



# Developing Integrative Healthcare Leaders

Adam Perlman, MD, MPH, FACP, discusses the importance of developing leadership skills for a new era of healthcare.

## ● How is healthcare changing?

As the Department of Health and Human Services shifts reimbursement to reward quality instead of just quantity, a new model of care will be required. We need this new healthcare to be more patient-centered and personalized, and to take an integrative approach that looks beyond just the physical aspects of health so that care not only cures disease but also protects health and fosters wellbeing. To adapt to these changes and truly transform healthcare, leadership styles and strategies must also change.

## ● What new skills do leaders need to prepare for this evolution?

It will be the courageous innovators who have strong internal values and know how to shift institutional cultures in organizations who will lead the way because this change requires us to redefine what we value. This type of compelling leadership begins from within and is based on the continued deepening of mindful awareness, the development of values — especially integrity, authenticity, compassion, courage, empathy, humility, and passion — and a commitment to increasing knowledge, skills, and wisdom in self and others. Integrative Leadership provides this foundation.

## ● What is Integrative Leadership?

At its center, Integrative Leadership is the cultivation of informed mindfulness — connecting self-awareness and self-regulation to make more informed choices. This practice leads to better relationships and more effective group dynamics. As other people begin to see the benefits, these improvements will radiate outward and the whole organization will evolve to higher levels of performance and effectiveness.

## ● How do the principles of Integrative Leadership help healthcare organizations adapt?

Organizational transformation requires strategic risk-taking. Just as cultivating personal awareness helps one to make better choices, cultivating situational awareness leads to more informed organizational decision-making.

Developing the skills to break down silos, overcome resistance and create win-win situations helps to foster buy-in to the broad vision. With a mindful approach, Integrative Leaders have a greater intuitive ability to affect change and create a culture that embraces that vision for sustained transformation.

## ● How does Integrative Leadership benefit patient care and help create cost-effective systems?

Integrative Leadership benefits patient care by placing the patient at the center and addressing the full scope of physical, mental, emotional, social, environmental and even spiritual aspects of a person's health. It recognizes that the best care rests on an open, compassionate relationship between patient and provider. By empowering the patient, people become more engaged in their own care — taking an active role in becoming and staying healthy and in decision-making about their care when they do become sick. When patients play a stronger role in preventing illness, our healthcare system becomes more cost-effective.

## ● Where is this model being used?

This leadership concept is gaining traction throughout United States and is in use in many clinics, hospitals and large health systems — including the U.S. military. By teaching the skills behind Integrative Leadership to current and future healthcare leaders, we hope to expand that base so that many more organizations and their patients can benefit.

## ● How can current and future health leaders acquire these skills?

The Leadership Program in Integrative Healthcare at Duke University is unique in providing training in this emerging area. It is designed to develop this new type of leader — one grounded in the philosophy of Integrative Healthcare and trained in the skills needed for organizational change.

More information about Integrative Leadership is available at [www.integrativehealthleaders.org](http://www.integrativehealthleaders.org).