



INTEGRATIVE CARE

## Advancing Holistic and Integrative Health Globally: ACIH Merges With AIHM

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Exciting news! The Academic Collaborative for Integrative Health (ACIH), "the Collaborative," and the Academy of Integrative Health & Medicine (AIHM), "the Academy," announced on Dec. 28, 2020 the planned merger of their business operations to advance holistic and integrative health globally. The ACIH will remain intact as a business unit within the AIHM.

The merger reflects the dramatic growth in consumer demand for integrative care. The National Center for Integrative and Complementary Health [reports](#) that about one in three U.S. adults utilize some form of integrative health approach.<sup>1</sup> Integrative health practitioners and physicians have expanded medicine's toolkit for treating pain, mitigating substance abuse and addiction, treating chronic illnesses – notably including those that afflict underserved communities – and helping people re-establish healthy lifestyles.



Bringing our two organizations together enhances connections between all integrative health professionals and the institutions that train them; and increases understanding and respect between professions, leading to enhanced educational opportunities for all integrative professionals.

#### Leading up to the Merger

In December 2018, ACIH and AIHM entered into deep discussions and a very deliberate process to seriously consider merging our organizations. These discussions began while Alyssa Wostrel, MBA, was ACIH executive director. A Joint Task Force, with representatives from each organization, has been meeting regularly since that time and has included the following leaders: *AIHM Board*: Lucia Thornton, RN, MSN, ThD, AHN-BC; Brad Jacobs, MD, MPH; Bill Meeker, DC, MPH; *ACIH Board*: JoAnn Yanez, ND, MPH, CAE; David O'Bryon, JD, CAE; John Scaringe, DC, EdD. *AIHM Staff*: Tabatha Parker, ND, AIHM Executive Director; *ACIH Staff*: Beth Rosenthal, MPH, MBA, PhD, ACIH Director; and Alyssa Wostrel, MBA, former ACIH Executive Director.

Both boards accepted the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December 2020, and integration began to be operationalized on Jan. 4, 2021.

#### AHIC and AIHM: Who We Are

The Collaborative, founded in 2004, represents 20 national integrative health and medicine organizations, many universities, colleges and programs, and a wide variety of supporters and volunteers. ACIH core members are national academic organizations associated with the five licensed integrative health and medicine professions that have a federally recognized accrediting agency

(acupuncture and East Asian medicine, chiropractic, direct-entry midwifery, massage therapy, and naturopathic medicine). ACIH membership also includes organizations representing traditional world medicines and emerging professions that are engaged in self-regulation and/or working toward future licensure. The Collaborative's goal is to contribute to transforming our health care system to one that emphasizes the importance of creating health and well-being.

The Academy is a global membership organization for the integrative health community. Since its inception, AIHM has been a leading provider of the highest quality, evidence-based education through its conferences, e-learning, webinars and world-class interprofessional fellowship in integrative health and medicine.

### Why We are Merging: We are Stronger Together

This merger extends the reach of both organizations into the integrative health care community. The expanded organization will serve 70-plus organizations and thousands of integrative health clinicians in their rapidly expanding global strategy. The merger allows ACIH to help lead, influence and grow 100-plus global AIHM chapters in integrative health and medicine.

Our organizations complement each other nicely: ACIH is an academic-focused organization of organizations, with working groups composed of educators, clinician educators and researchers. AIHM is a global organization representing integrative health and medicine practitioners and consumers. Here's what leadership of both organizations are saying about the merger:

"The Collaborative offers an exciting opportunity for AIHM to launch a robust organizational membership and fulfill our vision of becoming a truly interprofessional organization. AIHM was historically an association of holistic medical doctors. While AIHM became interprofessional in 2014, merging with ACIH will formally bring in the licensed integrative health professions. It signals that professional silos are truly coming down." — *Tabatha Parker, Executive Director of AIHM*

"The merger totally aligns with AIHM's global plan to strategize and catalyze an integrative health movement." — *William Meeker, DC, MPH, AIHM Board Chair*

"ACIH brings to AIHM the heart of the integrative health professions and leaders that have worked for decades to advance whole-person care." — *Lucia Thornton, RN, Immediate Past AIHM Board Chair*

"For years, organizations have been looking to find a place to strategically address the unique challenges and opportunities the integrative health community faces, and we will be best positioned to co-create that space and support the integrative health movement on that journey." — *JoAnn Yanez, ND, MPH, CAE, ACIH Board Chair*

"ACIH will help us rapidly expand our educational offerings and through their research, education and clinical working groups, create the container for moving strategic projects forward." — *Mimi Guarneri, MD, FACC, ABOIM, AIHM President and Co-Founder*

As for my thoughts, I believe the Academy partnering with the Collaborative provides a major growth opportunity for both organizations, and ultimately the integrative health community.

### How This Affects Our Membership and Community

Executive directors for both organizations) are in deep and detailed discussions with each other and

our boards as we operationalize the merger. There are many synergies to be explored as we extend our reach into the global integrative health care community. We are discussing membership categories and dues, and looking for ways to give members in both our organizations enhanced benefits.

Your support is greatly appreciated! Please let us know if you have any questions and/or are interested in membership by contacting me at [brosenthal@aihm.org](mailto:brosenthal@aihm.org).

### *Reference*

1. The Use and Cost of Complementary Health Approaches in the United States. NIH National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health.

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