

## Intention Paired With Herbal Practices

### **Intention Paired with Midwestern Herbal Practices:**

#### **Discovery of a Multi-Directional Energetic Exchange System**

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#### **Abstract**

Herbal medicine and intention as conscious, directed thought have been studied separately in their distinct fields. To date, there is no systematic documentation regarding the pairing of herbal medicine and intention and how they work together in practice. This phenomenological inquiry used semi-structured interviews to document how ten herbalists use intention in their practices. Intention is defined as bi-directional conscious, directed thoughts under the Quantum Enigma paradigm. However, in this study, a new discovery emerged depicting intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. Intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system manifested four specific themes within herbal practices: the triangulation of energetic connections between plant, client and practitioner, practitioner and plant relationship, plant intelligence, and practitioner as interpreter. This new theory of intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system demystifies intention as hocus pocus or a mystical illusion.

#### **Introduction**

In a phenomenological study of ten herbalists, the use of intention in herbal practices emerged as a energetic exchange system that supports the multi-directionality theorem of Holism and is associated with Quantum Complex Systems Theory. The results of this study support the use of evidenced based research to describe intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system and demystifies the notion of intention in

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herbal practices as mythical hocus-pocus. Traditional healers, including herbalists, combine various forms of healing modalities with herbal medicine, including energetic means of healing (Whorton, 1987). These energetic methods include various forms, such as sacred rituals, incantations, telepathy, clairvoyance, meditation, prayer, intuition, and imagination among others (Whorton, 1987).

Herbal practices involve plants and herbs as well as combining plant medicine with other energetic entities to promote healing. Within the herbal community, many leading herbalists combine the energies of the plant itself (Wood, 2004). Other leading herbalists describe known spirit(s) of the plant(s) (Cowan, 1995), as well as the inherent relationship between the herbal healer and the plant(s) (Weed, 1989). The concept of global holism states that herbs have their own energetics and operate with the vital life force, also known as qi (Wood, 1997; Wood, 2004). Wood (2004) illustrates the process of plant energetics by describing their activity as, “the impression they make upon the life force of the whole organism” (p. 63). Plants, having their own energetics, have energetic intentions while operating within the vital life force. In conjunction, herbalists have energetic intentions in utilizing the healing power of plants. Intention, as an energy form should be considered a credible and factual synergistic modality in the healing process with plant medicine.

In this phenomenological research inquiry, ten Midwestern herbalists acknowledged the use of intention as an integral part of their herbal practices. All ten herbalists recognized intention as an abstract entity, inherently known and often accessed, yet too indeterminate and mysterious to define or describe. Herbalists expressed apprehension when describing their experiences with intention noting the demoralization

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of anecdotal or empirical evidence by the scientific community as “hocus pocus” or traditional mythical illusions. In this research inquiry, the discovery of a new theorem unfolded portraying the use of intention in herbal practices as a multi-directional energetic exchange system demystifying intention as hocus pocus or a mythical illusion.

Identified in the Quantum Enigma paradigm, intention is researched as a bi-directional energy form involving conscious, directed thoughts in energy healing (Anderson, 2002; Crawford, Jonas, Nelson, Wirkus, & Wirkus, 2003; Jonas & Crawford, 2003; Schlitz et al. 2003). We chose to study the bi-directional energy of intention within herbal practices and discovered intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. The discovery of intention as a multi-directional modality grounded in evidenced-based research supports the use of intention as a credible and valid energetic source in client diagnosis and in herbal practices. Herbalists and integrative medicine practitioners who use herbal medicine are provided a multi-directional energy modality to pair with herbal practices.

Both herbal medicine and intention have been studied separately in their own distinct fields. To date, there is no systematic documentation regarding the pairing of herbal medicine and intention and how they work together in practice. In this study, four multi-directional energetic themes manifested from intention: energetic connections, plant intelligence, plant relationship, and practitioner as interpreter. To formulate the four themes contribution to the discovery, I describe intention as an energetic exchange system and its relationship to both Quantum Complex Systems Theory and Holism. Next, I illustrate the depiction of the triangular relationship between plant, client, and practitioner. Finally, I recount the major themes with anecdotal support from the

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interviews as seen in the practitioner and plant relationship, plant intelligence and ultimately the role of the practitioner as interpreter in the healing process establishing the discovery of intention as a dynamic energy exchange system.

### **Methodology**

In this phenomenological research study, “Herbal Medicine and Intention in Midwestern Herbalism,” we were interested in learning how Midwestern Herbalists used intention with herbal practices. Ten Midwestern herbalists were recruited and interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. Midwestern herbalists were defined as the geographical region including Minnesota, Wisconsin Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. For ethical and safety considerations participants were required to be 18 years or older. Credentials including vocational, certification, higher education, or folk training with a noted healer and at least two years experience as a herbalist ensured a sample with expertise in this field. Herbalists were asked to be currently practicing with at least nine clients in the last six months. This specification offered current experiences and information, giving the most accurate data on the state of contemporary herbalism.

Finally participants were required to use intention in their practices in some way. Excluded from the study were any participants who did not meet all of the criteria. This research inquiry included semi-structured interviews with a list of seven questions specific to the use of intention in the practitioners’ current practice. Field notes and a recording device were used to document interviews. The definition or interpretation of “intention” was undefined; instead, we chose to explore what emerged organically. To date, there are no known studies of this type of research. However, this study may serve as a catalyst for future research. This study is important in that intention is considered a

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form of energy healing which can be accessed in conjunction with herbal practices. As one herbalist expressed,

*“I’m so glad I could participate in this...that’s why Matt Wood writes...that’s why a lot of herbalists write, because there’s nothing really out there to support...intention...with herbal medicine and you know how powerful it [intention] is. The only place it’s really recognized is...religion. “ (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

During the interview process, many participants were uncomfortable in explaining or defining how they accessed intention (although they knew they used it). Herbalist shared retrospection of collective trauma and degradation of traditional folk medicine in regards to the credibility and validity of their profession. Many of the herbalists noted some magical or energetic quality of herbal medicine that the general public does not accept, especially in Western and allopathic medicine, the scientific, or academic communities. As one herbalist stated in the interview,

*“I have been sitting here talking about energy medicine and the chakras—I haven’t even started talking about crystals and like hanging out with the plants in the garden. To a lot of people I would sound really woo-woo like I’m some crazy, up in my head, spiritual freak, or whatever.”*

Another herbalist expressed,

*I think that present-day herbalists, because of our own collective trauma of what’s happened to herbalists in the past and healers in the past, have been really careful about how they advertise their stuff. If our goal is to have the greatest reach and access for people we need to meet people where they’re at...you don’t want to scare people with the thought that there’s magic or like those kinds of words” (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

This journal article documents the finding of intention as a credible multi-directional energetic exchange system relating to both Holism and Quantum Complex Systems Theory. I then explain intention as a triangulated relationship between the plant, practitioner and client. Finally, I canvas the themes which emerged from multi-

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directional energetic exchanges as seen in the practitioner and plant relationship, plant intelligence and ultimately the role of practitioner as interpreter in the healing process.

## **Intention in Relation to Quantum Complex Systems Theory and Holism**

Currently, scientific research is documenting the use of intention as bi-directional energetic communication between mind and matter classified under the Quantum Enigma paradigm. Quantum Enigma is an umbrella term that describes many energetic exchange systems and can be generalized by the concept, “physics meets consciousness” (Grandy, 2013 p. 477). The Quantum Enigma paradigm defines intention as directed mental consciousness (Anderson, 2002; Crawford, Jonas, Nelson, Wirkus & Wirkus, 2003; Jonas & Crawford, 2003; Schlitz, Radin, Bertram, Schmidt, Utts & Yount, 2003). Schlitz et al. (2003) contends, intention is a conscious perception associated with a specific subjective purpose, outcome, or goal, specifically stated, “a mental state directed toward achieving a goal” (p. 32). Zahourek (1998) agrees noting most research regarding intention is quantitative data addressing “the effects of directed mental processes” (p. 11).

Direct mental interaction with living things through consciousness is the foundational concurrence across the broad range of studies under the Quantum Enigma umbrella (Jonas & Crawford, 2003; Zahourek, 1998). Thus, research has noted intention as a bi-directional energy flow between thought and matter.

However, Quantum Enigma is a paradigm that researches many exchange systems such as: healing intention, bioenergy, biophoton emission, energy healing, focused intention, directed energy, observer effect, mental interactions, mind matter interactions, bioterapia, energy medicine, and intention (Crawford et al., 2003; Feinstein & Eden, 2008; Grandy,

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2013; Jonas & Chez, 2003; King, 2008; Kuttner & Rosenblum, 2010; Radan, Tatt, & Yount, 2004; Schwartz & Dossey, 2010). These terms encompass healing arts that have long been practiced, but only recently been researched (Jonas & Chez, 2003; Jonas & Crawford, 2003 Kuttner & Rosenblum, 2010).

Within this paradigm of energetic exchanges the theorem of quantum entanglement is posited, also known as Quantum Complex Systems Theory, which delineates all living things are communicating with everything energetically (Feinstein & Eden, 2008; Gyurkovics & Hornacek, 1995; Hintz, Yount, Kadar, Schwartz, Hammerschlag & Lin, 2003; Kuttner & Rosenblum, 2010; Rubens, 1995; Schwartz & Dossey, 2010; Zahourek, 1998). Zahourek (1998) confirms this ideology by using both Heidt's (1990) and Cooperstein's (1992) definition of intention as a "nonlinear process in which intending is a strong wish to help by linking the universal life energy with the client" (p.17).

Linking universal life energy with the client reinforces energetic interactions and affirms the notion that systems are interconnected and continuously interacting with one another. Scientific evidence suggests all matter is constantly interacting, communicating and directly influencing one another (Kuttner & Rosenblum, 2010). Energetic interconnections suggest the possibility that plants also have consciousness and are interacting as well. Grandy (2013) defines this suggestion as the theory of consciousness.

[This theory defines consciousness as the interaction of things (be it an organism, DNA molecule or atom) with other things, the external environment different forms of energy and forces. Essentially, this theory maintains that consciousness is interactions; by accepting this premise everything in the universe has a degree of

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consciousness ranging from quarks to molecules to cells to brains as they all interact in various degrees] (p. 478).

Conscious interactions between all living systems having influence upon other existing systems include plants as energetic entities. Theories of consciousness interactions can be extended to include the interactions and influences between an herbalist and plants, indicating an energy exchange within a network. Quantum Complex Systems Theory explores energy exchanges within enmeshed networks. Quantum Complex Systems Theory parallels the theorem of Holism, an ideology many herbalist embraced in this study and is explored in further detail.

Quantum Complex Systems Theory is a dynamic area of physics and science that encompasses many multi-leveled energetic network theories. These theories include but are not limited to: entanglement phase, interconnectedness, non-local correlations, resonance and entrainment, and living systems theory (Anderson, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Rosenblum & Kuttner, 2011). Anderson (2002) explains the Quantum Complex Systems Theory as “nested systems in which...humans, animals, plant life, minerals, and everything making up our environment and world are completely intertwined and communicating” (p. 95).

Quantum Complex Systems Theory and Holism are quite similar. Erickson (2007) defines Holism as “Everything is integrated into an inseparable whole greater than the sum of its parts, is in constant interaction with the universe and all it contains” (p. 139). Quantum Complex Systems Theory, like Holism, is the theory that everything is connected to and influences everything. Hoffman (1990) eloquently intertwines the

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theorems relating to herbalists and their relationship with plants, “From a holistic perspective, an herb is a plant in relationship with humanity, and herbalism becomes the exploration of humanity’s relationship with the plant kingdom” (p. 5).

Herbalists work directly with the plant kingdom to make herbal medicine. This type of work with nature instinctively creates energy exchanges. Micozzi (2011) describes this unavoidable interaction, “Matter, mind, energy and spirit are each part of nature and therefore are part of medicine that observes, respects, and works with nature” (p. 307). An herbalist’s ability to maintain communication and balance between the abstract and physical worlds is critical to the practice as a whole: “Although dual, the abstract (energy) and physical (matter) worlds are inseparable. An herbalist as healer devotes himself or herself to maintaining balance and communication between the visible and invisible” (p.323). One herbalist conveyed the idea of abstract and physical as looking for the whole story behind the client, physical, emotional and spiritual.

*I definitely try to address...the different layers that they [clients] might be dealing with. I do especially address physical, emotional and spiritual because they all play a part in our being balanced or imbalanced. So this idea is definitely something that I addressed trying to uncover somebody’s full picture...So I ask a lot of questions to uncover what the person sees and what they...don’t see...they have no idea because they’re so used to it or because they just don’t realize...that’s another part of their story (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Quantum Complex Systems Theory and Holism describe this system of energetic interconnectedness in which the invisible world communicates and directs its intentions with the herbalist and the client. Intention’s apparent apparition under said theories, Quantum Complex Systems, and Holism pondered how this energetic relationship works between plants and herbalists. Cogent results from the research envisage a triangulated relationship of exchanges between plant, practitioner and client.

### Triangular Relationship Between Plant, Client and Practitioner



Figure 1. Herbal medicine and intention depiction. This depiction illustrates how intention as it relates to herbal medicine emerged in the study.

Based on the descriptions of intention from the participants, this depiction represents the relevance of intention as part of the energetic exchange system.

#### Triangulation of Plant-Client-Practitioner.

All of the participants spoke of intention as some form of energy and how that energy creates a connection between themselves as practitioners, the client, and the plant itself. Practitioner as the connecting link to universal intention, pulse testing and the Doctrine of Signatures were a part of the triangulated connections. One herbalist describes this multi-directional relationship in the following way:

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*Because you're dealing more on an energetic level...if you can communicate with plants...if there's that energy from the plant and if they can still communicate with you or you have the intention you can pass it onto the plant. And pass on intention onto the person too; I think it probably works both ways (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Another herbalist agreed stating:

*...their pulse responds, so again there's that triangulated response, but it's focused in this way, where I'm pulling ideas there's an intention there to relate, to connect a person with the plant that might help them. It's focused into that person's pulse and their body's response to the plant, not just my idea of what might work (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

The triangulation of plant- client-practitioner relationships conveyed the energetic connections of practitioner as a facilitator in the client's healing. For example, words such as *conduit, messenger, mediator, vessel, educator, steward, connector, and conveyor* came up again and again as practitioners illustrated the theme of energetic connections to a higher source for the greatest good. One herbalist expressed being a vessel this way,

*I take myself completely out of it and allow the universe to lead me through. When you set your intention on them [clients] and their highest good, people can feel that.*

Expressed by another herbalist,

*Now I will also with intention call in guides and any higher beings that will be of service for the highest healing...yes, my intention is that I am connecting with something greater than me or the client into an energetic field that can bring healing (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Pulse testing was also recognized as part of the energetic connection between plant, practitioner and client. Eight participants referred to energetic pulse testing as an active source of intention in client diagnosis by matching the right herb to the client and their ailment. One herbalist stated:

*On a practical basis you need to do the energetic testing to find the right match because you know, 10 different herbs in my kit could be possibilities for a person. So I pull out all the ones that volunteer themselves plus the ones that my thinking brain thinks of and then I energetically pulse test them.*

Another herbalist explained pulse testing as a plant spirit connection:

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*When you work with the herbs you learn their personality and their spirit. All of us are connected to the earth. So we all kind of represent a known plant spirit. So depending on what's going with us, there may be many herbs that could fix that one issue but only one of them is really for you. The herb that is supposed to work for them comes to you. You pulse test and listen to their body (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Another herbalist noted that when she was out of a specific herbal tincture, she would write the herb on a piece of paper and use it for pulse testing:

*Stupidly, I didn't have dandelion in my kit, so I Just wrote on this paper...and then she [the client] tested for it: test for the piece of paper and then she just wore it on her chest. So a lot of times I just use pieces of paper (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

The pulse, as a prescient, established the energetic connection between the client's own intentions, the intentions of the herb and the healing needs of the client.

Synonymous with pulse testing, the Doctrine of Signatures was another energetic connection herbalist used in their practices. The Doctrine of Signatures contends the healing powers of herbs are apparent for interpretation and discernment of the plants healing therapeutics through its physical appearance, and adaptation to its immediate environment. The plant provides indications of its therapeutic uses through color, texture, form, taste, smell, behavior, and habitat (Harris, 1985). It is then the task of the herbalist to discern the characteristics, or virtues, of the plant using imagination and engagement with the plant. Wood (1997) writes:

[The logic behind this procedure is not in alignment with contemporary science, but is still a valid approach. Signatures represent configurations of energy or patterns in plants and these correspond to similar patterns in people. The Doctrine of Signatures operates through at least two different subjective faculties, the intuition and imagination]

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(p. 26-27). All herbalists in this study used the Doctrine of Signatures in their practice.

As one herbalist noted,

*It makes sense because a lot of times what the plant looks like, its signature, helps you know what it will do. All those little wispy flower, the feathery leaves can sort of whisk out the inside of the bladder with bacteria adhering to it. So it's more just me connecting with the plant and then the person and then putting the tincture on to see if it is indeed the right one they need to do the job (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Herbalists who used these stated energetic connections noted they developed intimate relationships with the plants, enriching the interrelated connectedness between plant-client and practitioner, hence supporting the theory of intention as a multi-directional energetic connection. Amidst the plant-client-practitioner relationships, the following major themes emerged; practitioner and plant relationship, plant intelligence, and practitioner as interpreter.

### **Practitioner's Relationship with the Plant**

When participants answered the question how intention was used in practice, the word "relationship" arose again and again. This particular theme emerged without much extraction or effort as all of the participants emphasized the connection between intention and the plant relationships, often using the same words to describe the phenomenon.

Plant-practitioner relationship formed through communication and connection with the plant itself. Herbalists described this relationship as plants talking to the herbalist, interaction between the herbalist and the plant, getting to know the plant, spending time in nature, and communicating with the plants. Communicating with the plant by asking it to help or by the plant speaking directly to the herbalist was a common experience throughout the interviews. One herbalist phrased it as asking *what (herb) wants to play,*

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and who (meaning herb), *wants to help in that moment*. A second herbalist phrased it similarly when she said, *I go and ask plants if anyone needs to come up...anyone else that wants to come up and help for this person's healing*. Another herbalist said *I will talk to the herb and ask it to help that person. I will say can you, inside, sometimes out loud, can you please help this person feel better* (Long & Richardson, 2016).

Many of the participants noted that the relationship to plants was one of the key factors in becoming an herbalist and that it continues to shape their practices. Throughout the interview process, the participants emphasized the importance of engagement and getting to know the plant at a heart level. One participant stated, *When you work with the herbs you learn their personality and their spirit*. A few herbalists mentioned herbs work differently than just taking a drug. As one herbalist stated *It's more of a relationship. You can have a relationship with a plant that you can't have with a drug*. Another herbalist noted that when her clients are interacting with plants, *it creates an intention and allows the healing to snowball* (Long & Richardson, 2016).

Herbalists spoke of the importance of honoring and continuing a close relationship with plants; cultivating that relationship was very intentional. The concept of plant intelligence surfaced when considering the unique nature of practitioner-plant relationships showing yet another depiction of intention as a multi-directional energetic connection.

### **Plant Intelligence**

Every participant shared her belief in plant intelligence implying the intention of the plant is revealed through its intelligence. Participants depicted plants as conscious

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beings having their own intentions. Also noted, plants act as healers by intentionally growing where they are needed. One herbalist shared her experience of the intelligence of plantain when it made itself available to her after a motorcycle accident:

*So...I got in a motorcycle accident and ripped apart part of my leg. My ankle is like just disgusting...There's like a three or four inch gash wide open. What immediately drew me to plantain was...it was growing all along where I had crashed...I was walking back from my injury, I'm seeing the plantain and I had just studied that in my class right before I got injured. Having just learned about it, it was fresh in my mind, it was fresh in my visual...it was right there on the ground...It was like yelling its name out to me. Like hey, use me (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

The herbalists believed that plants are intelligent, conscious beings that can communicate their own intentions for healing. Many herbalists noted that plants grow with a purpose and contain the medicinal components needed for healing. All participants perceived intention as part of the plant's desire to heal. One herbalist stated *Plants are our food and our medicine. There's something out there that will heal us and...feed us.* Another herbalist proposed, *The herbs are helping. They're helping people who are coming to me* (Long & Richardson, 2016). Another herbalist stated the plant's healing power will surface no matter the form in which the client receives the medicine:

*If the person needs the plant, the plant will come through in whatever form it's given...If the person needs the peppermint, the plant's going to come through. It doesn't have to be a specific Young Living brand. And so that's one area of...intention I was taught... (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Herbalists discussed the variances in how plant intelligence revealed intention however the intent remained obvious; the plant is there to help and to heal. This was a common premise in the last theme, practitioner as interpreter. Variances surfaced in how each herbalist used intention, yet the goal remained universal, to help and to heal clearly revealed in the final theme, practitioner as interpreter.

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### **Practitioner as Interpreter**

The herbalists used intention as a way of guiding their practices individually. To find the truth in a clients' healing process, they learned specific strategies that incorporated a form of intention. Strategies included, expressing gratitude when working with plants, intentionally being mindful and aware in their practice and removing the ego.

This herbalist expressed gratitude as being thankful,

*Having a thankful intention, as I'm harvesting or as I'm decanting the entire time I'm working with the plants. I definitely say, tell me what you want me to know. Thank you, thank you for anything that you will give me and that I can pass on through me (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Intention in the form of being mindful, conscious and aware as a practitioner surfaced throughout the interviews. One herbalist expressed her belief in this way, *So intention is important in that I need to be mindful; I need to be present. I need to show up as the practitioner, you know walking the walk with integrity.*

Another herbalist explained mindfulness with regards to intention in this way,

*And intention for me is something that...means that you want to be mindful. You want to be awake in your life. When you're living with intention you're awake. You're noticing what's going on around you. You're not on autopilot. It doesn't have to necessarily be like you're trying to will something into your life...it's engaging all of the spheres (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

Being intentionless was another strategy herbalists' used by removing was the ego. In other words, purposefully trying "not to intend" was a strategy this herbalist described:

*I don't like to put intention into the plants, into the herbs...I like to keep intention out of it. I guess my intention would be to just have open space and to clear my crap, clear anything that could kind of impede what this plant is so intelligently doing on it's own...I just like to let them do their own thing, really. So my intention is to be clear.*

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Another herbalist detailed her process in removing her ego,

*I'm deliberately not putting on relaxing music. I'm deliberately not putting on smelly lavender stuff to invoke a particular response. I'm very clearly trying not to in anyway impose my idea of what healing or their healing should be or what should work on them...the minute I help them or save them I have made it about me and I have disempowered them...because of the herbs, this person allows themselves to heal, but they're healing themselves. I'm not doing it. So if I start to get on that sort of ego bandwagon of like I'm healing these people, that's bad news (Long & Richardson, 2016).*

The depiction of the triangular relationship between plant, client and practitioner and the related themes that surfaced, illustrates the relevance of intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. The discovery depicts intention at the center as a synergy of energy connecting all the themes with the plant, client and practitioner. A network of energy exchanges where everything is simultaneously interacting, communicating and influencing everything.

## Discussion

Quantum Enigma describes intention as “a mental state directed toward achieving a goal” (Schlitz et al., 2003, p. 32). From this definition intention is observed as a bi-directional exchange. Our research discovered that intention surfaced quite differently. For example, many herbalists used intention without having a goal or directed outcome in mind. Many of the participants made a conscious effort to remain intentionless while staying open to the process of receiving information without channeling their own expectations into their sessions. The results of this research inquiry observed intention emerged other than directed thoughts towards a specific outcome or goal, suggesting intention is more complex and dynamic than initially perceived, and that each herbalist uses intention in varied forms. Participants used intention as a triangulated energetic connection between the plant, client, and practitioner. Scientific research findings in the

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Quantum Enigma paradigm, consider the use of intention as linear bi-directional conscious mental interaction (Grandy, 2013; Jonas & Crawford, 2003; Schlitz et al., 2003). Our findings depict intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. Based on the literature, a linear relationship is expected, our findings revealed a multi-directional relationship evident Figure 1.

Many of the herbalists struggled to separate out the different constructs of intention including a solid unified definition and an exact measure in how they used intention. The experiences they collectively shared when detailing how intention showed up in their practice, elucidated the major themes. The emergent themes illustrated the synergistic connections with intention being the cogent core constitution as indicated in the depiction (Figure 1).

These findings are also consistent with the literature regarding Quantum Complex Systems Theory, and the Theory of Holism in that herbalists use intention in their practices by interweaving energetic connections (Lipton, 2005; Micozzi, 2011). Synonymous with findings in the literature, herbalists used intention as a means of communication within the triangulated relationship and within their scope of practice (Feinstein & Eden, 2008; Gyurkovics & Hornacek, 1995; Hintz et al., 2003; Kuttner & Rosenblum, 2010; Rubens, 1995; Schwartz & Dossey, 2010; Zahourek, 1998).

As noted in the introduction, each domain of healing has been studied separately. Within the field of herbalism, research is unique to plant constituents (isolated and concentrated) and the physiological healing effects on biological systems. Intention is studied as a conscious directed thoughts toward a specific outcome or goal. While the

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two fields exist in the literature as separate entities, to date, the combination of herbal medicine and intention has not been systematically documented. This research provides the groundwork for future studies outside the Midwestern area and with a broader range of herbalists that choose to focus on energetic connections as well as any practitioners who use herbal medicine in their practice.

## **Conclusion**

Based on our findings a new theory of intention emerged as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. Documented as systemic evidenced based research, intention is a powerful energetic tool to use in herbal practices recognizing validity around an abstract phenomenon the herbalists in this study experienced while using intention. The results of this study stabilize intention as a concrete entity intertwining energetic connections with the physicality of herbal medicine. It also provides herbalists a clear understanding of how they might use intention as an energetic connection with their practices, as many of the participants spoke of using intention but had difficulty defining it. Intention, as a multi-directional energetic exchange system formulates continuity and a common language for herbal practitioners. Herbalists now have access to a definition of intention they can utilize within their practice. This research demystifies the stigma of “woo-woo, hocus pocus” or mystical illusions derived from previous qualitative studies and the scientific community. Herbalists no longer need to classify the use of intention as an esoteric practice.

Using the visual we created as a visual representation of intention, herbalists have a means to share unique experiences providing different methods of intention in their

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practices to promote healing. This research creates a common space offering a common language to communicate and share their collective experiences pairing herbal practices and intention expanding the definition of intention as a multi-directional energetic exchange system. Furthermore, the visual we created representing intention as an multi-directional energetic exchange system can be used in conjunction or generalized into other integrative healing modalities such as chiropractic care, acupuncture massage therapy, among many other healing therapeutics.

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