

10th Conference on Health Care of the Chinese in North America



True Integration: Having All the Pieces

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The Integrative Center for Culture and Healing (ICCH) represents a new model in community health care by promoting the integration of holistic/complementary health, community development, race, culture, and community education. It is also unique in its integration of conventional or western medicine, "alternative" or complementary healing modalities, and traditional (indigenous) healing accomplished within a community context.

ICCH was born out of the belief that working class and poor communities, particularly those of color, desire access to complementary health care. Surveys we have gathered have shown consistently and significantly positive responses to questions asking if they would be interested in learning about or receiving these types of treatments.

Our vision of integration is one in which community physicians refer patients to the Center. Patients call and talk with our Executive Director or soon-to-be Client Intake Facilitator. The initial emphasis is on picking a modality or modalities that would best meet the needs of the patient; this often includes considerable patient education. The complementary practitioner(s) stay(s) in communication with the referring physician and other practitioners via letters and calls. If necessary, a conference involving all the practitioners occurs, with the referring physician also being invited.

These conferences have been very exciting and informative, giving us a glimpse of "true integration." They involve a round table discussion, with the patient being presented by the primary treating practitioner, often the physician. Practitioners attending this collaborative discussion have included a hand surgeon, physiatrist, internist, chiropractors, acupuncturists, Feldenkrais practitioners, energy healers (including Reiki), a psychologist, and a myofascial massage practitioner. Each practitioner who has seen the patient presents his or her "piece" of the puzzle. By hearing, and then discussing, all the pieces, the practitioners have obtained a picture that they themselves were not able to elicit. The many facets of the patient become evident, there emerging a picture reflecting that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. Very fascinating in this process has been the contributions of practitioners not involved directly in the patient's care, but in some cases it is recommended that they directly participate in the future.

ICCH has several ongoing projects in addition to individual services, These include a "Getting Ready for Surgery" program, which utilizes imagery/visualization pre-operatively and during surgery (if desired by the patient and surgeon) and energy healing post-operatively in support of patients undergoing elective surgery. The goals are to reduce the stress of surgery, decrease pain and the needs for pain medicine, and facilitate wound healing. Another is the Repetitive Strain Injury program, one that incorporates

conventional approaches with complementary modalities in the treatment of repetitive strain injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. Finally, we have a project that entails a collaboration with the Instituto Familiar de la Raza and Cesar Chavez Elementary School that is looking a how to bring complementary modalities into the school setting, the emphasis being on teaching children how to better manage their energy. The goal is to improve test scores and behavior. We are anticipating working with students, teachers, and families.