

## The Weil/Arizona Center's Effort to Prove Its Economic Model Shuts Its Door ... plus more

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### The Weil/Arizona Center's Effort to Prove Its Economic Model Shuts Its Door

The promises of the Integrative Health Center of the academically focused Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine (ACIM) were titillating when the clinical center was announced in 2012. The Phoenix-based clinic stimulated strong hopes from ACIM founder Andrew Weil, MD. Part of the excitement was \$1.3 million from the Adolph Coors Foundation to support measurement of outcomes. When the center opened its doors, Weil believed that the pilot would economically prove the center's integrative health model: "We believe our findings will help change priorities of reimbursement and ultimately affect how health care is delivered on a national level."<sup>1</sup> On July 29, 2016, the center and its potential were unceremoniously shut down, apparently as an adverse effect of medical industry consolidation.

In an interview with me, ACIM executive director Victoria Maizes, MD, called the shut-down "a real heartbreak." In a matter-of-fact way, she spoke of the decision as a kind of collateral damage: "When health systems merge, if you're not at the top of the list of priorities, anything can happen." She pointed to a similar development when another merger ended the life of a prominent integrative center in New York.

The context in Phoenix, said Maizes, was a "half-billion dollar deal when Banner Health acquired the University of Arizona's clinical side." She sympathized with the "incredibly stressful situation" for Banner. Although Banner had previously gobbled up clinics and hospitals in its effort to dominate its competitors, the delivery organization was for the first time assimilating an academic health center. Despite a long-time history of offering some integrative services, Banner was not interested in the ins-and-outs "of this small clinic," according to Maizes. By state law, the Tucson-based University of Arizona could not directly operate the center in Phoenix. And the center's previous partner, District Medical Group, like Banner, also had no interest. The rug was pulled out.

The Integrative Health Center, when operational, boasted 2 integrative MDs, 2 licensed acupuncturists,

a chiropractor, a health coach, a nutritionist, a nurse, a mind-body expert, and medical assistants. Their outcomes were apparently good. A message on the site from Maizes and Weil recounts "wonderful successes" and "greater demand than the clinic could accommodate"—over 1800 signed up for their membership-based strategy. The notice claims "significant impact" on patients, "very high ratings" of practitioners, and "extremely high" satisfaction scores. They note "significant positive changes in multiple areas ranging from decreased stress to improved sleep and reduced time lost from work" from the patient self-reported outcomes. In a preliminary report from a poster at the May 2016 research conference, patients reported significant positive benefits were found across multiple indices. The poster was entitled "Integrative Medicine Primary Care: Assessing Patient-Reported Outcomes at Baseline and 12-month Follow-up."<sup>2</sup>

Part of the excitement with the Center was that ACIM engaged it through a partnership with an employer, Maricopa County. Their employees could choose the center for their primary care. The news account of the decision included a prediction from Weil that the Coors-funded study "will find that the IM clinic provides both better health outcomes and 'significantly' lower costs." Weil is quoted as stating that "one reason for the high cost of health care is the tremendous overuse of medications. I think just in that alone we will be able to show great cost reductions because we simply don't prescribe medications frequently. We have many nondrug options to manage common conditions."<sup>3</sup>

**Comment:** The story reads like Bambi meets Godzilla. Or perhaps the trajectory of a gnat, flicked off the back of Banner Health's swelling mass. Banner was a \$7 billion nominally not-for-profit business in 2015—up from \$5.4 billion the year before. It posted operating income of \$128.4 million.<sup>4</sup> If Maizes's account of the positive outcomes at the Integrative Health Center are the full story, Banner missed a good, cheap look at a potentially disruptive innovation.

The Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine has never been known for its clinical offerings. Yet it has a need to prove a business model for the now 1200-plus graduates of its Fellowship in Integrative Medicine. This pilot was anticipated to do that. Banner lacked imagination, amidst their shuffling of hundreds of millions, to make a relatively

## ShortTakes

- ▶ The Green Road, a 2-acre “outdoor healing environment” for injured soldiers and their families, has opened at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The project has multiple partners including the Institute for Integrative Health and includes “research to measure the Green Road’s healing effects on catastrophic injuries, such as posttraumatic stress disorder.”<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Tracy Pedrillo, PhD, CAE, has been named as the new chief executive officer for the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine, the MD-dominant and interprofessionally dedicated practitioner organization.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ Montana’s Republican US Senator Steve Danes visited Yellowstone Naturopathic Clinic in Margaret Beeson, North Dakota, to examine the integrative services provided there to veterans. Danes left concluding that veterans need “methods like chiropractic adjustments, acupuncture, massage and exercises to help alleviate chronic pain and ongoing pain from injury.”<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ The International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) has announced that their C-IAYT certification has taken off with more than 500 applicants—approximately one third licensed health care practitioners—from 45 states and 25 countries.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress announced that its white paper on chiropractic’s role in limiting opioid treatment has been downloaded 1700 times.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ The American Herbal Products Association was among the first to challenge the Food and Drug

Administration’s (FDA’s) emergency declaration of kratom as a Schedule 1 substance.<sup>10</sup> Under pressure for what many believed was a precipitous move, the FDA opened a comment period.

▶ Natural products executive and consultant Michael Levin rallied the integrative medicine community around his concerns with the FDA’s proposed guidance on new dietary ingredients. InnoVision Professional Media, the publisher of this journal, *Integrative Practitioner*, and the *Integrator Blog* were among those who urged practitioners and their organizations to call for an extension and comment.<sup>11</sup> The work influenced the FDA to extend the comment period on that issue until December 12, 2016.

▶ Palmer College and Gallup have sponsored a second annual survey on the use of chiropractic in the United States. A key finding is 93% of users find chiropractic effective, with 60% marking it “very effective.”<sup>12</sup>

▶ Beth Sommers, PhD, MPH, LAC, made history with her election to the American Public Health Association’s (APHA’s) “Intersectional Council.”<sup>13</sup> The Council promotes cross-collaboration between APHA’s 2 dozen component groups. Sommers, the past chair of APHA’s Integrative, Complementary and Traditional Health Care Practices Section,<sup>14</sup> is the first from this group to serve on that APHA body.

▶ Day-late department, but better now than never: The World Health Organization (WHO) is moving to curtail consumption of sugary drinks.<sup>15</sup>

small investment to explore a primary care method that could—if the data supports Weil’s postulate—promote significant changes in Banner’s status quo. Big loss for value-based health care at Banner, for ACIM, and for the field.

### **Certified Professional Midwives: Breakthroughs With Obstetricians, and the Birth Center Movement**

A typically poorly covered area of activity in the transition toward patient-centered integrative health care is the movement to advance the option of birth at home, and by nonnurse or certified professional midwives (CPMs). The National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM) reports 2 recent reasons for celebration. First, according to the NACPM newsletter, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) updated its “Committee Opinion on Planned Home Birth.” Although the document reiterates the ACOG perspective that out-of-hospital births are safest in birth centers, it adds that “each woman has the right to make a medically informed decision about delivery.”<sup>16</sup> This followed other small signs of thawing in the last

18 months. Then a month later, NACPM celebrated another advance. For the first time, a CPM has been elected as president-elect of the American Association of Birth Centers (AABC): naturopathic physician and midwife Amy Johnson-Grass, ND, LM, LN, CPM.<sup>17</sup>

**Comment:** Among the most frozen of interprofessional relationships has been that between obstetricians and midwives. For a long time, that between the CPMs and nurse midwives who have dominated leadership of the AABC was almost as cool. This healing momentum between the professions follows on a good deal of strategic relationship building and participation by the CPMs with both nurse midwives and obstetricians. Pleasing news.

### **In Memoriam: Tai Sophia Cofounder and Well-being Radical Bob Duggan (1939–2016)**

Robert Duggan, MA, MAc (UK), DiplAc (NCCAOM), LAC, was arguably the single most significant influencer in the development of the acupuncture and Oriental medicine (AOM) field in the United States. The school he cofounded, Tai Sophia Institute, became the first in the

United States to gain accreditation status. He was an early chair of the field's educational accrediting body. Tai Sophia, now transformed into Maryland Institute of Integrative Health, presently offers more than 1 dozen academic programs for more than 1000 students from more than 30 nations. Within days of Duggan's death, more than 350 people visited a Web site to laud his memory as a mentor and guide.<sup>18</sup>

Duggan, a devotee and friend of social critic Ivan Illich, was himself a radical advocate for a transformation to a patient-centered and health-focused system. At a time in the mid-1990s when the field's highest priority was promoting licensing in new states, Duggan offered a surprising suggestion. He argued—with tongue only partially in cheek—that to be true to acupuncture's well-being principles and push beyond the disease model, the profession should seek regulation under Parks and Recreation rather than professional licensing. In a dialogue among academics across a dozen integrative health fields in 2005, Duggan demanded that he and his school be listed not under AOM but as a new category: "Acupuncture Wellness Institute." At the end, Duggan was concerned that the meeting, with which I was involved as an organizer and which many recall as a critical launch for interprofessionalism in the integrative arena, had lost sight of its mission of health creation in favor of professional aggrandizement. He refused to be acknowledged as a participant in the meeting report.<sup>19</sup>

Duggan was, as one member of his field describe him, "an iconic figure in the dissemination of Chinese medicine into the West and also a full-blooded archetypal Prophet voice for the complementary and alternative medicine professions, in that come-to-Jesus/what-are-we-truly-about kind of way."

**Comment:** I am among those who was both mentored and aggravated by Bob Duggan. He kept his eye on the prize of actual transformation—and stunned many in doing so. Listen to this brief story shared with me in a personal communication with Duggan's close friend Sherman Cohn, JD, a professor at Georgetown Law and former Watergate lawyer: "Some of us will recall Bob's talk to the establishment of Howard County, Maryland, condemning the upcoming expansion of a major hospital as a total waste of resources. In that talk, as elsewhere, [Bob] campaigned for dismantling the medical establishment, not expanding it. It should not be a surprise that many in the audience were in strong disagreement." There will not be another like him. Now who will hold up this radical clarity about where we need to be driving this movement?

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