



Dr. Russell Greenfield

It's not 'alternative' medicine

Integrative medicine attends to mind, body and spirit

As the director of integrative medicine for Novant Health, Dr. Russell Greenfield has more than 30 years of experience in conventional and complementary medicine. He is board-certified in emergency medicine and was one of the first four physicians world-wide to complete a 2-year integrative medicine fellowship at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine under the direction of Dr. Andrew Weil, an internationally-recognized pioneer in this field. We asked Dr. Greenfield to share how patients might benefit from an integrative approach to health:

Q: For those new to the concept, what is integrative medicine?

A: My peers and I define integrative medicine as a whole-person approach to healthcare that attends to the body, mind, spirit, family, community and environment, all at the same time. In effect, integrative medicine treats the person, not the disease.

Integrative medicine combines conventional Western medicine with complementary treatments, such as acupuncture, massage, yoga therapy, and stress reduction techniques – all in an effort to support the whole person.

Q: Is integrative medicine the same as alternative medicine?

A: It is important to create some distinctions between what integrative medicine is and what it is not. Integrative medicine is not “alternative medicine,” a term that implies that conventional medical care will not be used. I do not buy into that. Conventional medicine offers great benefits and it also has some limitations. Complementary therapies also provide great benefits, but they, too, have limitations. However, I believe that an individualized approach combining the best of conventional medicine and complementary therapies, as well as healthy diet and lifestyle measures, best supports both successful treatment and quality of life.

Q: What is integrative oncology?

A: At Novant Health, my team and I focus on what is called integrative oncology. We help people through the cancer journey by combining the best of conventional medicine (such as chemotherapy, surgery and radiation therapy) with the best natural and evidence-based complementary therapies.

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, my goal is to help them prevent or minimize treatment side effects such as fatigue and pain, promote successful treatment outcome, and support optimal health in survivorship, with an eye toward healing and preventing recurrence.

Q: What are some examples of complementary therapies?

A: I partner with patients to explore optimal dietary practices, the safe and appropriate use of vitamins and supplements, and individualized fitness programs. Beyond that I might recommend therapies such as acupuncture, meditation, energy healing, or yoga therapy. These approaches offer patients the chance to participate more fully in their care and engages their innate healing capacity. In so doing, they may heal more completely, be better able to fend off illness, and respond better to treatment.

Q: Do you replace a cancer patient's current doctor?

A: No - our program is consultative in nature. I work alongside oncologists and other physicians.

Q: Will Novant Health Integrative Medicine expand beyond cancer patients?

A: I believe that integrative medicine is important for anybody and everybody because the aim is to help prevent illness and optimize health. We are starting with integrative oncology because the demand for credible guidance and treatment is so great among people with cancer. Over the coming years, however, we will be expanding into women's health, orthopedics, and other arenas to help serve as many people in need as possible.

Q: How do patients make an appointment with you?

A: If you are currently undergoing treatment for cancer, or have recently completed treatment, my team and I would be honored to help care for you. A physician referral is not necessary so you can call the office directly at 336-277-6009. To learn more about what we do, visit NovantHealth.org/IntegrativeMedicine.