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FIELD-FORWARDING LEADERSHIP

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Field-Forwarding Leadership Arya Nielson, PhD, and Benjamin Kligler, MD, MPH

Field-forwarding leadership sometimes come from the work of those identified by their institutions or organizations as "leaders." But often it comes from the passion and commitment of individuals without a specific high-level leadership title or role who are determined to create the change they see needed in their field. Here we tell the story of Dr. Arya Nielsen and the new Joint Commission Pain Standard, which for the first time includes a mandate that hospitals provide patients with non-pharmacological treatment options for pain treatment. This story is worth paying attention to not only because of the impact of this change for the field of integrative medicine, but because it illustrates how a specific leadership position is not at all a requirement for leading a hugely significant change. It also illustrates how mobilizing a team of supportive colleagues and organizations can help provide the momentum and stamina needed to see the change through from idea to implementation.

Arya Nielsen PhD, who led this effort, is a natural born leader. She has, during the course of her long and distinguished career as an acupuncturist, educator, and researcher, served in explicitly identified leadership positions, including as a Founding Member and Chair of the New York State Board for Acupuncture. At the time of the work described here, though, she was primarily working as a clinician and educator at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York, seeing patients and directing a small Inpatient Acupuncture Fellowship program. The story in Arya's words is below.

First Steps Toward Change

In early April 2013, I fashioned a letter to The Joint Commission (TJC, formerly the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations or JCAHO), cosigned by my Department colleagues, Marsha Handel, MLS, and Ben Kligler, MD, MPH, to request a review of the standards for pain management that were established in 2000. We thought there were three clear reasons to compel a review.

- 1. The evidence that management of pain has not been completely successful
- 2. The documented risks involved with increased use of opioids and their side-effects

For those unaware of The Joint Commission's significance, it is the largest not-for-profit hospital accreditation organization and probably the single most influential organization in the country in setting standards for healthcare organizations. Without TJC endorsement, a facility cannot collect payment from Medicare or Medicaid, and is basically financially unsustainable.

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