Title of Project: Integrative Medicine Centres in Australia: How Integrative Medicine Is Being Practiced in Clinical Centres Across Australia

(FOR Code/s): 1104

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Location of Project: Campbelltown

Project Background

Integrative healthcare aims to treat the whole person (physical, emotional, energetic, spiritual), using the body’s innate ability to heal itself with a blend of conventional and complementary therapies. Patients are integrating complementary medicine (CM) and allopathic medicine in a variety of ways depending on their condition and their changing beliefs. Patients with chronic illness typically use CM to reduce, avoid or replace conventional medicine, but don’t commonly give up conventional medicine altogether. Patients may start use of CM following a perceived lack of suitable orthodox treatment, or they are driven by a belief that “a combination of CAM and conventional medicine is superior to either approach alone”.

In response to this consumer demand, integrative health care centres have emerged. Staff may comprise allopathic doctors, sometimes a practice nurse, and any combination or type of complementary medicine (CM) practitioners. In Australia, literature is sparse and limited to descriptions of single entities. Little known about the level of integration they provide to patients, the main types of patients and conditions they treat. A summary of the types of centres and programs is needed to inform healthcare policy and research, and to be able to understand the potential and limitations of this type of care.

Aim of Study:

To better understand how integrative medicine is being practiced in Australia, this project aims to map the field. The project will:

- Describe primary care integrative medicine facilities;
- Describe the types of patients that are seen and the health conditions that are treated;
- Identify facilitators and barriers to successful practice of integrative medicine within these primary care facilities

Methods

Selection of centres: Integrative medicine centres across Australia will be identified through literature search, yellow pages, online investigation and contacting key players and leaders in the integrative medicine field such as the Australian Integrative Medicine Association.

Questionnaire design: A survey used to map the IM field in the US will be adapted to suit an Australian context (Horrigan, 2012).

Data collection and analysis: All or a selection of these centres will be sent a survey. The survey will be posted or conducted online using a Survey Monkey. An analysis and report of the findings will be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Ethics Application Requirements:
An ethics application will be required with UWS Ethics

**Key References:**

