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Integrative Health & Wellness Caucus Focuses on Putting *Health* Back in Healthcare
Bipartisan Effort Cites Prevention and Integrative Health Solutions to Combat Opioid Crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 21, 2018 – Reps. Mike Coffman, R-CO and Jared Polis, D-CO, welcomed members of Congress, their staff and healthcare stakeholders to an inaugural meeting of the new Integrative Health and Wellness Caucus to a standing room only crowd on March 15, 2018. The collective efforts of the bipartisan team of Coffman and Polis, supported by the Integrative Healthcare Policy Consortium ([IHPC](#)), attracted a wide array of staff members representing the House of Representatives and Senate elected officials from states of Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas and Utah. “I think it’s important for patients to have all the facts and latest research when it comes to therapies and treatments available to them when making medical decisions,” Coffman said. “This is why, it was my honor to welcome the Integrative Health and Wellness Caucus members to Capitol Hill last week.”

Rep. Polis addressed that, “Through this Caucus we are having conversations about how Congress can solve the major healthcare issues of this country and better meet the healthcare needs of everybody, including integrative health and wellness options.” He emphasized the importance of the timing of this Caucus to bring attention to successful non-pharmacological and other whole-person care options to the nation’s pain management crisis and opioid epidemic - which the Council on Foreign Relations cites as beyond the risks it poses to public health, it is becoming a drag on the economy and a threat to national security.

Other caucus attendees included representatives from the US Department of Defense, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the US Air Force Medical Service. Registrants were also representatives from as many as thirty medical groups, insurers, hospitals, service providers, learning institutions, health care lobbying firms and patient groups that support integrative healthcare. “This caucus is the start of an important conversation to shift our healthcare paradigm from a reactive model to whole-person preventive outcomes,” said Len Wisneski, M.D., Chair Integrative Health Policy Consortium. “American’s have spent billions of dollars out-of-pocket on complementary and integrative care. It is time that Congress and healthcare payers and systems respond by including all credentialed and licensed providers and evidence-based care approaches into the choices available to all Americans.”

The educational forum included an impressive panel of experts, including Margaret Chesney, PhD, Past Chair, Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health and Former Deputy Director of NCCIH; Eric Schoomaker, M.D., PhD, LTG U.S. Army (RET), former U.S. Army Surgeon General and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Medical Command; and Benjamin Kligler, M.D., National Director of the Integrative Health Coordinating Center Office of Patient-Centered Care & Cultural Transformation at the Veterans Health Administration (VA). Speakers discussed effective solutions and innovative protocols in public health and among military personnel and veterans for addiction and pain management that emphasize nonpharmacological approaches.

“I was excited to be part of the inaugural congressional caucus proceedings,” said Peter F. Demitry, M.D., MPH, Executive Director, National Foundation for Integrative Medicine ([NFIM](#)) and Assistant Air Force Surgeon General for Modernization. “The various organizations and stakeholders that attended and presented to Congress were very well informed with articulate, rationale arguments that were well received by the United States legislators. I think there was clear consensus that the time to fix US health care policy is now and NFIM is happy to be both meeting and joining these various dedicated stakeholders.”

This kick-off to the newly formed Integrative Health and Wellness Caucus is the start of informing and educating Congress, policy-makers and agencies about the improved outcomes and cost-saving possible when healthcare is oriented to prevention, wellness and well-being.

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[Rep. Jared Polis, D-Colo.](#), and [Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo.](#), launched the [Integrative Health and Wellness Congressional Caucus](#) in the House of Representatives Oct. 25, 2017. The Caucus serves as a non-partisan educational forum for legislators to receive up-to-date information from experts related to best practices and new research, and to discuss legislative and administrative opportunities for integrative health. **Media requests** for Rep. Polis, contact jessica.bralish@mail.house.gov; for Rep. Coffman, contact Daniel.Bucheli@mail.house.gov.

ABOUT IHPC

The Integrative Health Policy Consortium is the national policy and advocacy voice of integrative health and wellness healthcare professional organizations, representing the voice of more than 600,000 healthcare providers. IHPC functions as a critical watchdog and monitor of federal agencies charged with overseeing America’s health and health research needs, working towards eliminating barriers to health. IHPC Chair Dr. Len Wisneski is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at George Washington University Medical Center, Adjunct Faculty at Georgetown University, and is on faculty at The University of Colorado. He has published over 30 scientific articles and a landmark textbook, “The Scientific Basis of Integrative Health.” Website: <http://www.ihpc.org>.

