

Empower Others to Take Control of Their Health

By *Georgianna Donadio, M.Sc., Ph.D*

It's no secret that we Americans have reached an all time level of being "unhealthy", thanks to an ever increasing stress-filled lifestyle. Despite widespread campaigns aimed at helping people stop smoking, eat better and exercise, the vast majority of Americans does not get regular exercise and are not eating enough fruits and vegetables. This has resulted in an explosion in obesity that has been sited as high as 63%, along with climbing rates of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other diseases associated with lifestyle and behavior choices. As far back as 1996, Harvard Medical School published a 7- year study which confirms up to 70% of all cancer, heart disease, stroke and mature onset diabetes are preventable with lifestyle and behavior changes. And yet, the health of the wealthiest nation in the world continues to decline.

Core factors for this epidemic amongst Americans can be found in a recent government study. In 2005, the Institute of Medicine published a major study identifying that ninety million Americans are "health illiterate". This does not mean, in this internet dominant society, that people do not have access to or are not receiving enough health information. It means that the majority of us do not know how to interpret or use the health information we receive to control or improve our health or prevent chronic disease.

Think of the last time you read the results of a new study in a magazine, and realized you did not know how to use that information to support or improve your health. In fact, data, presented to the American College of Health Care Executives identifies, "lack of information as the number one root cause of death". Yet, experts like Susan Edgman-Levatin, Executive Director, John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation at Massachusetts General Hospital, acknowledges "It's no secret that traditional methods of patient education are hopelessly ineffective."

Addressing this problem, as far back as 1977, The National Institute of Whole Health, in Boston, Massachusetts, in cooperation with physicians, nurses and health educators, began research and development on an extraordinary, whole-person focused model of health education. The product of these 30 years of development in Boston area hospitals, Whole Health Education®, has today found its way into the medical mainstream. These specialized health educators, Whole Health Educators™, are uniquely trained in respectful presence and mindful listening skills as well as evidence-based, integrated health sciences to demystify for their clients the five major factors of health which influence how well we are or how sick we become. By providing "the big picture of health"®, an integrated understanding of how these five aspects can cause health or disease, the patient or client can possess the knowledge and tools to make necessary lifestyle changes and behavioral choices that are personally right for them. Identifying the root cause and effect of a chronic condition can free an individual to make changes they may not have previously considered.

NIWH Director, Dan Wolff, states, " It's one thing for a patient to be told what to do, but a completely different experience for that person to be invited into understanding the how and why of their condition, and then be empowered to take control of their health through personalized health information and self-care options."

Moreover, the current Medicare/Medicaid, Institute of Medicine and Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organization's mandate for patient centered, whole-person health education and prevention-focused health care delivery has created a demand for certified Whole Health Educators trained by NIWH, which is an accredited, endorsed and approved provider of continuing education for numerous national organizations such as the American Dietetics Association, American Nurses Association, National Association of Social Workers, and the American Holistic Nurses Association.

NIWH is a collaborative partner with Patient360, a physician led organization, to provide physician practices, health organizations and insurance providers with certified Whole Health Educators, whose

patient education services, under the direction of the MD, DO, or DMD, can be billed and reimbursed for by Medicare/Medicaid and other insurance providers.

If you are looking for work with purpose and integrity and are a health care professional, or entry level candidate, who desires to serve others by providing evidence-based health information, and a natural, spiritual outlook on healing, this program may be of interest to you. Program are offered through distance learning as well as optional in-person weekend classes, conducted at a Harvard affiliate hospital in the Boston area, which includes nationally recognized health experts and outstanding core facility members.

For more information visit **www.niwh.org** or call **888-354-HEAL (4325)**

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