



## ***The Power and Potential for Insured Integrative Healthcare Services***

**Section 2706 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)** was written to correct "imbalances" in the health insurance marketplace. In fact, it is placed in the Act alongside provisions that prohibit insurer discrimination *against people with pre-existing conditions*, which is now well accepted across the country.

But when it comes to the purpose of Section 2706—ensuring that licensed holistic and integrative health service providers are included in health insurance provider networks -- it is very clear that insurers and their state regulators are badly ***out of synch with*** and ***far behind*** millions of healthcare consumers who each year choose safe and proven healthcare options from licensed providers such as acupuncturists, naturopathic physicians, certified professional midwives, massage therapists and chiropractors.

Because of the public's long-standing preferences for these practices and their growing acceptance in many areas of healthcare (described below) ***Section 2706 directs state regulators to end insurer discrimination against them.*** Although Section 2706 went into effect January 1, 2014, compliance with its provisions has barely budged. As a result, the full potential of integrative care to improve health and to reduce its costs remains badly constrained.

That is precisely why the **Integrative Health Policy Consortium (IHPC)** launched **CoverMyCare** at the end of 2014. <http://www.CoverMyCare.org> is a grassroots, consumer resource and destination site for patients, consumers and providers around the country who are working in their states to ensure compliance with 2706. The site is a platform for connecting advocates in each state and is designed to highlight and emphasize the real-world roles that integrative practice has established in many sectors of healthcare, including:

- ***Clinical collaboration*** between MDs and naturopathic physicians (NDs)
- ***Integrative pain management:*** a proven and powerful option offsetting the effects of over-prescribed opioid-based pain killers
- ***In U.S. military and veterans' medicine:*** acupuncture, yoga and meditation help alleviate the debilitation of pain and stress for servicemen and women
- ***In cancer therapy:*** massage and yoga reduce the often crippling side-effects of chemotherapy
- ***In primary care:*** patients of chiropractic and naturopathic medicine often use these professionals as their primary care providers

These examples of care combining conventional and complementary therapies are relatively new. But trained complementary and alternative health professionals have served Americans since the 1970's. Their professional education and credentialing bodies are well established and recognized by federal and increasingly state authorities, as are the beneficial outcomes of their practices. We see this in the adoption of integrative methods in treatment areas like those above, and by local and multi-state health systems such as the **Cleveland Clinic**, the **Allina Health System**, **U.S. military and veterans' medicine** and many others who are now making such services staples in their treatment programs.

**Despite this impressive recent history**, state insurance regulators – who must ensure compliance with Section 2706 among the companies they regulate -- are often unaware of how extensive integrative practice has become in their states and across the nation, and especially how many residents in their states have made use of complementary and integrative therapies, many for more than a generation.

**In 2015 CoverMyCare.org** is helping to close this information gap by working with and encouraging the formation of coalitions of advocates in local communities and the states. By acting as a clearinghouse and community builder, we help local residents and integrative practitioners meet with and inform their regulators, media, employers, insurers, and elected officials. All can play a role in moving the promise of Section 2706 **"the last mile"** -- to ensure that licensed integrative health professionals become part insurer provider networks, as Section 2706 intends.

It is a promise that now includes the demonstrated cost savings that integrative practice makes possible but which has been little known until now. Those cost advantages are now laid out for the first time in the booklet, *"Integrative Health and Medicine: Today's Answer to Affordable Healthcare: Health Creation Economics"* published by the IHPC, producer of CoverMyCare.

Wider and equitable access to integrative therapies means better care options for many populations, especially those suffering long-term chronic illness for whom integrative options have shown significant benefits and lower long-term costs.

If you are active in your region or state advocating for the non-discrimination principles of Section 2706 and for the wider goal of equitable access to patient-preferred care, or you want to find others who are, please get in touch with us.

For more, visit the web site: [www.covermycare.org](http://www.covermycare.org) or better yet, join the conversation on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/covermycare](https://www.facebook.com/covermycare)



### **The Integrative Health Policy Consortium**

(IHPC ) is a national nonprofit 501c-4 consortium comprised of 16 organizations and institutions ("Partners for Health") representing more than 400,000 licensed and state and nationally certified healthcare professionals who annually serve millions of Americans. Our mission is to advocate for an integrative healthcare system with equal access to the full range of health-oriented, person-centered, regulated healthcare professionals.



<http://www.ihpc.org>

*Supporting a national health care system devoted to optimal health and wellbeing*