

## Integrative Health Initiative: Bringing the Power of Complementary and Alternative Medicine to Vulnerable Communities

### The Need



The evidence base for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is rich, diverse, and increasingly vast. Through rigorous scientific research, we understand which CAM modalities are effective in treating a wide range of health and medical issues. Additionally, we know that people are using CAM for health promotion and as an important part of a wellness lifestyle.

Despite this progress, under-resourced communities have traditionally lacked access to CAM as a powerful tool to improve their health. These communities are the central focus of the Integrative Health Initiative (IHI).

### The Program: The Integrative Health Initiative

Under the direction of Dr. Dawn Upchurch and Dr. Michael Prelip in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, the project will build a robust, community-focused CAM research program to promote health, wellness, and resilience in underserved communities, through the lens of prevention.

Historically, research and practice in CAM has assumed a medical, treatment-centered orientation. An integrative health initiative that uses a health- and wellness-centered approach holds great potential to empower communities to take control of their well-being in ways that are culturally appropriate and meaningful as well as cost effective and sustainable.

The Integrative Health Initiative is currently working with Eisner Foundation to pilot a **Mindfulness intervention** in the Generation Xchange program, a partnership with LAUSD aimed at improving health and well-being in adults and learning and emotional regulation among students.

*Examples of potential pilot research projects include:*

- **Acupressure** for adolescents to enhance positive coping and resilience.
- **Tai Chi** for older adults to maintain balance, improve mobility and promote independent living.
- **Culturally informed plant-based diets** for young adults to prevent the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

### Timeline and Budget

Over a 3-year period, IHI will launch four pilot intervention research projects in greater Los Angeles to translate evidence-based research on CAM into community intervention models. *Estimated project cost is \$1.5M.*

### Impact

As a result of the Integrative Health Initiative, highly tailored community-based models for delivering evidence-based CAM modalities will be developed, implemented and evaluated in communities of need. These models have potential for scalability through replication and modifications for delivery in other vulnerable communities, thereby dramatically increasing IHI's reach and impact.