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Extending the Systems Biology Model to the Workplace Environment

This issue concludes a three-part series in which Dr. Bland has been discussing different aspects related to the application of personalized medicine programs. This month, the focus is on extending the systems biology model to the workplace environment, described in this way by Dr. Bland: “A broader model where hopefully more people can be influenced in a positive way as it pertains to how to access this systems biology thinking.”

Dr. Bland welcomes Dr. Kenneth Pelletier this month, a longtime colleague. Dr. Pelletier is the author of the 1977 best-selling book *Mind As Healer, Mind As Slayer*—a seminal book on the link between stress and four major types of illness (cardiovascular disease, cancer, arthritis, and respiratory disease) that has never been out of print since its original publication. Dr. Pelletier went on to publish 11 additional books, while at the same time becoming a world expert on corporate health programs, behavioral medicine, disease management, worksite interventions, and alternative/integrative medicine.

Clinician/Researcher of the Month

Kenneth Pelletier, PhD, MD

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Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier is a Clinical Professor of Medicine and a Professor of Public Health at the University of Arizona School of Medicine, as well as a Clinical Professor of Medicine in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco (UCSF). At the University of Arizona School of Medicine, he is also Director of the Corporate Health Improvement Program (CHIP), which is a collaborative research program with 15 of the Fortune 500 corporations including IBM, Ford, Dow, Prudential, Cisco, Pepsi, Mercer, Thomson Reuters, Walgreens, and NASA.

After discussing Dr. Pelletier’s background and the events that contributed to the publication of his best-selling book, *Mind As Healer, Mind As Slayer*, Dr. Bland and Dr. Pelletier turn their focus to corporate health promotion from an integrated perspective. Dr. Bland cites numerous publications by Dr. Pelletier,

and notes his expertise in converting information into implementable, executable strategies. Says Dr. Pelletier:

“It is interesting to think about that progression initially from those first studies and demonstrations around mind-body and how we can influence and self-regulate our autonomic nervous system. What I began to think about is how often does that occur out of awareness, i.e. we create states of illness through decisions, through beliefs, through actions, through lifestyle changes that are dysfunctional, that are negative for us and create poor conditions for health.”

They go on to discuss the myriad issues connected to corporate health programs, including such topics as the impact of the Affordable Care Act, and a recent study examining the impact of wellness programs on incidence of chronic disease.

Dr. Pelletier also discusses his work with the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. To date, over 1100 physicians have completed a two-year post-doctoral program, and later this year the first national exams leading to certification in integrative medicine will take place. Dr. Pelletier’s fellow Board members who participated in developing questions for the exams include such noted individuals as Dr. Andrew Weil, Dr. Tieraona Low Dog, Dr. Victoria Maizes, and Dr. Patrick Hanaway.

Integrating the Concept of Systems Thinking into Healthcare Delivery

Dr. Bland closes this issue with discussion of a line-up of articles and editorials from the recent medical literature, all highlighting some aspect of the changing environment in health care. Topics range from the potential economic stress the Affordable Care Act may create in some populations, to standard-of-care guidelines that are shifting to become less restrictive as recognition of the need for personalization and individualized treatment approaches grows. Dr. Bland synthesizes his analysis of these publications and provides his takeaways and insights.

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