

# Research agenda Integrative Medicine 2022-2024

The healthcare system in the Netherlands has undergone significant changes in recent decades. The aging population continues to grow, and the number of patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart conditions, and cancer is also increasing. As a result, healthcare costs are rising every year, making prevention increasingly important. Furthermore, a considerable number of healthcare providers and patients realize that care can be different: more personalized, tailored to individual needs, with more attention to the interaction between the body and mind. These developments align well with the vision of Integrative Medicine (IM), where the relationship between the healthcare provider as a coach and the patient takes center stage. Integrative Medicine responds to the demand from citizens for complementary care, without diminishing the value of all the existing healthcare options. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the significant importance of complementary care if we aim to have sustainable and affordable healthcare available to everyone in the long term. They call on all countries to conduct research into complementary care. ZonMW endorses this advice and has recommended the establishment of a research agenda for Integrative Medicine in the Netherlands.

Context

The aim of a **Dutch research agenda for Integrative Medicine** is to address knowledge gaps and promote the integration of Integrative Medicine into mainstream healthcare. The research agenda provides guidance for research priorities and aims to bring together various stakeholders in the field of integrative medicine in the Netherlands.

Aim

Using a consensus-based strategy (Kienle et al. 2019), the research agenda was developed. Firstly, relevant literature was studied, international research agendas were reviewed, and relevant developments in the Dutch healthcare system were discussed. Subsequently, an online questionnaire was designed and distributed among a broad group of interested parties. The questionnaire was distributed in November 2022 and was completed by 92 respondents. In 2023, it will be further discussed with various stakeholders and potentially enriched.

Approach

## Results

### Research Priorities

Below are the research priorities per research topic:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Research on the effectiveness and safety of IM interventions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effectiveness of the interventions (75%)</li> <li>2. Efficiency / cost-effectiveness (57%)</li> <li>3. Best methodology for mapping effects (42%)</li> </ol> | <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Research on best practices, knowledge sharing, and implementation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaboration models between complementary and conventional healthcare (53%)</li> <li>2. Best practices of IM in domestic and international contexts (53%)</li> <li>3. Implementation research in practice (51%)</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Research on the use of and experiences by patients</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information provision for patients (59%)</li> <li>2. Patients' preferences and needs (54%)</li> <li>3. Patients' experiences and satisfaction (52%)</li> </ol>         | <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>More fundamental IM research, such as connections between health and biological systems</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connections between different aspects of health (61%)</li> <li>2. The self-healing capacity of humans (54%)</li> <li>3. The connection between the body and mind (52%)</li> </ol>                     |

Two examples of research questions that were identified in the study:

*"Has the sense of autonomy and self-reliance increased in patients with a chronic illness after one year of Integrative Medicine care?"*

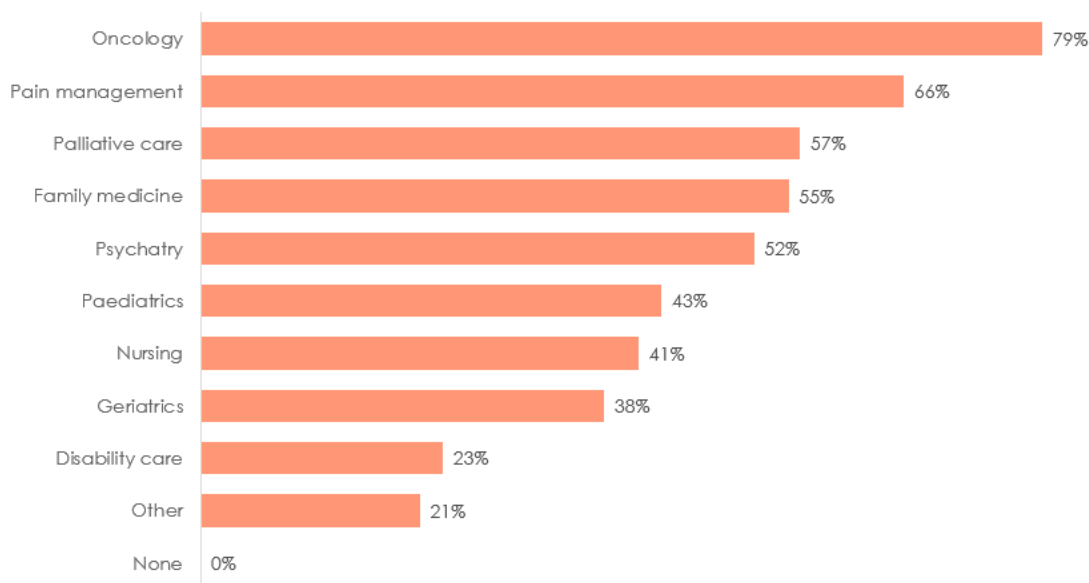
*"Can healthcare costs decrease through the implementation of Integrative Medicine?"*

### Domains

The most promising domains for conducting research into Integrative Medicine are identified as oncology, pain management, and palliative care.

#### What do you see as the most promising domains for conducting research on IM in the Netherlands?

Multiple answers possible (n=92; %)



## Types of Interventions

Particularly, mind-body interventions, biological interventions, and interventions targeting 'the whole medical system' are highlighted as crucial areas for research focus:

### On which types of interventions should research primarily focus, according to you?

Multiple answers possible (n=92; %)

Types of Interventions	%
Mind-body interventions	64
Biological interventions	49
Medical systems (whole medical systems)	42
Energetic interventions	38
Body-Oriented Manipulative interventions	28
Other	14

## Knowledge sharing

In the realm of knowledge sharing, providing good information for patients/clients is predominantly mentioned, followed by showcasing good examples from healthcare institutions and offering effective decision-making tools:

### What would you like to see in the field of knowledge sharing about IM?

Multiple answers possible (n=92; %)



*"De integrative oncology poli at Rijnstate is a great example of IM in the Netherlands"*

*"De integrative Psychiatry at Lentis is also a wonderful example"*

The development of the research agenda is a collaboration between the Consortium for Integral Care and Health (CIZG) and the Louis Bolk Institute. The CIZG is a partnership involving academic hospitals, mental health care organizations, and knowledge institutions.

The definitions utilized within the research:

- Integrative Medicine: "(1) emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the patient and the healthcare provider, placing it at the core, (2) considers the whole person, (3) employs all appropriate therapeutic interventions, healthcare professionals, and disciplines based on evidence, in order to achieve (4) optimal health and recovery."
- Complementary care: When a non-conventional treatment is used in combination with or as an addition to conventional healthcare, or as the sole treatment when no conventional treatment is available, it is considered 'complementary.'
- Alternative care: When a non-conventional approach is used instead of conventional medicine, it is considered "alternative."

Integrative Medicine brings together conventional and complementary interventions in a coordinated manner, emphasizing multimodal interventions, which involve two or more interventions such as conventional interventions (e.g., medication and rehabilitation) and complementary interventions (e.g., acupuncture, yoga, and probiotics) in various combinations, with a focus on treating the whole person.

#### More information:

More information about the research, the research agenda, and the comprehensive report can be found here: <https://www.louisbolk.nl/projecten/onderzoeksagenda-voor-integrative-medicine>



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