

## **National Integrative Care Organization Formed - Seeks to Change Health Care "from the Grassroots Level"**

Editorial Staff

In response to the public's increasing need for information about complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), the National Integrative Medicine Council (NIMC) has been formed. The group, headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, proposes a "strategic alliance of businesses, physicians, academic institutions, nonprofit agencies, and consumers who support integrative medicine, enabling them to work together to bring about changes in the current health care system from the grassroots level."

The basic tenet of integrative medicine is to assist patients by seeking the best therapies, whether conventional or "alternative," to assist the body's innate healing capacity.

The founder of the NIMC is Andrew Weil, MD, a doctor widely known to the public for his practical health advice, and as a supporter of alternative health therapies. He is the author of dozens of books, including *Spontaneous Healing*.

"University programs in integrative medicine now exist throughout the country, exposing doctors and other health care providers to this revolutionary approach," Dr. Weil noted. "The NIMC takes the movement one step further by working toward changes in health care through public policy, legislative action, and public education. There's a growing population of supporters of integrative medicine who want to promote this movement and help it grow, and NIMC is a response to that."

NIMC's director of medical and public affairs is Bill Benda, MD, who has 25 years of clinical experience. He is a graduate fellow of the integrative medicine program at the University of Arizona, which was founded by Weil in 1996. "The time has come for collaboration rather than competition," he said. "I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to contribute to this movement."

Joining Drs. Weil and Benda is Matt Russell, the organization's executive director, whose background includes work with the Foundation for Integrative Medicine, the American Osteopathic Association, and the National Mental Health Association.

Governing the group is a national board of directors, that is, according to the NIMC, "comprised of innovators in business, public policy and medicine."

OCTOBER 2000