



Integrate Medicine

The Future of Medicine

Words: Dr Mark Atkinson

Integrated medicine is the new buzz word. The UK's first professional training programme for integrated medicine is about to be launched; integrated clinics and centres are opening and books on integrated medicine can be found in pretty much every health book store throughout the country.

In America integrated medicine, or integrative medicine, as they refer to it, is even further developed. The Duke Centre for Integrative Medicine was launched in 2002 as the Americas flagship integrative medicine centre. Located in North Carolina, its 27,000 square foot premises houses therapeutic treatment rooms, conference and workshop spaces, fitness facilities, meditation spaces, and a state-of-the-art kitchen for healthy cooking demonstrations, guest meals and catered events. Their integrative medical team consists of professionals from medicine, health psychology, life coaching, nutrition and the complementary therapies. In that same significant year, 2002, The Bravewell Collaborative was founded by a small group of philanthropists who were dedicated to transforming American healthcare by returning "*the soul to medicine*." They really have been a major driving force behind the advancement of integrated medicine in the USA. For example, and I can't help but admit that I am envious about this, they have funded a clinical network of eight integrated medicine clinics, raised the funds to produce a PBS programme on integrated medicine called *The New Medicine*, funded scholarships for 28 physicians to receive training in integrated medicine and funded the infrastructure and growth of the Consortium of

Academic Health Centres for Integrative Medicine to its current level of participation—38 of the leading US medical schools.

So integrated medicine, the "medicine of the new millennium" is here to stay, but what exactly does integrated medicine mean, and how does it differ from integrated healthcare?

Defining Integrated Medicine (Is Not Easy)

There is not a universally accepted definition of integrated medicine - it's a definition in evolution. When I ask people at my lectures what they understand integrated medicine to be, I either get blank stares (the majority) or a couple will say something along the lines of "it's about combining the best of conventional and complementary medicine". That's partly true, but integrated medicine is so much more. These are two of the most illuminating definitions that I have come across.

The first is from The Consortium of Academic Health Centres for Integrative Medicine, that I mentioned earlier. Their mission (in their own words), is to help transform medicine and healthcare through rigorous scientific studies, new models of clinical care, and innovative educational programs that integrate biomedicine, the complexity of human beings, the intrinsic nature of healing and the rich diversity of therapeutic systems. Their definition is:

Integrative Medicine is the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.