

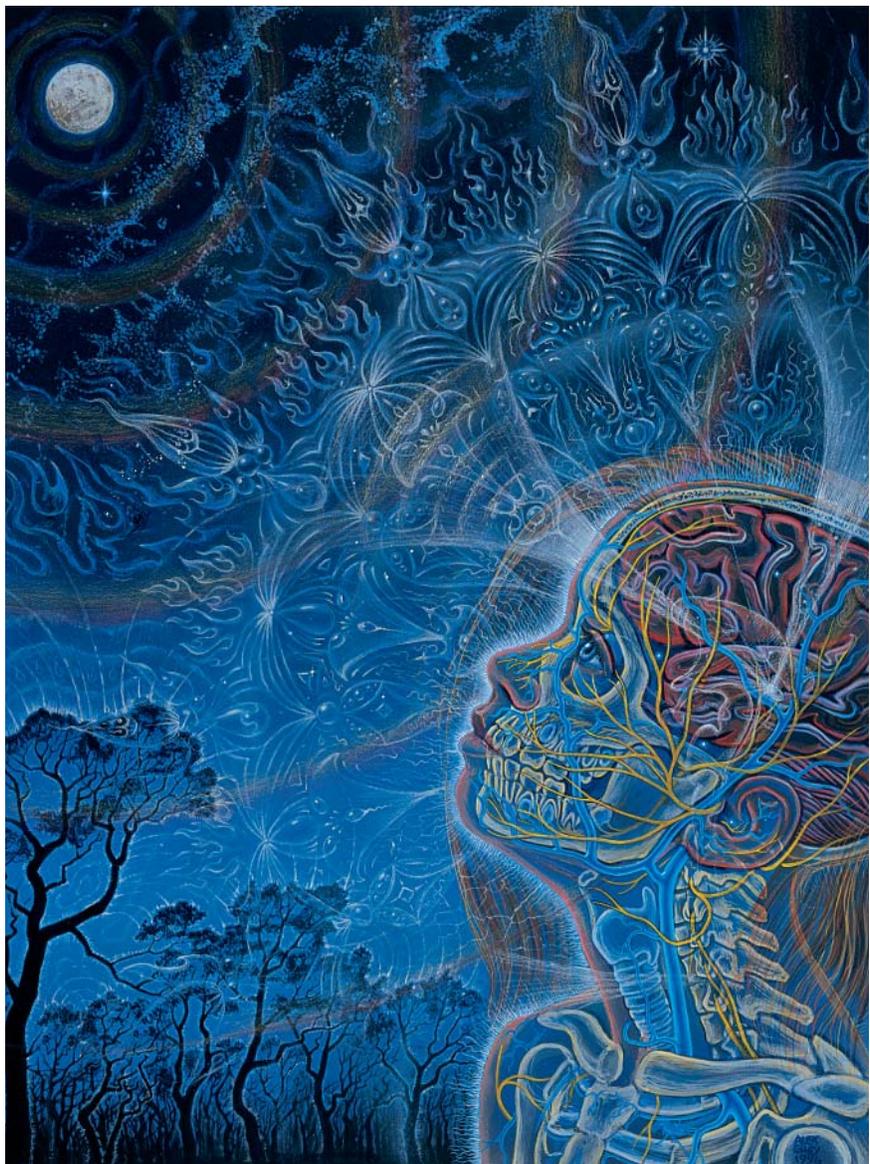
CHALLENGES OF INTEGRAL MEDICINE

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A Personal Quest

I GRADUATED IN CLINICAL medicine in India. Even though India is a land of rich tradition of indigenous medicine, throughout my medical education not a word was spoken about other systems of healing. My medical education was based completely on the Western dualistic model. I spent six years in England to complete my postgraduate specialization in obstetrics and gynecology. My deep concern for prevention and early care motivated me toward the social side of obstetrics, and I came to the United States to study public health, majoring in maternal and child health and population dynamics. This launched me into the international health arena, and I joined the World Health Organization. Over a period of twenty-five years, I had the opportunity to serve in 60 countries, providing technical and managerial expertise in diverse areas of health.

My extensive international health experience made me even more aware of the fact that despite all the



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resources, technology, and managerial potential, no country has been able to provide a continuum of health care to all its citizens from birth to death.

Need for Integral Thinking

OVER THE PAST DECADE, I have been learning about other systems of healthcare and healing. My main objective has been to explore how we could enhance our health through integrating body, mind, and spirit practices in our daily life. What do the various systems of health care and healing have in common? How can we associate integral thinking in relation to health?

Integral thinking is based on the principle of unity of all things. It views the universe as a whole, and human being as an integral part of Being, the dynamic unity of all opposites. Integral thinking represents a dynamic integration of scientific, phenomenological, and dialectical methods of the West, and the self-analytical, psycho-integrative, and nondual value disciplines of the East. Practically all systems of healthcare except the conventional Western model emphasize healing rather than curing. They give a higher significance to the role of mind in health and healing, and treat the person as a whole, as well as consider the environmental and other social influences on a person's health and healing

Creating New Vision

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT tasks for those advocating integral medicine is to clarify the concept. Fortunately, many renowned physicians, scientists, and healers representing reputable institutions have initiated a dialogue on many complementary modalities that contribute to health.

It is timely for the Institute of Noetic Sciences to take a lead in sponsoring a conference dedicated to integral medicine (*See page 45*). It serves to open a dialogue among the many stakeholders of the business of health, includ-

ing the representatives of the clients. It aims to clarify the conceptual basis and advocate practical ways of shifting from the fragmented to the integral-medicine model. It brings to light some of the creative examples of practical models and experiences of what works and what doesn't.

Clearly, the concept of integral medicine has to be understood and accepted by the society as a whole. I believe that people are already embracing the idea, and are willing to take primary responsibility for their health.

Integral medicine has important implications for the education and training of healthcare practitioners, whether they practice conventional medicine or one of the complementary therapies. Though many medical schools now offer elective courses in integral medicine, few of today's doctors have learned to look beyond laboratory tests to grapple with the patient's experience of illness and quest for health. The future looks hopeful, as several leading medical schools have formed a consortium to push for fundamental changes in the way the future physicians are to be trained.

It will not be enough to offer an elective course or a lecture here and there in complementary systems. It is also not practical to expect that doctors have to learn all complementary therapies to which they want to have access for their patients. One can visualize several approaches for such training.

In one scenario, an entire year of medical education is spent on studying about health—what creates it, what destroys it, and what protects it. The medical students will learn about the human body as an integral part of the cosmos. They will learn about the body's energy and immune systems and their innate capacities for healing. They will learn about mind-body medicine. They will become more aware of the individual's personal responsibility for health, and learn how to communicate with their patients about this. They will also develop some basic understanding of other major complementary therapies, what they offer, and their relative effectiveness.

Another approach is for doctors who choose to pursue a primary-care or family practice to spend one year as an intern with some of the complementary-care practitioners. Yet another possibility is to offer fellowships to those interested in more in-depth learning about some

of the complementary therapies, especially mind-body therapies, which they can integrate into their practice. Another useful approach would be to have joint seminars and workshops for conventional and complementary-care practitioners to enhance their understanding and respect for each other's approaches and their values. In fact, these should become an important aspect of their continuing education program.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive, nor are they entirely new. It is possible that some of them are already in place. We need to learn more about them, and advocate a fundamental change in the preparation of our future healthcare practitioners.

Organizational Changes

INTEGRAL MEDICINE asserts that all parties will benefit from a respectful cooperation and integration of healthcare models. Our current structures will require modification to allow access and movement across the boundaries of conventional and complementary medicine. This has to become the norm within the modern healthcare system. The role of the primary-care physician or family doctor will be crucial.

We need to learn about the well-functioning integral-medicine models, and how they can be replicated. One example is the Health and Healing Center of the Institute of Health and Healing, California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, California. The center integrates self-care with expert care, and the best of conventional medicine with proven healing practices from around the world. The center's physicians and practitioners are expert in many of the world's great healing traditions, including Western medicine, all backed by research. The center offers a personalized approach to healthcare that combines conventional and complementary approaches. The Institute of Health and Healing also offers classes to teach individuals and practitioners fundamental tools for wellness.

There are ethical and legal considerations in the practical application of integral medicine. These would have to be clarified by the healthcare policy makers. Involvement

of respective professional bodies such as the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and other professional health practitioners' associations is crucial.

International Response

THE CONCEPT of integral medicine has to be universally applicable. Here the role of international organizations, especially the World Health Organization, is crucial. The latter has the global responsibility for defining health, and validating as well as launching innovative concepts and initiatives to healthcare. So far, its initiative in complementary medicine has been limited principally to some research and evaluation of indigenous herbs and medicines.

In 1978, the World Health Organization launched the goal of health for all by the year 2000. It defined the basic components of this goal, and the strategy of primary health care for achieving it. Today, twenty-five years later, progress has been uneven, and inequalities in health persist, and in some cases have even worsened. Now is a good time for the organization to take a leadership role in promoting and defining new and creative ways of providing integral healthcare using all available resources and expertise, including traditional and complementary approaches. The leadership of the organization should be approached for convening an expert consultation on integral medicine in the near future.

In the complex healthcare of the 21st century, no single therapeutic practice should have monopoly on effective diagnosis and treatment for all conditions. Scientific, psychological, nutritional, environmental, and spiritual insights must surely be fully employed to restore and maintain health.



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