

# UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine

Impact Report 2020





Dear Friends,

At the UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, we are dedicated to nurturing health and inspiring the well-being of all people. Focusing on this commitment feels more urgent in 2020 than at any other point in our 22-year history.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our faculty and staff have done a remarkable job of speedily and continuously adapting to extraordinary circumstances while persisting in our clinical, educational, and research missions.

Our strong sense of community has been essential this year. Together, we adapted our therapeutic models; learned new technical skills; and temporarily moved patient visits, courses, and research efforts online. As we carefully and safely reopen for appointments and activities, we know that the innovations we developed will continue to benefit the UCSF Osher Center and all those we serve.

Even as we cope with the pandemic, we are channeling the sadness, frustration, and anger we feel over racial injustice into necessary and meaningful progress. With the goal of making the UCSF Osher Center a boldly anti-racist organization, our clinic has formed a Health Care Inequality/Anti-Racism Working Group focused on eliminating inequities in the delivery of integrative health care. Our center-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group continues to design and implement strategies to achieve health equity.

The Community Care Fund has been critically important during the economic downturn, so we are grateful that it was awarded renewed funding from The Bernard Osher Foundation and the Mount Zion Health Fund. Even with this support, though, patient need exceeds our resources and there is much more we must do. In this report, you can read more about how we are caring for patients, conducting novel research, and training the next generation of integrative medicine providers.

We wish you good health and well-being and look forward to the day we can meet again in person.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shelley R. Adler'.

**Shelley R. Adler, PhD**

*Director, UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine*

*Osher Foundation Distinguished Professor of Integrative Medicine*

# Integrative Health Equity: An Urgent Imperative

Achieving health equity means overcoming unfair and unnecessary disparities due to socioeconomic, ethnic, geographic, or gender differences to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to attain their full health potential. Health equity requires clinicians and health systems to welcome and respect all people and strive for inclusivity.

These are core values of the UCSF Osher Center's mission and a priority across all of our programs.

"We are committed to applying an equity lens to all of our work," says Maria Chao, DrPH, MPA, the UCSF Osher Center's associate director for health equity and diversity and associate director of research. "This includes researching how integrative approaches can



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– Maria Chao, DrPH, MPA

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We are committed to improving integrative health care for members of medically underserved communities. Through the UCSF Osher Center clinic, we improve access to integrative medicine and provide direct support for low-income patients who need integrative care.

All **rac**es  
All **rel**igions  
All **coun**tries of origin  
All **sexu**al **orien**tations  
All **gend**ers  
All **ethn**icities  
All **abili**ties

All are welcome here.

# Caring for Our Community

With support from friends like you, we established the Community Care Fund as part of our goal of providing compassionate and comprehensive care for all members of our community. Through this fund, low-income patients can access all of the care recommended by their UCSF Osher Center providers, even if those services are not covered by insurance.



*Acupuncturist Helen Ye, MS, LAc*

“The Community Care Fund fulfills one of the bedrock goals of the UCSF Osher Center: providing integrative health care to underserved populations,” says Sanford Newmark, MD, UCSF Osher Center medical director and the Osher Foundation Endowed Chair in Clinical Programs in Integrative Medicine. “Although Medi-Cal may pay for doctor visits, the Community Care Fund enables us to provide other healing methods for those who otherwise cannot afford them.”

The Community Care Fund subsidizes about 12% of UCSF Osher Clinic visits each year. Patients referred to acupuncture, massage, psychotherapy, biofeedback, or mindfulness-based stress reduction courses who do not have the means to pay are supported by the fund.



*UCSF Osher Center Practice Manager LaKendra Spates, MHSA*

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the Community Care Fund more important than ever, notes LaKendra Spates, MHSA, the UCSF Osher Clinic’s new practice manager, who has been invaluable in addressing patient needs and transitioning appointments online. “The Community Care Fund gives us the ability to expand our scope by providing services to patients who may have recently lost their jobs due to the pandemic,” she says. “The fund can reduce the stress patients may have related to their ongoing care after a major life change.”

## Mindfulness for Mental Health

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) combines meditation practices from mindfulness-based stress reduction with cognitive behavioral therapy to improve mental health. While evidence shows that MBCT provides a variety of mental health benefits, it is particularly helpful in preventing relapses of depression, which occur in 80% of people with a history of two episodes of depression. Compared to usual care, MBCT reduces depression relapse rates by an average of 30% for two years following an eight-week course. However, we don’t yet know the next steps to recommend to patients after the program to continue its benefits.



Led by Rick Hecht, MD, UCSF Osher Center director of research and the Osher Foundation Endowed Chair in Research in Integrative Medicine, and Dr. Adler, we are launching a pilot study to determine the most effective maintenance approaches after MBCT. Stakeholder input has been gathered, and we are now conducting online focus groups with MBCT “graduates” and teachers. We look forward to the results of this project, which have the potential to strengthen evidence for applying mindfulness-based approaches to improve mental health.



## Meditation for Wellness

Loving-kindness meditation cultivates wishes of well-being for the self and others. The UCSF Osher Center project Loving-Kindness with Intersectional Neuroscience and Diverse Meditators (KIND) will explore how diverse meditators teach and practice loving-kindness meditation during times of uncertainty to support their health, sense of community, and responses to injustice.

The study is led by Helen Y. Weng, PhD, UCSF Osher Center assistant professor; Ariana Thompson-Lastad, PhD, a UCSF Osher Center postdoctoral research fellow; and Dr. Adler. The project builds on Dr. Weng’s broader goals to increase inclusivity within



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– Helen Weng, PhD

the neuroscience of meditation, a framework called intersectional neuroscience. Early in her career, Dr. Weng observed a significant lack of diversity in the field: Researchers and participants in contemplative science studies were most often white men.

“By including more diverse meditators in our studies, we mutually learn from each other and can discover how loving-kindness meditation can help people cope with stress rooted in oppression,” Dr. Weng says. “To help support our participants, we adapted the KIND study to be more accessible during this time of multiple crises, including the pandemic and racial oppression.”

The study was adapted for participants’ physical and emotional safety this year by shifting to an online format, and it provided opportunities for people to share how meditation helps them cope with the pandemic and forms of oppression such as racial discrimination.

The KIND study was awarded a Prosociality, Empathy, Altruism, Compassion, and Ethics (PEACE) Grant from the Mind and Life Institute to explore how diverse



*UCSF Osher Center Clinic Practice Supervisor Heather De Martini and other staff members safely assist patients on the phone and in person.*

meditators at Oakland’s East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) practice loving-kindness meditation. The team conducted focus groups within EBMC’s population, including racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQIA+ community, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, social justice activists, and EBMC teachers.

In the next phase, the KIND study team will collaborate with EBMC on a community-engaged neuroscience study to measure mental states during loving-kindness meditation using an individualized neuroscience approach.

## Predicting COVID-19 and Other Infectious Diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need to identify individuals who may be in the earliest stages of a transmittable disease, provide them with rapid testing, and guide isolation and contact tracing to interrupt continued transmission. Earlier this year, Ashley Mason, PhD, UCSF Osher Center assistant professor, launched the TemPredict Study to ascertain whether detailed physiological data can predict the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

## Innovative Research to Reduce Health Disparities and Improve Health and Well-Being

Augmented by partnerships with community-based organizations and safety-net clinics, our research program pursues a range of studies focused on populations negatively impacted by health disparities. Current areas of study include:

- Impacts of food insecurity.
- Access to integrative approaches to pain management.
- Diet and lifestyle interventions to improve care for vulnerable individuals with cancer.
- Mindfulness to treat depression over the long term.
- Physiological measures to predict the onset of transmittable diseases such as COVID-19.



“We’re excited about the impact this program is having on training UCSF faculty members in integrative medicine.”

– Anand Dhruva, MD

We received seed funding for the study from #StartSmall – an initiative launched in response to the pandemic – and leveraged that into a larger grant from the US Department of Defense. TemPredict utilizes a smart ring – a wearable health-tracking device that measures variables such as temperature, heart rate, and respiration. The team is collaborating with scientists at UC San Diego, MIT Lincoln Laboratory, and Vitalant Research Institute, and with startup Oura Health, makers of the smart ring.

“My team and I are thrilled to work on something that might make a difference for this pandemic and also have a long-lasting impact on disease prediction,” Dr. Mason says. “We hope this project will shed light on how commercially available wearable devices could serve as useful illness-detection tools.”

TemPredict has enrolled more than 65,000 participants to provide data using the smart ring and self-reports.

Approximately 10,000 of the participants have also completed COVID-19 antibody testing. The project is currently focused on developing an algorithm that predicts the onset of COVID-19 that will then be pilot-tested in a high-risk sample beginning in late 2020.

## Integrative Medicine Education During the Pandemic and Beyond



*Integrative geriatrician Louise Aronson, MD, MFA, leads a (pre-pandemic) course on aging.*

Through the UCSF Osher Center’s education program, we are actively building pipelines to improve the diversity of the integrative medicine workforce. Although the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to our education program, we built upon our expertise and infrastructure to make a smooth transition to online learning.

With funding from the National Institutes of Health, we are launching a Summer Institute on Integrative Health Equity and Applied Research (IHEAR), co-directed by Dr. Adler and Dr. Chao, in 2021. Through IHEAR, we will provide predoctoral medical, nursing, acupuncture, and other health-profession



trainees with short-term, interprofessional research training in integrative medicine, with a focus on social disparities in health and health care.

Our yearlong Integrative Medicine Scholars Program trains UCSF faculty members and provides board eligibility in integrative medicine. This year, we enrolled a robust cohort of trainees from numerous medical specialties, including medical oncology, neurology, palliative medicine, psychiatry, and radiation oncology. During and after their training, these scholars become ambassadors for the UCSF Osher Center and for integrative medicine within their home departments.

“We’re excited about the impact this program is having on training UCSF faculty members in integrative

medicine,” says Anand Dhruva, MD, the UCSF Osher Center’s director of education and Osher Foundation Endowed Chair in Education in Integrative Medicine.

The Integrative Medicine Scholars Program has become a template for the cross-center training program of the Osher Collaborative for Integrative Medicine – the international consortium of seven Osher Centers.

Providing education and training for practicing physicians outside of UCSF is another important part of our educational mission. During the 2020-2021 academic year, we are offering online continuing medical education courses in integrative oncology and integrative health equity. These courses take advantage of our online teaching skills to reach an even wider audience than our in-person courses.

Our public education efforts also continue online, with the Osher Mini Medical School for the Public, which features courses such as “Child and Adolescent Well-Being While Sheltering in Place” and “Self-Healing in the Era of Social Distancing.”

We are grateful to continue serving our community of learners, locally and globally.

## Thank you for your support of the UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine.

For more information about the UCSF Osher Center,  
please contact Sarah Krumholz at

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