

A COMPREHENSIVE CLINICAL MODEL FOR CHRONIC DISEASE

CHANGING THE WAY WE DO MEDICINE, AND THE MEDICINE WE DO

MEDICINE IN TRANSITION

- Medicine is in transition from a reductionist (acute-care) model to a systems model of biologic function that has emerged from the genomic revolution. Clinical practice and medical education must evolve and adapt to match the scientific paradigm shift to systems medicine.^{1,2}
- Reductionist clinical models produce fragmented, organ-based, specialist-focused care that results in increased costs and poor outcomes.³ Disastrously, primary care is a dying field^{4,5,6} at the same time that primary care diseases are increasing at dramatic rates. We are at a moment in medical history that requires a new way of interpreting and processing data, a new operating system to successfully address our global epidemic of chronic disease.⁷
- A fundamental re-orientation of clinical problem solving is required, expanding the diagnostic focus from the disease-based ICD-9 classification system to include assessment of *patterns of dysfunction within complex networks of biologic systems*, which are at the root of all disease.⁸

PREVENTING AND TREATING CHRONIC DISEASE—EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

- Most chronic disease is preventable, and much of it is reversible, if a comprehensive, individualized approach addressing genetics, diet, nutrition, environmental exposures, stress, exercise, and psychospiritual needs is implemented through integrated clinical teams and based on emerging research.⁹
 - The EPIC study of 23,000 persons adhering to 4 simple behaviors (not smoking, healthy diet, exercise, and maintaining healthy weight) found that 93% of diabetes, 81% of heart attacks, 50% of strokes, and 36% of all cancers could be prevented.¹⁰
 - The INTERHEART study followed 30,000 people and found that changing lifestyle could prevent 90% of all heart disease.¹¹
- *Functional medicine provides a practical clinical framework for understanding how the body's physiologic systems are linked together and how their function is influenced by both environment and genetics.*¹² Clinical medicine can and must shift to an applied systems medicine—personalized, predictive, preventive, and participatory.¹³
- Applied in practice, functional medicine can help reinvigorate primary care by training practitioners to prevent, treat, and often cure chronic conditions more effectively and at lower cost than the conventional medical paradigm.¹⁴

THE INSTITUTE FOR FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE—LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION, RESEARCH, COLLABORATION

- IFM has a reputation for excellence, integrity, and innovation; now is the time for IFM to build on that foundation to create a significantly larger national and international presence.
- We will build a scalable, modular, and robust educational platform using innovative technologies and teaching methods that can be incorporated into medical school curriculums, residencies, fellowships, and continuing medical education.
- A clear, focused plan of action—based on both visionary and pragmatic strategies—will advance functional medicine as an effective solution to the problems of our global chronic disease burden and escalating healthcare costs.
- Medicine will transform once a new generation of practitioners is trained and existing practitioners are re-trained, when we refocus research to assess whole systems versus reductionist clinical approaches, and when we forge strategic partnerships with existing public and private institutions to change practice and policy.

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