

The 4th Annual Symposium on Western and Tibetan Medicine at Stanford School of Medicine

Date : May 11, 2017

By Adam Okerblom, Lac, Tibetan Medicine Practitioner



This May, in Palo Alto California, Stanford School of Medicine hosted the 4th annual Symposium on Western and Tibetan Medicine. This dynamic integrative medicine event provides a context for establishing a cohesive intercultural and interdisciplinary field of seminars, research, roundtable discussions, and continuing education for diverse practitioners. The Symposium was developed by the Kunde Institute of Traditional Tibetan Medicine based in Daly City, California, and co-hosted by Stanford School of Medicine. The event is the inspired project of Dr Yangdron Kalsang, Traditional

Tibetan Doctor, Licensed Acupuncturist, Doctoral Fellow and founder of the Kunde Institute.

Over the last several years, Dr Kalsang has brought together an exciting team of big players in the worlds of both Tibetan Medicine and Western Medicine, to produce this symposium. This event has helped to draw interest in Traditional Tibetan Medicine from the high levels of Western Medicine. Each year this unique event gains momentum, important connections and collaborations are born. Practitioners discuss new ideas for future research projects, techniques for patient care, and other exciting collaborations.



The symposium was enthusiastically attended by a range of healthcare professionals including Medical Doctors, Tibetan Doctors, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Acupuncturists, Chiropractors and medical students. Continuing education units were available for licensed acupuncturists. Each year so far has seen the scope and breadth of the event increase. Our venue reached maximum capacity this time around. We will need a larger conference hall next year!

The headline topic for this year's Symposium was integrative pain management. The presenters and panelists expounded the facets of this theme at length. We learned of pain management techniques and medical theory from Western Medicine and Tibetan Medicine traditions. Pain management was approached from the most ancient philosophical ground to the most recent, ground-breaking research. With these streams of knowledge, the symposium worked to advance the understanding of the concepts of pain and disease that inform medical traditions, along with healing modalities to reduce suffering and enhance the mind-body balance, that is not adequately addressed by the current Western medical model.



Dr Yangdron Kalsang

The opening salvo of the symposium, Friday April 14th was oriented towards medical professionals. We began with a guided meditation and dedication of intention with Lobsang Partsang, Geshe Ngarampa trained at Gyudmed Tantric Monastic University in South India. In the following presentation, Dr Sakti Srivastava spoke on the framework of integrative medicine. He presented fascinating research on imaging of the body's subtle energetic signatures in response to extreme stress or disease states, comparing a fatigued doctoral candidate to a well-rested person.



Dr Phuntsog Wangmo

Dr Jennifer Daubenmier, Assistant Professor in the Holistic Health Studies program in the Department of Health Education at San Francisco State University, presented an articulate introduction to Traditional Tibetan Medicine, its history and basic theory. The following panel discussions included Research on Integrative Medicine and Integrative Approaches to the Management of Pain. As well as Pain in Western and Tibetan Medicine: Concepts, Diagnosis, and Treatments.

The following day, Saturday April 15th was a day of presentations and panel discussions for the general public. The morning began with Tibetan [Yantra Yoga](#) and healing through breath, with certified Yantra Yoga instructors Matthew Schmookler, Menpa and Luke Karamol, AHC, RYT. We then proceeded with several keynote speakers and a lineup of experiential workshops.



Matt Schmookler (left) and Luke Karamol presenting Yantra Yoga at the conference

Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, who gave a profound and inspiring talk on preventing and transforming suffering. He exhorted us to rise from our “rotten karmic cushion” and to effortlessly connect with our inner selves like recharging our devices. Dr Phuntsog Wangmo presented on aging and end of life care from the Tibetan Medicine perspective. We were treated to two dynamic presentations of the mental, emotional and physical manifestations of pain. One from the Western Medical perspective was presented by Dr Erica Weirich, Adjunct Clinical Professor of Medicine, Family and Community Medicine, at Stanford University School of Medicine, presented. Next the Tibetan Medical view of pain was presented by Tawni Tidwell, Menpa and doctoral candidate at Emory University.

Throughout the afternoon attendees participated in experiential workshops facilitated by the various keynote luminaries of the symposium. These workshops included Tibetan Medicine diagnostic methods, therapeutic mind training, techniques of stress reduction, hypnotherapy and healthy eating. These workshops preceded a panel discussion with some time for questions and input from the general attendees. Closing dedications and group photos brought this year’s Symposium to completion.

The 4th Annual Symposium on Western and Tibetan Medicine brought together a diverse group of scholars and medical professionals from around the world. The event provided inspiration and education for a large and equally diverse group of local practitioners, students, and Dzogchen Community people in attendance. We shared exciting new research, expand our horizons to discover new ideas and medical treatment modalities. We reconnected with old friends and made new ones. For presenters and attendees alike, the event was a platform to celebrate the work of integrative medicine, finding common cause to better understand and approach pain management from diverse medical and cultural perspectives. This symposium embodies integrative medicine in both theory and practice. Next year, I highly recommend, sign up early and come join me in the front row!



Participants in the symposium

