

NEWS RELEASE

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IOM Summit Provides Models for Health Reform

Washington, DC (February 27, 2009) – Before one of the largest and most diverse audiences ever assembled at the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the Summit on Integrative Medicine and the Health of the Public held this week brought forth emerging strategies for addressing some of the major problems inherent in our current health care system. The goal: improved care for less cost.

Sponsored by The Bravewell Collaborative, the Summit gathered more than 600 distinguished scientists, leading clinicians, top policy experts and industry leaders to present research and explore how principles and best practices from integrative medicine could form the basis for effective health care reform.

Integrative medicine is an approach to health care that places the patient at the center of care, focuses on prevention and wellness, and attends to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the person. “It is care that is preventive, predictive and personalized,” said Ralph Snyderman, MD, Chair of the Summit Planning Committee and Chancellor Emeritus Duke University.

Harvey Fineberg, MD, PhD President, Institute of Medicine, commented on “the burgeoning interest in the ideas and ideals of integrative medicine.” As the evidence demonstrating its efficacy and cost effectiveness continues to grow, the field has been gaining more widespread support. In his address to Summit participants, William D. Novelli, CEO of AARP said that, “Implemented correctly, health care reform with a focus on prevention will provide the biggest return on investment this nation could ever have.”

The 600 plus participants at the Summit discussed how advancing technology is finally allowing health professionals to understand the mechanisms by which many integrative medicine interventions, such as mind-body medicine and nutrition, actually work. “Genomics and advanced imaging technologies such as MRI are validating the mechanisms for integrative health care approaches that were difficult to prove before,” said Mimi Guarneri, MD, Founder and Medical Director of Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine. Consequently, the new evidence is compelling.

The Summit identified the following key points as crucial to meaningful health care reform:

- The progression of many chronic diseases can be reversed and sometimes even completely healed through lifestyle modifications. The Summit presented research demonstrating that lifestyle modification programs have been proven to mitigate cardiac disease and several forms of cancer, among other chronic conditions.
- Genetics is not destiny. Recent research by Dean Ornish, MD, and others shows that gene expression can be turned on or off by nutritional choices, levels of social support, stress reduction activities such as meditation, and moderate exercise, thus reducing the potential for the onset of certain diseases.
- Our environment influences our health. Mounting evidence suggests that the environment outside one's body rapidly becomes the environment inside the body.
- Improving our primary and chronic disease care systems is paramount. Summit participants widely agreed that our primary care system, including care for those with chronic illness, is in danger of collapse and must be retooled. The new system should focus on prevention and wellness, and put an empowered patient at the center of care.
- The reimbursement system must be changed. The Summit grappled with the current reimbursement system that rewards procedures rather than outcomes and urged payors to design and test new programs.
- Changes in education will fuel changes in practice. Implementation of an integrated approach to health care requires changes in provider education. All health care practitioners should be educated in the importance of compassionate care that addresses the biopsychosocial dimensions of health.
- Evidence-based medicine is the only acceptable standard. Researchers and practitioners alike concurred that health care should be supported by evidence and urged further research and testing to expand the evidence base for integrative models of care.
- A large demonstration project is needed. Because funding for research on the effectiveness of specific models of care is difficult to obtain from standard grant channels, participants voiced support for a government-funded demonstration project that would fully demonstrate the effectiveness of the integrated approach to care.

In his keynote address, Senator Tom Harkin, D-IA stated that, "It is my intention to change our health system and to place integrative health care at the heart of the reform legislation we will pass this year."

Calling attention to the fact that the health care issues facing the United States are actually global issues facing the world, representatives from the Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health in the United Kingdom added their voice to the call for reform. A letter from HRH The Prince of Wales to Summit participants urged both nations to support the creation of a health care system

that places a greater emphasis on treating humans as whole beings — mind, body and spirit — and on prevention, as well as the cure, of illness and disease.

The Summit's leadership believes that the integrated approach to health care could provide the basis for our nation's health reform. "We intend to broadly share ideas expressed at this Summit for transforming health care; our key audiences are the Obama Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services," said Judy Salerno, MD, MS, Executive Director of the IOM.

The Summit was sponsored by The Bravewell Collaborative. "We look forward to receiving the formal summary report of the IOM Summit and the Health of the Public on November 4, 2009," said Bravewell Executive Director, Diane Neimann. "There will be a major event in Washington DC to mark the release of the report."

"Immediately following the Summit, we will begin work with our Summit Coalition partners in consultation with the IOM on two major points of merging consensus," said Christy Mack, Bravewell's President. "We endorse Bill Novelli/AARP's call for a national campaign for health and wellness and will explore the potential for a public/private partnership to make it happen. We will also encourage demonstration models that will test the efficacy of the philosophy and approach to health care addressed through this historic Summit."

Video recordings of all Summit presentations are available at www.imsummitwebcast.org.
