

World first network on integrative mental health to improve treatments

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The first network of its kind endorsing an integrative approach to the treatment of mental health has been launched as part of World Mental Health Week

The International Network of Integrative [Mental Health](#) (INIMH) is a network of mental health experts including [medical doctors](#), allied health clinicians, and academics who are passionate about improving mental health outcomes for patients by combining complementary and [mainstream medicine](#).

Vice Chair of INIMH and NHMRC Clinical Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, Dr Jerome Sarris said the network would be a resource to doctors, researchers and the general public on the practice of integrated [mental health care](#).

"There is a growing body of statistical and anecdotal evidence indicating that many people are using non-conventional approaches (often in combination with mainstream medicine) to treat [mental health conditions](#)," he said.

"Despite this, there has been a deficit in the availability of high-quality information for people to improve their mental health using an integrated approach that combines the 'best of both worlds'.

"INIMH would address the absence of quality, evidence-based information about integrative and complementary medicine approaches

in current mental healthcare," he said.

The practice of "integrative mental healthcare" adopts a model of healthcare that uses an integrated approach to addressing biological, psychological, sociological determinants of mental illness.

A combination of mainstream interventions such as pharmacological treatments and psychosocial interventions with evidence-based non-conventional therapeutics (such as nutritional medicine, dietary and exercise modification, acupuncture, select [herbal medicines](#), and mindfulness meditation), are often prescribed.

The INIMH announcement incorporates the official launch of its innovative website for clinicians and the public (www.inimh.org). The interactive website provides links to resources on integrative mental healthcare; expert-hosted forums; a comprehensive searchable mental healthcare library; and offers networking between clinicians, researchers and the public.

Dr Sarris has also recently co-authored a White Paper outlining strategic recommendations for advancing integrative mental healthcare, including increasing research in key areas, improving clinician training and education, and promoting a public health agenda.

"The current trend suggests that many healthcare providers and patients believe that both conventional and non-conventional therapies are legitimate treatment choices," Dr Sarris pointed out.

"However there is little agreement on what healthcare providers should recommend—or patients should choose—regarding safe, evidence-based, non-conventional or integrative treatment strategies to address mental health needs. INIMH addresses this deficit."

"It is our intention with the launch of INIMH and the website now to grow the international network to assist in the transformation of mental healthcare, and to provide a vital resource for clinicians and the public."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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