

Breakout Session: *How Does the Spa Industry Fit into a New World Integrative Medical Model?*

Monday, May 21st
3:15PM – 4:30PM
Sutton Suite

Scribe: Mariana Pires

Moderator: Marc Cohen, Foundation Professor, Complementary Medicine, RMIT University and President, Australasian Integrative Medicine Association, Australia

Panelists:

Dan Cosgrove, M.D., President, Wellmax Center for Preventative Medicine, California

Ted Ning, Director, LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability), Colorado

Deborah Szekely, Founder, Creative Director, Rancho La Puerta & Golden Door, California

Andreas Wieser, Director, Lanserhof, Austria

Contributor:

Paul Lehr, President, Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa, Florida

Marc Cohen sees disease and health as a spectrum, and the perfect health state or bliss is related to the spa experience. Here, we have a multi-dimensional arena where spiritual, financial, sexual, environmental, and occupational healths co-exist. On the bottom of this spectrum we have disease, and next we have average health.

In western medicine we want to stop complaints and achieve an average health. Complimentary medicines want to go further onto a more enhanced health. These need practices are part of a day-to-day life. On the higher spectrum the more you care about what you do with your life, how you perform and how you respond to stress. Here, the fall is higher, and there is higher consciousness.

Spas are the so-called “blissors”, that move us up. The “stressors” move us down, towards disease. We don’t have to be in perfect health to be at a bliss, nevertheless. So, the spa should help us find a balance, a point of bliss wherever people are.

The medical model operates down on the spectrum, but the spa model operates up there. How do they meet is the question.

According to Deborah Szekely, spas should go back to its roots, and a participation of individuals in health should be stimulated. At Golden Door, guests made it happen, and the company wanted to make healthy people healthier. It is a whole different level of medicine, because people are not sick.

The programs consist of one week, from Saturday to Saturday, where people reflect to redirect their lives. Once you come, you’re stuck to these places. Because it takes time to look at your life and see if it is ok, as opposed to diets and guilt trips. It is important to have a goal-oriented life. Guests were the pioneers and had the responsibility. The employees also stayed with us.

Andres is the founder of Lanserhof in Austria, where medical and holistic doctors were brought in, creating a retreat center. People come for thirteen days; they are diagnosed with the use of the five senses, through old traditional European medicines. The information is customized for people, as well as cuisine, control of muscles and coordination results, etc.

The communication of the case is very important, and therefore people who perform the study should speak directly with the customers. This company is strong on sleep medicine and they have a mobile laboratory where they have a metabolic approach and see what could be done.

Lanserhof also has executive health programs because more and more companies find the need to let know that they are sensitive about work-life balance.

Aesthetics is also important; not beauty, but derma therapy.

The social community also speaks a lot about this place, and friendship connections have been built between our guests and the local community. Our guests return a lot, and they communicate with other people that were also at this location. We provide telephone coaching for our guests as well when they are away.

At the Wellmax Center for Preventative Medicine, an early detection of disease process is performed: by measuring, discipline, response, and by measuring it again in the future. This center has an unbiased approach they advocate on, and if it matters, they measure it. People come from all over to this center, and the partnership with a local hotel allows people to have accommodations connected to the center. This provided a location for the center and a commitment to put heads in beds at the hotel.

Now people from an upper-end tier of society go and have an “ultimate tune up”. Word-of-mouth contributed greatly for this center’s growth and popularity.

There is a comprehensive approach, but it’s not all proactive in the sense that it helps prevent future problems. But there is a consumer-drive medicine, even if you are not sick – the guests come because they want to feel good.

Ted Ning explained how there is a consumer that is looking for wellness and medicine: the LOHAS consumer. Their choices are aligned with their values. They are also educators, early adopters, not only exploring but they will be your evangelists. This is an important part of the population. Catering to them should be about getting these people information, making them knowledgeable, and make them internalize it so it becomes wisdom. How can people prove that they are conscious is something hard. So people are looking for self-gratification, aspiring from different perspectives.

In western medicine we measure everything, assess it, and then institutionalize it. The spa model how can we measure if people reached their goals? If market research exists: what are its outcomes? It is difficult, but not impossible to measure it. If these outcomes are measurable, maybe medical insurance will start covering for it.

But at the Wellmax center they are not interested in that. If people are in charge of a part of their disposable income to spend on it, people will probably want to spend it on a spa. It should remain something extra. If it’s your money, you have higher expectations.

Many times, these services are not for the underprivileged, but other people also have needs that need to be fulfilled. And these clinics can really help them.

More than trying to change the system, people should find ways to work with it. At Rancho la Puerta ill people are not accepted for example, and there is enough market for the healthy that still need this product. There is also a hope people will take responsibility home and keep doing the programs.

Mind and body medicine is also an interesting subject, where medicine is created in your body and goes to your mind. The economic model of spas and these clinics also runs with this idea.

The connection is all about human beings, and we are all here to connect with each other. Spas have the opportunity and possibility to be the new teachers.

There is a fine line between pleasure and pain, risk and innovation, and this should be cutting edge, integrative, through residences, etc. If there is an increased consciousness, in our minds, then it reaches the companies’ minds, industry, and finally reaches a global level. All these influences are coming together now.

The spa industry has the possibility to reap the wellness industry demand and profitability; and it has begun absorbing all the other industries like fashion, retail, and others.

It is important to realize, nevertheless, how screening and testing is still important for preventive medicine, and fitness, exercise, and eating well does not mean you will not get sick. Western medicine has and should continue to have a more proactive approach.