

World Congress for Integrative Medicine & Health 2017 in Berlin – Invitation to Participate in Shaping the Future of Comprehensive Patient Care

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We are excited to announce that the 10th European Congress for Integrative Medicine (ECIM) will be convened as global event: the World Congress on Integrative Medicine & Health (WCIMH 2017; www.ecim-icmr.org/2017) to be held in Berlin on May 3–5, 2017. This World Congress will be jointly convened by the European Society of Integrative Medicine (ESIM) and the International Society for Complementary Medicine Research (ISCMR, and serving as this organization's 12th International Congress on Complementary Medicine Research).

The Congress will take place in association with a number of national and international organizations from North America and other continents, including the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health (ACIMH), the Academy of Integrative Health & Medicine (AIHM), the Integrative Health Policy Consortium (IHPC), and the Academic Collaborative for Integrative Health (formerly the Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care). Consequently, the congress will provide the most comprehensive global forum and perspective in the field of Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CIM) in 2017, and its goal is reflected in the tag line: *The Future of Comprehensive Patient Care – Strengthening the Alliance of Researchers, Educators and Providers*.

The main themes of the congress are:

1) *Clinical care*: the practice of integrative medicine should be based on distinct definitions, should be evidence informed, and

needs to be compiled in guidelines by experts in conventional and complementary medicine.

- 2) *Education*: academic leaders and health officials have called for future doctors to possess the knowledge and skills to understand how integrative medicine can be incorporated into conventional care to improve the health of the public. Therefore, it is essential to share best practices in how to create robust curricular opportunities for medical students to experience systematic teaching of the principles, strengths, and limitations of Integrative Medicine.
- 3) *Research*: within this Congress, scientists will showcase research of the highest quality worldwide in this field and will provide the state-of-the-science evidence base through plenary lectures, symposia, and abstract presentations.
- 4) *Traditional healing systems*: traditional healing products, practices, and practitioners are an important and often underestimated part of health care. Actually, traditional healing systems (THS) are vital in almost every country in the world, and the demand for their services is increasing. Research contributing to evidence-informed decision making is imperative to develop a cohesive and integrative approach to health care that allows governments, health care practitioners, and, most importantly, those who use health care services to access THS in a safe, respectful, cost-efficient, and effective manner.

5) *Arts and medicine*: Under this theme, for the first time at a research congress, the important contributions of the arts (music, visual arts, dancing, etc.) for integrative therapeutic strategies to achieve optimal health and healing will be explored.

Given the ambitious scope of this international World Congress, the 4 authors of this editorial serve as co-presidents supported by the International Organizing Committee consisting of 17 experts from around the world, including M.S. Lee, J. Liu, K. Watanabe (Far East Asia), R. Street (Africa), A. Steel (Australia), P.A. Caceres Guido, C.A. Lin (South America), H. Boon, J. Briggs, J. Weeks (North America), A. Al-Bedah, M. Khalil, and E. Schiff (Middle East and the Gulf region).

The programming for each of the above mentioned 5 themes is directed by theme subcommittees involving some of the most highly regarded clinicians, educators, and researchers in the world in this field (in alphabetic order): L. Braun, E. Bojner Horwitz, G. Dobos, J. Dusic, D. Eisenberg, I. Fattorini, E.G. Hahn, S.B. Hanser, R. Hecht, G. Lewith, A. Michalsen, J. Rollins, M. Teut, T. Parker, R. Saper, C.M. Witt, and M. Wilcox. The Local Organizing Board is managed by M. Cree. We are very grateful to all organizations and individuals working diligently to making this first WCIMH in 2017 a great success.

Strengthening the international collaborations in the field of CIM is a major goal of the Congress. The preceding 9 ECIM Congresses were important in shaping the field on the continent and led to the desire of convening this World Congress to broaden the global reach.

The first ECIM Congress took place in Berlin, Germany, and that became the site of many subsequent ECIM Congresses as well (2008 to 2011 and in 2013), under the organization and support of the ESIM (www.european-society-integrative-medicine.org). The main idea for the ECIM Congress was to create a European platform for researchers, clinicians, and educators in the field of Integrative Medicine to share their research findings and build collabo-

rations. One of the essential aims was to attract and include conventional practitioners and clinicians interested in the field of evidence-informed CIM. Also, an intensive interchange should occur between the research and practice representatives of Integrative Medicine. Finally, the ESIM deemed it crucial that the international cooperation on Integrative Medicine was facilitated in Europe and included all groups that were contributing to the field, especially within the countries of Eastern Europe.

After establishing the annual ECIM Congresses in Berlin, Germany, subsequent meetings were successfully organized 2012 in Florence, 2014 in Belgrade, 2015 in Copenhagen, and 2016 in Budapest. These scientific conferences demonstrate that there is a strong need for changes in the conventional medicine, as well as for the inclusion of evidence-informed CIM in the practice of medicine in Europe. Fortunately, the quality of the scientific and practical-medical CIM presentations has significantly increased in the last 10 years. However, we are aware that the field of CIM is still evolving and that continual improvement of the research methodology and quality of evidence is indeed necessary. We are also conscious of the fact that it remains a challenge to bring together medical and non-medical CIM providers, who are working mostly in outpatient clinics, with medical school educators and researchers in order to foster a fruitful exchange about diagnostic and treatment strategies.

Complementary and Integrative Medicine, including traditional healing systems and medicine and the arts, will benefit from an international forum focused on highlighting advances in these fields. The World Congress on Integrative Medicine & Health will provide such a forum in 2017. We invite all practitioners, educators, and researchers in the field of Integrative Medicine and Health to come together, submit their best work, participate, and engage together to make this Congress an exciting meeting for the successful advancement of Integrative Medicine across the globe.