



MOUNT SINAI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Holistic Healing and Integrative Medicine: Assessing the Feasibility and Educational Potential of a Curriculum in Integrative Medicine in Medical School Education

Ellie Wiener, Marie Oliva Hennelly, Céline Sparrow, Emily Steinberger, Patricia Bloom, MD
Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, NY 10029



Background

A growing number of patients seeks to incorporate integrative medicine practices into their healthcare. However, few physicians feel comfortable discussing integrative medicine (previously referred to as complementary and alternative medicine) practices with their patients, and many feel the need to learn more about the fields to adequately address patient concerns. Integrative medicine is infrequently taught in U.S. medical schools, and educational opportunities for medical students in integrative medicine are few. Medical schools are attempting to respond to this training gap by incorporating integrative medicine into the traditional curriculum as well as by developing supplemental curricula to adequately prepare physicians for future patient care. The Holistic Health and Integrative Medicine (HHIM) elective course was developed and offered to provide a supplemental curriculum in integrative medicine at MSSM.

Aims

To describe the structure and implementation of the HHIM course and its success in achieving the following objectives for participants:

- to gain knowledge in various fields of integrative medicine (IM)
- to learn ways to incorporate IM into future patient care
- to acquire skills in researching evidence concerning IM
- to gain tools to improve and maintain participant wellness

Methods

Course structure: The HHIM course consisted of 10 two-hour sessions taught by experts in various fields of integrative medicine. Each class included case studies, interactive exercises, a didactic lesson by a guest lecturer, research presentations, and student-led opening and closing exercises that incorporated course themes such as touch, listening, healing, wellness, mind-body connections, and community-building.

Participants:

- 23 first-year and second-year students
- 7 third-year and fourth-year students
 - Of these, 4 took the course for credit

Evaluation: An end-of-course evaluation was completed by course participants regarding knowledge acquisition, attitudes towards IM, interest in further education and training in IM, degree of exposure to IM in the traditional medical school curriculum, and effects of the course on participant wellness.



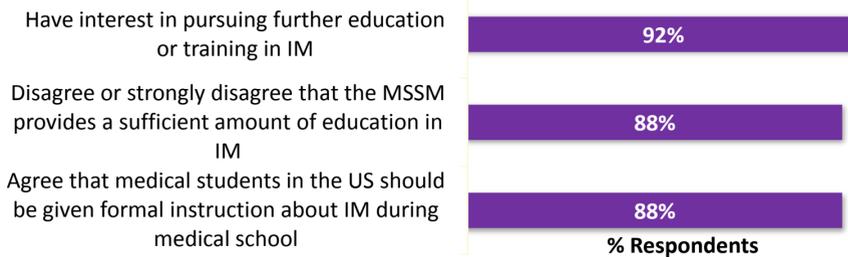
Results

Survey respondents:

Of the 30 MSSM students who took the course, 25 completed the end-of-course evaluation:

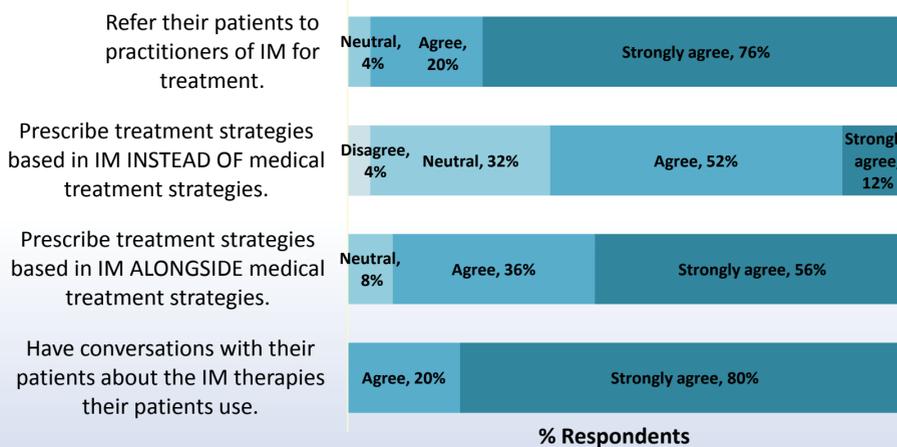
- 20 female and 5 male students
- 22 medical students, 1 MPH student, and 2 MD/PhD students
- 64% of respondents had prior first-hand experience with IM. Of these, 72% had experience with nutrition, 72% meditation, 60% massage, 40% herbal medicine, and 32% traditional Chinese medicine.

Reported interest in IM education in medical school curricula post-HHIM elective



Attitudes towards incorporation of IM in future patient care

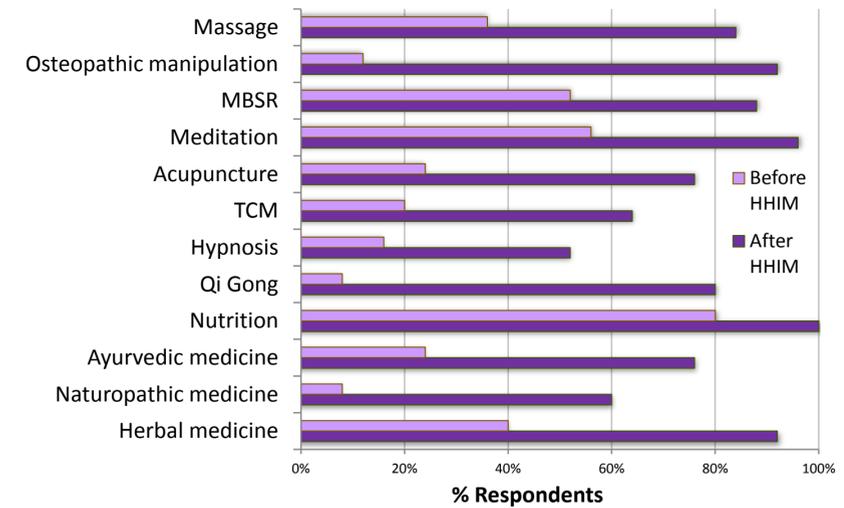
Physicians should be able to...



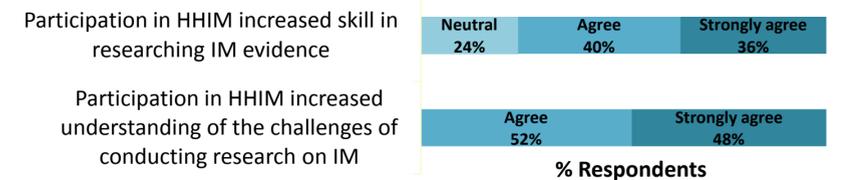
Conclusion

With increasing public use of integrative medicine, medical schools must consider how to best educate physicians about these therapies. An integrative medicine elective, such as HHIM, is feasible and educationally effective as a supplement to the medical school curriculum.

Fields of IM that respondents could define accurately before and after HHIM elective



Reported increased research capability in IM



Reported effect of HHIM elective on participant wellness

