Bernard Osher Gift to Establish Integrative Medicine Center

Thanks to the extraordinary philanthropy of Bernard Osher, the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine will soon be one of a select few institutions offering a unique and comprehensive center for evidence-based, integrative medicine.

The Osher Center for Integrative Medicine offerings will include massage therapy, acupuncture, mind-body and nutrition classes, herbal remedies, and yoga, with the providers in one place.

The Bernard Osher Foundation, which was founded by Osher in 1977, recently approved a $5 million endowment gift to create the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, along with a $500,000 current-use grant. The funds supporting the two grants are a personal donation of Osher, who is also the treasurer of the
Foundation.

“As the architect of the Osher integrative medicine program, the Foundation takes great pride in the program’s expansion, through the personal gifts of Bernard Osher, to include the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine,” said Mary Bitterman, Foundation president and trustee. “We have been greatly impressed with the leadership of the University in the integrative medicine field and with the support it has received from the Mitchell Wolfson Sr. Foundation. We are confident that this new center will make valuable contributions to the network of Osher centers across the country, and in Sweden.”

The Bernard Osher Foundation has been committed to the support of integrative medicine since 1997. There are currently Osher Centers for Integrative Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston; the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden; Northwestern University in Chicago; the University of California San Francisco; and Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Believed to be the first of its kind in South Florida, the new Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine will bring all integrative medicine efforts at the University of Miami Health System together under one roof, collaborating extensively with Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center to continue developing innovative approaches to pain management and palliative care.

“We are very grateful to Bernard Osher and the Osher Foundation for their extraordinarily generous and thoughtful support,” said University of Miami President Julio Frenk,
M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D. “This initiative will promote a holistic approach to health and wellness and serve as a comprehensive resource for health care providers, patients, and medical students.”

The center will build the future of integrative medicine by combining the use of modern medicine with complementary therapies, and encompass multidisciplinary initiatives in education, clinical care, research, and community engagement.

Leading the Miller School effort is E. Robert Schwartz, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, and chief of service at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for us to create evidence-based approaches to integrative medicine and complementary care that our patients have been asking for,” said Schwartz. “Our goal is to develop a clinical practice offering massage therapy, acupuncture, mind-body and nutrition classes, herbal remedies, yoga, and more, with the providers in one place.”

UM has engaged in integrative medicine for more than a quarter-century, starting with the launch of a continuing medical education program in acupuncture. In 1992, the Miller School established the Touch Research Institute (TRI) in the Department of Pediatrics with a start-up grant from Johnson & Johnson and subsequent funding from NIH, among other entities. The TRI was the first center devoted solely to the study of touch and its effects on various medical and psychological...
conditions at all stages of life.

In 2010, the Integrative and Complementary Academic Medicine Programs (iCamp) was created to bring the University’s various integrative medicine initiatives together in one collaborative and interdisciplinary center.

Based in UM’s Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, the program has created partnerships throughout the University to build educational programs, wellness initiatives, and research projects that focus on core integrative modalities. Now, those programs will be available in one central location.

“I am extremely confident in our faculty’s capability to shape the future of integrative medicine,” said Laurence B. Gardner, M.D., MACP, interim dean of the Miller School of Medicine. “Our goal is to continue bringing our clinicians, researchers, and other practitioners together from across UM to collaborate on how their services and research could complement each other for the benefit of patients receiving care through UHealth and through our community partners.”

While building its program, UM has benefited from the generous support and dedicated partnership of the Mitchell Wolfson Sr. Foundation. Jeri L. Wolfson is a trustee of the Foundation, the granddaughter of Mitchell Wolfson Sr., daughter of UM Trustee Emerita Frances L. Wolfson, and passionate advocate of integrative medicine.

“The intention of the Mitchell Wolfson Sr. Foundation funding for integrative medicine has been to support integrative and complementary medicine at the University of Miami, its
community, and the nation, while focusing on the development of self-sustaining medical programs,” Wolfson said. “This gift that the University has secured is another step toward sustainability of integrative and complementary medicine at the ‘U.’ It beautifully accompanies our funding of medical research, education, and clinical services throughout the Miller School of Medicine.”

Construction is expected to start over the next few months in a 1,172-square-foot section of the UHealth Fitness & Wellness Center in the Don Soffer Clinical Research Center (CRC), which will be the home of the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

The center will have seven exam rooms where clinicians will see patients five days a week. The UHealth Fitness & Wellness Center is a 60,000-square-foot health facility that includes a 15,000-square-foot fitness floor with more than 100 pieces of state-of-the-art Life Fitness cardio and strength equipment, instructional classrooms, aquatic therapy, pain management, physical therapy, smoking cessation, and healthy food options.

Schwartz has visited other Osher Centers to get a first-hand look at the most efficient strategies in use and the challenges that lie ahead. He hopes to see integrative medicine become a standard offering to UHealth care in all locations.

“I cannot thank Bernard Osher and Mary Bitterman enough,” he said. “They have been extraordinarily supportive and incredibly helpful to our team in putting this proposal together. I am personally indebted to them, and I think the University of Miami will benefit greatly from their interest
The Bernard Osher Foundation was founded to improve the quality of life through support for higher education and the arts. In addition to supporting integrative medicine programs, the Foundation has provided significant philanthropy to fund two other programs at the University of Miami: the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UM (OLLI @ UM) and the Osher Reentry Scholarship Program at UM. Both provide multifaceted learning and financial opportunities to older adults and non-traditional students from throughout the community.