Spreading Awareness of Integrative Medicine for Whole-Person Healing in the 21st Century

Undergraduate and graduate students, healthcare professionals, administrators, and community members all gathered together on Saturday, March 1st, 2014 at Tamkin Auditorium located in UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center for the second Annual Student Conference for Integrative Medicine (ASCIM).

This year, the conference theme was “Science and Art of Whole-Person Healing for the 21st Century”. The event was hosted by UCLA’s Students for Integrative Medicine (SIM, formerly NCAM) and David Geffen Integrative Medicine Student Interest Group (IMSIG), and sponsored by UCLA Center for East-West Medicine (CEWM) as well as UCLA Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI).

With the goal of educating people about the holistic approach of integrative medicine and empowering them with tools for self care, the program for the day ranged from keynotes on “Integrative Medicine for the 21st Century: The Role of Preconception Counseling” by Dr. Victoria Maizes, MD, Executive Director of the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, and “The UCLA Healthy Campus Initiative: What’s IM Got to Do with It?” by Dr. Michael Goldstein, PhD, Professor at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, to experiential sessions on the “Science and Practice of Tai Chi” and “Acupressure for Neck Pain and Stress.”

“Because integrative medicine takes a comprehensive approach to human health and recognizes the human body as a complex, interconnected system of mind, body, and spirit, this whole-person approach can also be applied to the whole healthcare system in order to promote wellness and address health concerns of the 21st century, such as pain, stress, and chronic illnesses,” according to Vivianne Chang, a fourth-year Human Biology and Society undergraduate student and Director of ASCIM 2014. To accomplish the goal of raising awareness for integrative medicine, “we selected a program that would allow attendees to explore the scientific evidence behind various practices such as Tai Chi, yoga, and creative arts therapies, as well as to experience the modalities first-hand to better understand the benefits. In this way, we hoped to expand the knowledge and minds of our younger generation of healthcare consumers and providers on ways they can care for themselves and their future patients,” Chang said.
Dr. Maizes notes, “Integrative medicine is a relatively new field and anytime [...] something new [is brought] into a conservative medical establishment you are going to encounter some challenges, [...] not having enough evidence. When people say there is no evidence, it usually means they haven’t looked. Because there actually is a huge body of evidence supporting many of the things we do.” As a result, one of the main aims of the conference was to highlight some of the scientific evidence supporting integrative medicine.

Additionally, Dr. Maizes comments, “I believe that integrative medicine offers very significant solutions for the crisis we are in with the health system. [...] We are working to partner with our patients so we offer patient centered care, which is an important part of the newer paradigm. So I think we can actually contribute in very significant ways to changing medicine to be the kind of practice that we believe will be the most healing and most beneficial for patients. We have to have strong voices though to make those changes.”

When asked to comment on the outcome of the conference, the event planners expressed that, “Given our goal of inspiring young people, one of our biggest successes was bringing in an audience of more than 200 attendees, most of which were pre-health undergraduate and graduate students. Most of the attendees were engaged and excited even toward the end of the event, and the speakers brought forward an excellent quality of research and experiential sessions.” Furthermore, Chang adds, she hopes that “ASCIM 2014 will establish a precedent for similar events in the future, and inspire attendees to continue exploring whole-person health and healing.”

Additional post-conference materials are posted on the ExploreIM webportal: www.exploreim.ucla.edu/events/ASCIM-2014.

This conference is made possible by the Shirley Hui Memorial Fund and Oppenheimer Family Foundation. To make a contribution to the Shirley Hui Memorial Fund, please contact UCLA Center for East-West Medicine: Website: www.cewm.med.ucla.edu | Email: cewm@mednet.ucla.edu | Phone: (310) 794-0712