

# INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE IN AMERICA

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How Integrative Medicine Is Being Practiced  
in Clinical Centers Across the United States



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The Bravewell Collaborative



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The impetus for developing and implementing integrative medicine strategies is rooted in the desire to improve patient care.

The Bravewell Collaborative, a philanthropic organization that works to improve healthcare, defines integrative medicine as “an approach to care that puts the patient at the center and addresses the full range of physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and environmental influences that affect a person’s health. Employing a personalized strategy that considers the patient’s unique conditions, needs, and circumstances, it uses the most appropriate interventions from an array of scientific disciplines to heal illness and disease and help people regain and maintain optimum health.”

Over the past two decades, there has been documented growth in the number of clinical centers providing integrative medicine, the number of medical schools teaching integrative strategies, the number of researchers studying integrative interventions, and the number of patients seeking integrative care. But whether integrative medicine was being offered in the same, similar, or disparate ways was unknown. In addition, while previous studies focused on the prevalence and use of complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) by patients<sup>1, 2</sup> or by practitioners in hospital settings<sup>3</sup> by enumerating the use of single CAM therapies, very little information had been collected regarding the actual practice of integrative medicine, which by definition treats the whole person.

In 2011, The Bravewell Collaborative commissioned a survey to determine how integrative medicine was currently being practiced across the United States by (1) describing the patient populations and health conditions most commonly treated, (2) defining the core practices and models of care, (3) ascertaining how services are reimbursed, (4) identifying the values and principles underlying the care, and (5) determining the biggest factors driving successful implementation.

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1 Barnes PM, Bloom B, Nahin R. CDC National Health Statistics Report #12. The Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the United States. Findings from the 2007 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Center for Health Statistics. December 2008. [http://nccam.nih.gov/news/camstats/2007/camsurvey\\_fs1.htm](http://nccam.nih.gov/news/camstats/2007/camsurvey_fs1.htm) Accessed November 5, 2011.

2 Eisenberg DM, Davis RB, Ettner SL, et al. Trends in Alternative Medicine Use in the United States, 1990–1997: Results of a Follow-up National Survey. *JAMA*. 1998;280(18):1569–1575

3 Ananth S. 2010 Complementary and Alternative Medicine Survey of Hospitals: Summary of Results. Health Forum (American Hospital Association) and the Samueli Institute. September 2011. <http://www.siib.org/news/2468-SIIB/version/default/part/AttachmentData/data/CAM%20Survey%20FINAL.pdf> Accessed December 11, 2011.

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Twenty-nine integrative medicine centers and programs across the nation were chosen to participate in the study. This group included the nine centers in The Bravewell Clinical Network plus 20 others that, directed by either a physician, other doctoral level healthcare practitioner, or nurse, were chosen on the basis of length of time in operation (a minimum of three years), patient volume, and/or prior clinical contributions to the field.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

1. All of the centers in the study reported being **affiliated** with a hospital, a healthcare system, and/or a medical or nursing school.
  2. The integrative centers use **three models of care** delivery, which are not mutually exclusive:
    - 26 of the 29 centers (90%) offer consultative care  
*(care delivered in collaboration with the patient's primary care provider)*
    - 18 centers (62%) offer comprehensive care  
*(complete care for a specified condition in which the integrative practitioner acts as the primary caregiver for the patient during the course of treatment)*
    - 13 centers (45%) offer primary care  
*(overall care of a person's health across the lifespan)*
  3. Fifteen centers offer **in-patient** services in the hospitals to which they are affiliated.
  4. The entire spectrum of **patient populations** is addressed.
    - All centers provide care to adults
    - 28 centers (97%) offer geriatric services
    - 25 centers (86%) provide adolescent care
    - 21 centers (72%) offer OB-GYN services
    - 18 centers (62%) provide pediatric care
  5. Overall, 63% of patients seen are **self-referred**. But 38% of the centers receive more than half of their patients from within their own healthcare system.
  6. The care patients receive is **individualized**.
    - 27 centers (93%) create a unique health plan for their patients
    - 26 centers (90%) involve the family in patient care
  7. All centers measure **patient satisfaction** on an ongoing basis.
  8. Twenty-five centers (86%) conduct **research**.
  9. Twenty-one centers (72%) use **electronic medical records**.
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10. The most frequently employed **practitioners** at integrative medicine centers are, in descending order, physicians, massage therapists, meditation instructors, and acupuncturists.
  11. Twenty-one centers (72%) reported offering **self-care and wellness programs** to their practitioners and staff.
  12. The survey asked about the use of 34 different **interventions** in treating 20 different conditions. The centers were asked to report which therapies were used for which conditions. The interventions prescribed most frequently across all conditions, in descending order, are:
    - Food/Nutrition
    - Supplements
    - Yoga
    - Meditation
    - TCM/Acupuncture
    - Massage
    - Pharmaceuticals
  13. From a list of 20 **clinical conditions**, respondents chose the top five for which they perceive integrative medicine to be most successful at their centers. These are, in descending order:
    - Chronic pain
    - Gastrointestinal conditions
    - Depression
    - Stress
    - Cancer
  14. The survey grouped the **therapies** into four categories — mind-body, dietary/biological, movement/energy, and manual interventions. In all cases, centers used interventions from more than one treatment category to address each specified health condition. More than half of the centers reported using at least one intervention from all treatment categories for 12 of the 20 conditions covered in the survey.
  15. The authors asked which of the 34 **interventions** listed in the survey the centers used in treating the 20 different conditions. The frequency of use of each intervention for each condition was ranked, and the correlations between treatment ranks were calculated. This analysis revealed that there was a high degree of concordance of interventions used for similar clinical conditions across the centers.
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## CONCLUSIONS

The strong affiliations to hospitals, healthcare systems, and medical and nursing schools as well as the centers' collaborative work with and growing referrals from their own health systems reveal that integrative medicine is now an established part of healthcare in the United States.

The fact that integrative medicine is being practiced in diverse sites across the country with high levels of concordance of interventions for specific conditions suggests that integrative medicine practice is informed by a common knowledge base.

The data from the survey reveals that integrative medicine centers embrace a group of core values that inform and radiate through their practice and interactions with their patients. Integrative care is, in practice, patient-centered care and is a fundamentally collaborative enterprise fostering cooperation between patients and practitioners, and among the practitioners themselves.

One of the most striking, though perhaps predictable, conclusions of this study is that integrative medicine is, in fact, integrative. It integrates conventional care with non-conventional or non-Western therapies; ancient healing wisdom with modern science; and the whole person — mind, body, and spirit in the context of community.

*Integrative medicine is now an established part  
of healthcare in the United States.*

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## NEXT STEPS

### Outcomes Data

Most centers report that, because of limited human and financial resources, they are unable to analyze and disseminate the treatment and outcomes data they collect. Providing funding for analysis of these data, which could provide important information about the efficacy of integrative medicine approaches as well as the treatment of chronic health conditions, should be a priority for funding sources and institutions.

### Best Practices

The field of integrative medicine is still being developed. Systems to identify and share best practices among integrative medicine centers and practitioners should be developed and implemented so that more patients have access to the benefits of integrative medicine approaches.

### Follow-up Survey

To track the progress of integrative care, a follow-up survey in three to five years, building on the questionnaire employed in this report, should be conducted. Comparing the results reported here with those to be found in future studies may be helpful in identifying innovation and trends in the delivery, effectiveness, and use of integrative care.

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*To learn more about integrative medicine please visit [www.bravewell.org](http://www.bravewell.org). Questions about this survey or requests for more information should be directed to Bonnie Horrigan, Director of Communications and Public Education, The Bravewell Collaborative. (760) 815-0238 or [bonniehorrigan@cox.net](mailto:bonniehorrigan@cox.net).*

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