



So you want proof healing works?

Science is often described as the “gold standard” for finding the truth. However, in reality, science is not a fixed set of answers, it’s a process of examination, discovery, and revision. That process is powerful, but it’s also open to interpretation, bias, and the limits of the tools we have at any given time.

History shows that even when scientists think they have the answers and develop whole theories on them, those answers can change, sometimes dramatically, as new evidence comes to light. Two examples still shaping lives today show how wrong turns can persist for decades:

The Fat Mistake: In the late 20th century, public health authorities declared fat the enemy. Butter was out, margarine was in, and “low-fat” labels became a marketing goldmine. The advice was based largely on research like Ancel Keys’ Seven Countries Study, which linked dietary fat to heart disease.

Keys was criticised because he left out countries whose data didn’t fit the theory, and he also didn’t consider the broader lifestyle of participants. Later research found the connection between fat and heart disease was far more complex, and that healthy fats are vital for brain health, hormone production, and cardiovascular function.

However, the implications of his research were massive. Food companies swapped fat for sugar and refined carbs, contributing to soaring obesity and type 2 diabetes rates. Decades later, many people still believe “fat = bad,” even though science has moved on.

The logo consists of five overlapping circles in a circular arrangement. The colors are grey, yellow, red, orange, and white. The text "Shamanic Healers Circle" is centered over the circles.

Shamanic Healers Circle

The second fallacy, depression and chemical imbalance. For years, we were told depression was caused by a “chemical imbalance”, often explained as a shortage of serotonin in the brain. This idea was heavily promoted by pharmaceutical companies, not just in academic literature but in TV ads and public health campaigns.

Yet modern reviews, including a major 2022 study in *Molecular Psychiatry*¹, have found no clear evidence that depression is caused by low serotonin. Despite this, antidepressants are still prescribed widely, even to children and teenagers, raising concerns about:

- Dependence and withdrawal: Many patients experience withdrawal symptoms when stopping antidepressants, sometimes mistaken for relapse.
- Limited benefit in many cases, the drugs often performing no better than the placebo.

Why does this matter for Health Care

Both cases reveal how science can become wedded to oversimplified explanations, especially when there are powerful financial incentives to keep them in place. They also highlight a deeper truth that science is limited to studying what it can measure, and what it cannot measure often goes unexplored or dismissed.

If our tools or models aren't yet capable of detecting certain effects, those effects may be ignored or dismissed. Throughout history, this has happened over and over, from microbes before microscopes to brain plasticity before modern imaging.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41380-022-01661-0> accessed 15 August 2025



Why This Matters for Complementary Healing

This same limitation often applies to complementary healing, like shamanic practice. Used for centuries across cultures, from the Amazon to Siberia, shamanic healing focuses on ritual, connection, and meaning. Modern medicine may not yet be capable of measuring its effects, but that doesn't mean they're absent. Ask the many clients who have benefited from shamanic healing. Many healing traditions have endured because communities found them effective. They experienced the positive benefits.

If science is truly about curiosity and discovery, why isn't it more open to exploration. To keeping possibilities alive rather than closing the door on them? Complementary healing, can draw from a range of modalities that:

- Offer benefits science has not yet developed the tools to measure.
- Work in harmony with, rather than in competition to, modern medical care.
- Empower patients by restoring a sense of meaning, community, and personal agency in their healing journey.

Conclusion

Science is not diminished by admitting it doesn't have all the answers. By recognising the limits of current knowledge, and the biases that shape what gets studied, we can make room for a richer, more inclusive view of healing. One that values the real benefits of a range of healing modalities. One that puts people first.