



PEDIATRIC INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE Clinical Pathways in Mainstream Medicine

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recognizes the increasing use of integrative therapies for children and advises pediatricians and other clinicians who care for children to counsel patients and families about all relevant, safe, effective, and age-appropriate health services and therapies. However, many pediatricians remain unaware of integrative medicine's potential to provide expanded, evidence-based treatment options for children and adolescents. Evidence-based integrative medicine practices are not emphasized in medical education. As of 2012, only 16 of the 143 academic pediatric programs surveyed in the United States reported having pediatric integrative medicine programs. Impactful initiatives in pediatric integrative medicine to fill this education gap include the Pediatric Integrative Medicine in Residency program, a 100-hour online educational curriculum offered by the Andrew Weil, Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, and the Academy Scholars program, a 300-hour certification, offered by the Academy of Pediatric Integrative Medicine (APIM).



Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), affiliated with the Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, is the oldest hospital in the United States dedicated exclusively to pediatrics. It offers comprehensive integrative care that is internationally recognized. **Maria R. Mascarenhas, MBBS**, is a pediatric gastroenterologist and nutrition pediatrician in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Children's Hospital, and Director of CHOP's Integrative Health Program. She teaches an APIM master class and says *"pediatricians who are updated on the literature and clinical research in integrative-based interventions will be better able to counsel families and be prepared to offer more comprehensive treatment options and effective preventive lifestyle recommendations for children and adolescents."*

Research has shown that Integrative medicine models of care deliver measurable improvement in quality of life for children and adolescents with ongoing health conditions while saving money for stretched health systems. Therapies offered at CHOP include acupuncture, yoga, aromatherapy, culinary medicine, massage, mindfulness, Reiki, and a variety of child life therapies. Positive metrics around these interventions have led to grants, philanthropic and budget support. More broadly, Dr. Mascarenhas notes that *"steady progress is being made in select areas where we have integrated into clinical pathways in mainstream medicine and this needs to continue – to include all pediatric care through our shared metrics/experiences and clinical research."*



Strengths and Challenges in the Field

Increasing patient awareness and demand leads the list of strengths in this field, in tandem with health outcomes and measures and leadership champions. Generating revenue and determining and capturing the metrics that prove value to funders count among the challenges. There remains a need for more education and for quality research to develop and evaluate integrative pediatric care models, in scope and effectiveness, across a range of conditions.

Dr. Mascarenhas says *"taking care of children is an honor and a sacred duty; it is also a close partnership, not only with our young patients and their families, but with our colleagues in healthcare, generally, and in integrative medicine most specifically."* She adds: *"A colleague and good friend once told me that the universe listens and cooperates with you in many ways, and I think the universe IS listening; the medical field is receptive and the world is ready for the message that pediatric integrative medicine is sending and the unique benefits it is providing."*

ARMED and Ready to Advance Pediatric Integrative Medicine

The following practical tips to help clinicians address pediatric integrative medicine approaches with parents were developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, i.e. **ARMED**:

- A** - Ask about the integrative medicine therapies used by patients.
- R** - Respect the family's perspectives, values, and cultural beliefs throughout the discussion.
- M** - Monitor the patient's response to treatment and establish measurable outcomes for evaluation.
- E** - Educate the patient by identifying credible resources on integrative approaches.
- D** - Distribute evidence-based information about relevant therapies available from NCCIH, the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health, and peer-reviewed journals.

At the health system level, it is important to assess the breadth of interventions that may produce the planned outcome for child and adolescent health care, i.e. quality of life, health services utilization, quality of care, education, cost savings and cost effectiveness.

Establishing and Growing a Pediatric Integrative Medicine Program

1. Assess support from patients and families, the institution's administration and staff.
2. Consider how to demonstrate value with metrics and interdepartmental collaboration: patient satisfaction scores, inbound referral, revenue, grants, research, sponsorships.
3. Build in stages along the lines of clinical services, research, education, staff support and community.
4. Publish your experience and add to the research in [Global Advances in Health and Medicine](#).

RESOURCES

- MASCARENHAS@chop.edu
- [Pediatric Integrative Medicine | Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)
- [Integrated Care Models & Child Health | Journal of the AAP](#)
- [Complementary & Alternative Medicine in Pediatrics | Journal of the AA](#)
- [Department of Pediatrics | Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Academy of Pediatric Integrative Medicine](#)
- [IM in Residency \(IMR\): Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine](#)
- [Academy Scholars - APIM](#)
- [Podcast with Dr. Maria Mascarenhas, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](#)
- [2021 Grand Rounds: Pediatric Integrative Medicine - Programs at Academic Medical Center](#)
- [Anti-inflammatory Family Cookbook | Children's Hospital of Philadelphia \(Simon & Schuster 2021\)](#)
- Dr. Mascarenhas recommends: [The Holistic Pediatrician by Kathi J. Kemper, MD, MPH](#)

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