



WHOLE HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACHING

Health coaching is not new, having entered the integrative health portfolio in the early 2000's. Neither is it a subset of the decades-older "life coaching." There is need and room for both today, when people everywhere are trying to recover or discover some balance after the last 18 months of global chaos - political, environmental and medical, behavioral and societal. It can be overwhelming. Timing may be exactly right for renewed focus on health coaching to clear away any confusion, public or professional, about its role and benefits, standards and certifications, and deliver the skilled help that empowers individuals and groups to identify and achieve their health and well-being goals.



Ruth Q. Wolever, PhD, NBC-HWC, is a founding member, inaugural president and current member of the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC), a nonprofit affiliate of the National Board of Medical Examiners. The NBHWC has accredited more than 80 training programs since 2017 when it launched national standards and certification for Health and Wellness Coaching (HWC). The University of Minnesota offered the first graduate degree in health coaching; today 10 other members of the Academic Consortium offer accredited training programs. To date, more than 5,000 individuals, including healthcare professionals, hold the NBC-HWC (Nationally Board-Certified HWC) credential.

As director of Vanderbilt Health Coaching, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and interim director, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Vanderbilt, Dr. Wolever says *"health coaching was never more needed than it is today and fits nicely within the integrative approach to optimize health and well-being; we're seeing both clinician and patient awareness increase as the demand for this patient-focused, whole-health approach reaches new levels."*

The Vanderbilt Health Coaching Program has two phases and starts two new cohorts each year, designed for licensed healthcare professionals who want to practice as an independent Nationally Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coach (NBC-HWC) or Nurse Coach-Board Certified (NC-BC), or to enhance a current healthcare role with the skills to help patients self-manage their health and optimize wellness. Dr. Wolever notes that physician participants typically are in primary care or specialties where they treat chronic diseases highly influenced by patients' lifestyle behaviors and mental health status.



The Vanderbilt curriculum covers foundational and advanced health coaching skills and tools, mindfulness training, motivational interviewing, behavior change theory, cultural competence, regulation and scope of practice.

The American Medical Association (AMA) approved **Category III CPT® Codes** for health and well-being coaching, effective January 2020.

The AMA defines **Health and Well-Being Coaching** as a *patient-centered approach wherein patients determine their goals, use self-discovery or active learning processes together with content education to work toward their goals, and self-monitor behaviors to increase accountability, all within the context of an interpersonal relationship with a coach.*

The **coach** is defined as a *non-physician healthcare professional certified by either the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching OR the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc.*

Dr. Wolever says that, although many assume coaching is a matter of *"advising and recommending,"* in fact, health coaching *"is a very specific process for building a patient-centered relationship, eliciting the patient's personal goals for their health and wellness and helping them to find the best route for achieving those goals."* The integrative health coaches at Vanderbilt use a Wheel of Health to broaden the patient's perspective of their health issues and develop a related gap analysis to identify what they want and where to start.



The Vanderbilt Wheel of Health includes 9 areas important to overall health and well-being. Copyright 2015, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, used with permission.

The future for health and wellness coaching is bright

– for two major reasons:

1. Having the national credential and unified movement to clarify the definition allow for more rigorous research, moving health coaching to the forefront in healthcare.
2. Although the AMA approved a Level III CPT code and definitions, the NBHWC, in collaboration with the Veterans Administration, has placed health and wellness coaching on a path toward Level I reimbursement, expected in the next year to 18 months, with empirical evidence and expanded definitions (see below).

National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC) defines **Health and Wellness Coaching** as a *patient-centered approach wherein patients at least partially determine their goals, use self-discovery or active learning processes together with content education to work toward their goals, and self-monitor behaviors to increase accountability, all within the context of an interpersonal relationship with a coach.*

The **coach** is a *healthcare professional trained in behavior change theory, motivational strategies, and communication techniques, which are used to assist patients to develop intrinsic motivation and obtain skills to create sustainable change for improved health and well-being.*

As the path to a Level I CPT code for health coaching broadens, research studies are exploring the benefits for specific diseases. At Vanderbilt, such studies, conducted in partnership with different departments, are reviewing the benefits for patients with irritable bowel disease, for example, to see if it improves their ability to stay on their biologics regimen. With the department of nephrology, coaches are studying the impact of motivational interviewing for patients with chronic kidney disease, to determine how it helps their adherence to a dialysis regimen.

Dr. Wolever notes that four major insurance carriers have embraced coaching for 10 years or more, but only as a way to manage costs, not offered as a patient care option for everyone. *"With continued research and increasing public and practitioner education, we will prove the value of health and wellness coaching as a healthcare driver and deliver the evidence needed for it to qualify for reimbursement."*

Integrative Health and Wellness Coaching Program – Before You Start

1. Consider the possibilities for comprehensive health and wellness coaching within your integrative health program and the patient needs it might serve.
2. Pay close attention to funding pathways and mechanisms for billing. Until a Level I CPT code is achieved, reimbursement for coaching services depends upon the third-party payor's bundled or preventive care package or the coach's healthcare credentials, or the patient's ability to pay.
3. If the program is intended as training for healthcare professionals, check with the NBHWC to ensure your curriculum meets required competencies and standards so trainees will be eligible for certification.

RESOURCES

- [Kelli Stewart, Vanderbilt Health Coaching Program Manager](#)
- [National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching](#)
- [Health Coaching Curriculum Plan | Vanderbilt Health Coaching Program](#)
- [Answering the Cry for Health Coaching](#)
- [Health and Wellness Coaching Today's Patients: A Primer for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [Engaging Patients in their Health Care: Processes Health Coaches Use](#)
- [Integrative Health Coaching: An Organizational Case Study](#)
- [Master of Arts Degree in Integrative Health and Well-being Coaching, | University of Minnesota](#)
- [A Systematic Review of the Literature on Health and Wellness Coaching](#)
- [The Process of Patient Empowerment in Integrative Health Coaching: How does it Happen?](#)

Copyright © 2021 All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:
Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health
12570 Turtle Creek Drive
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove®

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

12570 Turtle Creek Dr
New Buffalo, MI | 49117 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

