



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Paving the Way to Integrative Health & Wellness

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Jared Polis (D-Colorado) and Mike Coffman (R-Colorado) launched the integrative health and wellness (IHW) caucus in October, 2017. A congressional caucus is defined as "a collection of members of the United States Congress that meets to pursue common legislative objectives." It also provides an excellent opportunity to educate legislators on the value of acupuncture and Oriental medicine for the health and vitality of our nation.

Evidence-Based Integrative Care

In a press release from Polis' office, Jared said, "Integrative and complementary therapies and treatments are an effective choice for many people on their journey to health and wellness. As we debate how we can further the health care system in the U.S., we must ensure that it is affordable and accessible to all - but also, we must ensure that it provides the best possible care available.

That means investing in evidence-based integrative care. I am proud to launch this Caucus alongside my fellow Coloradan Rep. Mike Coffman, and hope that our collaboration serves as a reminder that bipartisanship can help us reach our goals in health care."

Mike Coffman added, "I think it's important for patients to have all the facts and latest research when it comes to therapies and treatments available to them when making medical decisions. I am happy to co-chair the 'Health and Wellness Caucus' with my fellow Colorado colleague, Jared Polis, as we can contribute immensely given our experience dealing with health care in a state as diverse as Colorado."

The IHPC Program

The Integrative Health Policy Consortium (IHPC) organized a program entitled, "What's missing from medicine? Health" as the first Congressional briefing held on March 15th, 2018 focusing specifically on integrative health solutions to the U.S. opioid crisis. It was standing room only in the

Rayburn house including staffers from both the House and Senate representing Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas and Utah. Additionally, there were patient advocacy groups and representatives from over 30 organizations including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD).



The two-hour program included presentations from Eric Schoomaker, MD, PhD, former U.S. Army Surgeon General entitled "Changing the Culture of Comprehensive Pain Management: DoD and VA Efforts," and Ben Kligler, MD, National Director of the Integrative Health Coordinating Center of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs presenting on "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Pain and Well-Being in the VA." Dr. Schoomaker emphasized that the VA expanded the numerical pain scale, to include assessments on how the veteran's pain impacts their activities, sleep, mood and stress. He said that, "Management of chronic pain is a complex, individual experience often with comorbid elements for which care must be patient-centered, tailored, individualized, multi-disciplinary and team-based." Schoomaker doesn't support a "one size fits all" approach to pain management.

The VA Model

Dr. Kligler gave a brief overview of how pain is handled within the VA system and shared that it is the largest health care system in the U.S. with 1,243 facilities across the nation, treating more than 9 million veterans annually. He intends the VA system to be the model of integrative health care in the U.S. A whopping 93 percent of the centers offer some kind of integrative health service, although the type of service varies from one medical center to another ranging from tai chi and yoga to acupuncture and chiropractic care. In a discussion with Dr. Kligler post-briefing, I found that the February 2018 issue of the VA handbook now contains qualification standards for employing licensed acupuncturists in the VA health system.

The IHW Caucus concluded with four presentations, where I promoted acupuncture as a crucial part of integrative pain management, Gerry Clum, DC, President of Octagon and former president of Life University spoke on the effectiveness of chiropractic for acute and chronic pain, Ben Kligler

offered two sample case studies, and Emily Telfair, ND spoke on naturopathic approaches to chronic pain. All of the presentations were extremely well-received; it's fairly typical to have legislative staffers coming and going throughout these briefings, yet everyone who attended stayed to the very end and moved to the hallway to discuss issues further after it was over.

The IHPC has a number of public health topics to address in future briefings through the IHW caucus, and the leadership team was very impressed with the solid attendance. Please urge your congressmen to join the IHW Caucus by clicking [here](#) to assist in paving the way to integrative health and wellness in the U.S.

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