

# Changing the Medicine We Do



Twenty years ago, functional medicine was an idea without a movement. It is now a movement that is the single biggest game changing idea in health care. More than 100,000 practitioners from 73 countries have been introduced to the principles and practices of functional medicine. Faculty from one-fifth of all medical schools in America, and practitioners from 46 countries have attended our foundational training course, Applying Functional Medicine in Clinical Practice. And a major milestone will be met when the first participants in IFM's Functional Medicine Certification Program complete their training in 2013.

Many exciting initiatives are now underway as a result of this unprecedented exposure: Corporations such as Google, American Express, and Twitter are exploring the whole-systems approach of functional medicine. Medical leaders at major insurers, including CIGNA, are considering how to incorporate functional medicine in pilot projects for chronic disease. Faith-based communities are embracing the functional medicine model for their congregants. The Veteran's Administration is exploring research programs in functional medicine. Supported by 12 Senators, Medicare is piloting a program to lower premiums for participants in intensive lifestyle treatment programs. Residencies and medical schools are actively introducing functional medicine courses into their programs.

Nationally, functional medicine has made a significant impression on leaders in government and medicine: In 2009, the US Senate invited testimony on health reform, where functional medicine was brought to the attention of key policymakers. Additional productive discussions with legislative leaders and staff followed that opportunity. Senator Harkin now keeps a copy of the Textbook of Functional Medicine in his Senate office. That same year, IFM's white paper, 21st Century Medicine: A New Model for Medical Education and Practice, was published and disseminated widely to critical acclaim. With the passage of healthcare reform legislation in 2010, the National Council on Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health was established and will have an advisory group that includes leaders in functional medicine. Leading integrative medicine authorities, such as Mehmet Oz, MD, cite functional medicine as a major influence on their thinking.

The Institute for Functional Medicine was born 20 years ago from the vision of Susan and Jeffrey Bland to seed the future of health care with a new breed of practitioners, skilled at preventing and treating the tsunami of chronic disease. We are preparing for the next 20 years with a clear strategic plan based on education, research, and collaboration. Our goal is to reverse the epidemic of chronic disease and to continue advancing the leading edge of knowledge in the decades ahead.

To accomplish this goal, IFM has plans to build a scalable and robust educational platform using innovative technologies and teaching methods that can be incorporated into medical school curriculums, residencies, fellowships, and continuing medical education. We will be involved in efforts to develop research models that can appropriately evaluate whole-systems practices and treatment plans that involve individualized and diverse interventions. To achieve its educational and research goals, IFM plans to expand upon its existing collaborative efforts—involving leaders in academic medicine, private sector industry, insurers, and government agencies—to develop and implement pilot programs that can open doors for the integration of functional medicine into the nation's healthcare system.