



ACADEMIC CONSORTIUM
FOR **INTEGRATIVE**
MEDICINE & HEALTH

IMPACT CIRCLES

A yearlong series of Academic Consortium member successes in integrative innovation and implementation, intended to inspire new ideas and programs throughout the integrative medicine community, worldwide, in 2021.

INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION SCIENCE/RESEARCH

-foundation of Lifestyle Medicine

-filling an education gap

Worldwide, more than 650 million adults and 340 million children have obesity. Increasingly, children under the age of 5 are struggling with this disease. While it has long been known that nutrition is linked to health, the science behind that link is a developing field of inquiry and application. The American Society for Nutrition Scientists (Today the American Society for Nutrition) was founded early in the last century; the American Nutrition Association today notes that “there is a rich and evolving body of science illuminating nutrition’s impact on our health.” Nutrition is considered a foundation of lifestyle medicine, yet much remains to be learned so that it becomes mainstream in practice. Integrative nutrition science and research are leading the way, with targeted education lending breadth to our knowledge and depth to patient consultation and healthcare delivery.



Leigh Frame, PhD, MHS, a nutrition scientist and nutritional immunology researcher, is bringing integrative nutrition and immunity together through clinical/translational research. She is assistant professor, Department of Clinical Research and Leadership, George Washington University (GW). As a scientist, Dr. Frame recognizes there is “*no consensus in the scientific community on what defines a ‘healthy’ gut microbiome.*” “*Future research must consider individual responses to diet and how the gut microbiome responds to dietary interventions as well as emphasize function (metabolomics) over composition (genomics).*”

Dr. Frame also is GW’s program director, Integrative Medicine Programs, and executive director, Office of Integrative Medicine and Health. As program director, she is broadening the foundation used to prepare students for professional certifications, with an emphasis on expanding integrative nutrition

education.

GW offers the only Master of Science in Health Sciences (MSHS) in integrative medicine for practicing clinicians, now with a nutrition track. She credits development of this unique program and its inclusion of nutrition science, to GW’s willingness to recognize the portal to transformative care that research



provides and the genuine need for integrative care that is whole-health focused and evidence-supported. GW is committed to the advancement of this evidence-based approach, promoting interprofessional and translational practice.

Although a reported 60% of adults in the U.S. have diet-related chronic disease; nutrition counseling is part of an estimated 25-40% of primary care visits, according to Dr. Frame. The two-year master track teaches patient-centered nutrition science and behavioral counseling as well as the research skills that empower students to stay abreast of fast-changing advances in this field of care.

The first graduating class will introduce 14 clinicians this May, well equipped to develop personalized, multidisciplinary and scientifically-backed lifestyle medicine plans for each patient, including improving diet and use of team-based medicine. These graduates will be eligible to sit for the Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS) exam, recognized by the Board for Certification of Nutrition Specialists.



Dr. Frame reports that the National Academy of Sciences recommends 25 hours of nutrition education for clinicians and the American Society for Nutrition recommends 44 hours, yet the current average is fewer than 20 hours.

To fill the need for greater access to integrative nutrition education, GW is now developing coursework leading to a graduate certificate in Integrative Nutrition & Lifestyle Medicine, which will require just 15 credit hours for

completion. *“We hope that this will satisfy the busy health care provider without the time or need for a master’s degree and broaden the audience for this important training.”*

INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION SCIENCE/ NUTRITION RESEARCH STARTING POINTS

1. Consider the possibilities for nutrition science/research education within the integrative healthcare landscape at your institution.
2. Determine your target audience for training, i.e., practicing clinicians or trainees?
3. Talk to your Curriculum Committee to ensure you clearly understand their interests and priorities in development of a new curriculum and how it fits into the integrative educational matrix.
4. Check with the American Nutrition Association to ensure your curriculum meets required competencies for certification.

RESOURCES

- [Leigh Frame PhD, MHS](#)
- [American Nutrition Association](#)
- [American Society for Nutrition](#)
- [Annual Nutrition Science Meeting | 2021 Annual Nutrition Conference](#)
- [International Conference on Nutrition in Medicine 2021](#)
- [Nutrition Science Podcast | GWU Office of Integrative Medicine and Health](#)
- [Nutrition & Culinary Medicine Special Interest Group/Academic Consortium](#)

Special note: Integrative Nutrition and Culinary Medicine are separate Lifestyle Medicine approaches, a developing partnership that reaches for the same result – optimal health and healing through nutrition. *Impact Circles* will explore the Culinary Medicine intersect in the July edition.