

# Change Your Mind, Change the World

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Panel: “Individual and Institutional Approaches to Wellbeing”

What is Integrative Medicine and why is it critical to today’s healthcare discussion?

I am a **strategic philanthropist deeply invested in mainstreaming the principles and practices of integrative medicine.**

Through the work of The George Family Foundation, and the Bravewell Collaborative, which I co-founded, my husband Bill and I are leaning into what we, and others, envision as a **transformational consciousness shift in healthcare.**

**Integrative Medicine is foundational to that shift.**

**In many ways, medicine has become a prisoner of its own success.** With the advent of antibiotics and the ability to cure infectious diseases came the impression that curing is the same as healing, that there is a pill for every ill, and that anything with value can be measured by standard Western methodologies.

Now we know that those beliefs are self-limiting and do not go far enough to bring us to our larger, overall goal – deeper health and wellbeing for individuals and medical institutions in our country.

This past February, I was in Davos, Switzerland for the World Economic Forum and had the good fortune to have an extended conversation with Mathieu Ricard (whom many of you know) about this conference. He is a brilliant thinker and a poetic speaker. I loved what he had to say in regards to where we find ourselves in the healthcare landscape, and here I quote:

***“Vanquishing infectious disease has left us living with chronic diseases of lifestyle and aging, leading to the possibility that healthcare can focus on increasing human flourishing by putting the person’s wellbeing – body, mind and spirit - at the center, empowering them for optimal life.”***

“...Body, Mind AND spirit at the center –  
Empowering people for optimal life....”

**That encapsulates the very essence of health and wellbeing.**

**And this is where Integrative Medicine** enters the picture.

**Integrative Medicine IS the healthcare approach that sees people as inextricably connected in body, mind and spirit.** It combines the **best treatment options** from conventional Western medicine with those from other healing traditions, with a preference for the least toxic interventions whenever possible.

It seeks to catalyze the body's self-healing capacities, viewing **self-care as the true primary care.**

**And it has the capacity to empower people through the entire life cycle,** from before birth (helping keep babies safely inside their mothers till time for delivery) through end of life.

**One of the most empowering aspects of Integrative Medicine is that it embraces tools and strategies that can be taught inexpensively and practiced by people wherever they are.** Many of these are familiar, including yoga, massage, guided imagery, and healthy eating and sleeping habits.

**And it will come as no surprise that one of the most effective tools in achieving wellbeing is mindfulness meditation.** We, and others, are applying mindfulness meditation in a clinical setting and we're getting such dramatic results that were it a pharmaceutical, it would be malpractice not to prescribe it.

When a person learns in the face of illness that they can remain at peace, enlarge their perspective and increase their inner resilience: **that is wellbeing.**

When health professionals learn to meditate, they find they better tolerate the stresses of their work: **that is wellbeing.**

And there is evidence that it improves physical outcomes, not just mental wellbeing.

**Mindfulness is a part of what we're doing successfully in Minnesota.**

For instance, **Allina Health, one of the largest health systems in Minnesota, offers a resilience-training program** that includes mindfulness, nutrition and exercise to help people manage depression and anxiety. It has been so successful with the health system's own employees that the program is now a covered employee benefit. It has also been identified as an important Allina offering through the Minnesota Insurance Exchange.

And we trust that we are on the verge of exciting new discoveries... What if we discovered, for instance, that prescriptions for loving-kindness and compassion training were MORE effective than medications in some instances? Perhaps His Holiness will have some sage advice for us in that regard...

It is clear that as a nation, **we can no longer afford to wait for people to get sick to address known conditions that lead to illness.** The status quo is not sustainable, no matter how much we increase efficiency and eliminate waste.

**We need to be looking for ways, collectively, to move “upstream”, before the first signs of illness are even detectable.** We must recognize the need to get in FRONT of our health, for the sake of living full lives, not simply to prevent disease.

**Giving people the support they need and an invitation to become the driver in their own healthcare is one transformational way to start that forward-looking movement.**

**I certainly found that to be so for me** to when I was diagnosed with breast cancer and embarked on my own healing journey. While I had excellent conventional medical care for the treatment of my disease, it did nothing to address me as a whole human being, much less the existential questions that a potentially fatal illness provokes.

**Millions of people are coming to the same conclusions that I have.**

As a philanthropist, **we are seeing a huge payoff from the investments that we have made in the past ten years.**

- We are **building awareness** so that large numbers of people are now seeking integrative care.
- We are **building the research base** to show that integrative care is better care. We are accumulating data that shows it delivers better outcomes and increases patient satisfaction while lowering costs – the Triple Aim in healthcare delivery.
- And we are **growing the number of leading academic health centers committed to this as the future of medicine.** In fact, the Bravewell Collaborative has been instrumental in building the number of academic health centers committed to Integrative Medicine from 5 in 2001 to 55 today, greatly increasing the number of highly trained integrative medicine doctors available to meet demand across the country.

An exciting example of very recent progress is that **Allina Health has, in 2012, made the Penny George Institute for Health and Healing into a clinical service line** responsible for prevention, wellness and integrative medicine across its 11 hospitals and more than 120 clinics.

As one of Minnesota’s pioneering Accountable Care Organizations, **Allina has clearly recognized the importance of integrative approaches** to improving the health and wellbeing of its patients.

**So..... where does that leave us?**

**Where do we want to be ten years from now?**

**And how do we get from here to there?**

We know that we need to begin to ask **“What matters to YOU?”** instead of **“What is the MATTER with you?”**

We **know that we need to continue to find ways to effectively partner with people** that leads to their assuming responsibility for their own health.

We also know that **we need to train health professionals who can work collaboratively** in teams across professional disciplines.

And **we need to develop leaders who are able to think beyond the conventional training** they have received.

**I invite you join us in helping to bring about the cultural and consciousness shifts required for this country to achieve optimal health and wellbeing.**

## **Related material you may want to review:**

Grantmakers In Health - Views From The Field, April 22, 2013:

[http://www.gih.org/files/FileDownloads/Integrative\\_Medicine\\_and\\_US\\_Health\\_Kellogg\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://www.gih.org/files/FileDownloads/Integrative_Medicine_and_US_Health_Kellogg_April_2013.pdf)

Institute of Medicine -Integrative Medicine and the Health of the Public: A Summary of the February 2009 Summit:

<http://www.iom.edu/reports/2009/integrative-medicine-health-public.aspx>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – Health and Health Care in 2032:

<http://www.rwjf.org/en/research-publications/find-rwjf-research/2012/06/health-and-health-care-in-2032.html>

World Economic Forum – Sustainable Health Systems:

<http://www.weforum.org/reports/sustainable-health-systems-visions-strategies-critical-uncertainties-and-scenarios>