In these examples, general themes that stand out are 'life-long quest', 'continual ongoing process', 'taking personal responsibility', 'optimum health', 'preventing illness' and 'holistic'. One particular theme worth emphasizing, is the need for an individual to take personal responsibility for their health and wellness, in other words wellness is not something that you can purchase or get once, but is a continual ongoing lifelong process.

“a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential.”

– The National Wellness Institute

... the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health. *The Global Wellness Institute*

The quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort. An approach to healthcare that emphasizes preventing illness and prolonging life as opposed to treating diseases.

www.dictionary.com/browse/wellness

Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices towards a healthy and fulfilling life. It is more than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth. A good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity; welfare.

www.globalwellnessday.org/about/what-is-wellness/

Wellness is the act of practicing healthy habits on a daily basis to attain better physical and mental health outcomes, so that instead of just surviving, you're *thriving*.

www.pfizer.com/health-wellness/wellness/what-is-wellness

Figure 9.2: Definitions of wellness.

Cohen and Bodeker (2008: 8) take the concept of wellness one step further by describing it as “a multidimensional state of being ‘well’ where the inner and outer worlds are in harmony.”

In short, there is no one definition, however the Global Wellness Institute does offer a clean, concise description: “the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health” (Global Wellness Institute, 2020).

Where does wellness come from?

The pursuit of wellness and holistic health has been around in all parts of the globe for thousands of years, from Ayurveda in India and Chinese medicine from ancient China, to the ancient Greeks, where the physician Hippocrates focused on not just treating disease but on diet and lifestyle too.

The western concept of wellness has its roots not just from the ancient world, but also from the 18th and 19th centuries when the importance of clean, healthy living and diet fed its way into the mainstream.

The modern use of the word ‘wellness’ derives from the 1950s when J.I. Rodale launched *Prevention* magazine followed by the publication of Halbert L. Dunn’s *High Level Wellness*, published in 1961. The concept of wellness as we know it today was first established in a university campus in the 1970s and then expanded with the fitness revolution of the 1980s and early 90s, followed by later integration into spa concepts.

Perhaps one of the most recent influences on the concept of modern wellness has been the study of blue zones which evolved out of a National Geographic expedition to discover the secrets of life longevity; its findings proving essential knowledge for anyone working in spas or health tourism: