ANNUAL STUDENT CONFERENCE FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE (ASCIM 2015):
Exploring Integrative Medicine from a Clinical to Global Scale

“Healthcare systems around the world are becoming unsustainable,” addressed Ka-Kit Hui, MD, FACP, Professor and Director of the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine (CEWM), to the nearly 150 attendees composed of high school, undergraduate and graduate students, healthcare professionals, and community members from across the country. As opening keynote to the third Annual Student Conference for Integrative Medicine (ASCIM), Dr. Hui urged for a new innovative health model that promotes prevention and wellness while synergistically addressing multiple complex problems, thereby setting the tone for the program.

Held on Saturday, February 28, 2015 at Tamkin Auditorium located in the UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center, the conference was organized by the Students for Integrative Medicine (SIM) at UCLA, the David Geffen Integrative Medicine Student Interest Group (IMSIG), and the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine (CEWM).

The theme this year was “Exploring Integrative Medicine from a Clinical to Global Scale,” showcasing important work being done in various fields with the common goal to improve healthcare and bring it to those who are suffering everywhere, including patients, caregivers, doctors, and institutions. The framework of health and healing presented by Dr. Hui goes beyond the best of western medicine, which is more adept when a specific etiology is available to remove, replace, block, and stimulate.

“Not sleeping well? This is a sign that something is wrong. Don’t just take a sleeping pill but also determine what is leading to the issue,” stated Dr. Hui, “Signs of ill health can start as tension headaches, tightness, or back problems that over time may result in wear and tear, referred to as allostatic load. When a patient experiences a macro stress or trauma, the body can no longer adapt, which can lead to a huge problem, such as PTSD or chronic pain. The key is to have control over how we lead our lifestyle, which has been shown in studies to prevent 70% of premature health and 50% of illnesses.”
Following the conference theme, attendees were exposed to a variety of healing traditions, with experts presenting on osteopathy, Ayurveda, and Chinese medicine, explored the mind-body connection at the heart of an integrative approach, and learned about the different clinical and research models that incorporate integrative medicine into their practice. Popular sessions such as the mindfulness meditation and the professional panel were particularly stimulating because the attendees could readily apply what they had learned. Afterwards, many attendees expressed their desire to have more opportunities to apply integrative practices first-hand. The application of integrative medicine challenges the status quo. According to Sonya Pritzker, PhD, LAc, Assistant Professor at the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine, “This invisible revolution in methodology is taking place that is as equally challenging, important, riveting, and fulfilling as the major work being done in clinical and healthcare delivery. There is hope on the horizon.”

Lastly, the conference topped the day off with a spectacular closing keynote by Suzie Kline, PhD, NP, LAc, Director of the Huntington Hospital Integrative Oncology Program, on minimizing cancer risks through self-care, providing a wealth of helpful tips that the attendees can actively utilize on a daily basis. Dr. Kline also emphasized the need for self-compassion. She asked attendees to wrap their arms around themselves in a hug, releasing oxytocin, and treat themselves to kind thoughts as they would to a dear loved one. In closing, Dr. Kline said, “You are all inspirational – to us [speakers] as well.”

When the ASCIM 2015 came to a successful end, Dr. Hui expressed his gratitude and hope that the young generation of future healthcare providers and consumers will contribute to the field of integrative medicine and ultimately surpass their mentors.

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