



## From Theory to Practice: Integration of Functional Medicine and Systems Thinking into Nursing and Allied Health Education

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### Disclosure Slide

- The presenter is an Assistant Professor and Adult-Gerontology Curriculum Coordinator at Nebraska Methodist College, an Acute Care Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist with the Methodist Health System, and the Nebraska Methodist College Champion in Functional Medicine with the Institute for Functional Medicine.
- The content presented reflects her professional expertise and experience.
- No conflicts of interest to disclose.

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## Objectives



By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:



**Define** Functional Medicine according to the Institute for Functional Medicine (IFM) and describe its core principles of systems biology and root-cause analysis.



**Differentiate** Functional Medicine from traditional disease-centered approaches, emphasizing its focus on whole-person, preventive, and patient-centered care.



**Describe** the college's partnership with IFM and participation in the *Ardmore Institute of Health* grant to support faculty and student engagement in lifestyle medicine education.



**Explain** the college's ongoing process of integrating Functional Medicine principles into nursing curriculum through faculty certification and champion development.

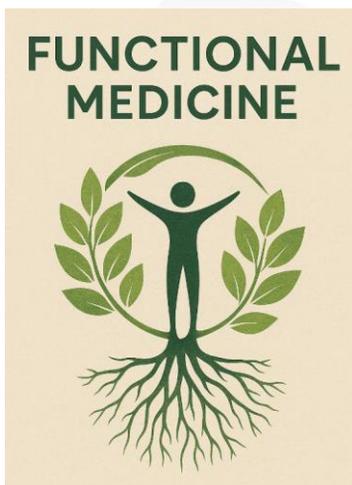


**Recognize** opportunities to apply Functional Medicine concepts in clinical and academic settings to promote holistic, evidence-based patient care.

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## What is Functional Medicine?



[What is Functional Medicine](#)

- **Functional Medicine**, as defined by the Institute for Functional Medicine (IFM), is a *systems biology–based, patient-centered approach* that focuses on *identifying and addressing the root causes of disease*.
- It emphasizes the interconnectedness of the body's systems and considers *genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors* to promote optimal health and prevent disease.

(The Institute for Functional Medicine, n.d.)

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## Who Can Practice Functional Medicine?

### Functional medicine may be performed by:

- Physicians (MD, DO, ND)
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)
  - Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
  - Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
  - Nurse Practitioner (NP)
  - Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)
- Physician Assistants (PAs)
- Other licensed healthcare professionals such as:
  - Pharmacists
  - Registered Nurses
  - Registered Dietitians
  - Physical Therapists

<https://www.ifm.org/certification>

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## Key principles of IFM's Functional Medicine model include:

- **Root cause focus:** Seeking to understand *why* an illness occurs and addressing underlying imbalances.
- **Patient-centered approach:** Engaging patients as active partners in their care.
- **Systems-based thinking:** Viewing the body as an interconnected network rather than separate organs.
- **Lifestyle and environment:** Considering nutrition, stress, sleep, movement, relationships, and environment as core influences on health.
- **Prevention and resilience:** Promoting health and vitality rather than merely managing disease.



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MEDICINE®

(The Institute for Functional Medicine, n.d.)

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## Traditional Disease-Centered Model

- **Diagnose → Treat** model  
Emphasis on identifying disease and applying standardized treatments.
- **Symptom management focus**  
Often reactive rather than preventive.  
Emphasis to reduce or control
- **Efficiency & guideline driven**  
Prioritizes established clinical pathways or algorithms.

(Borrell-Carrió et al., 2004)

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## Functional Medicine Big Picture Overview

- **Whole-systems, root-cause approach**  
Focuses on identifying underlying imbalances in physiology, genetics, environment, and lifestyle.
- **Personalized & patient-centered**  
Extensive history-taking, functional labs, and individualized treatment plans.
- **Integrative treatment strategies**  
Combines nutrition, lifestyle interventions, supplements, and sometimes integrative therapies.
- **Strong patient engagement**  
Patients often feel heard and more involved in their care decisions.
- **Addresses complex, chronic conditions**  
Useful when symptoms don't fit neatly into a single diagnosis or when multiple systems are involved.
- **Goal:** Restore function and promote long-term wellness.

(The Institute for Functional Medicine, n.d.)

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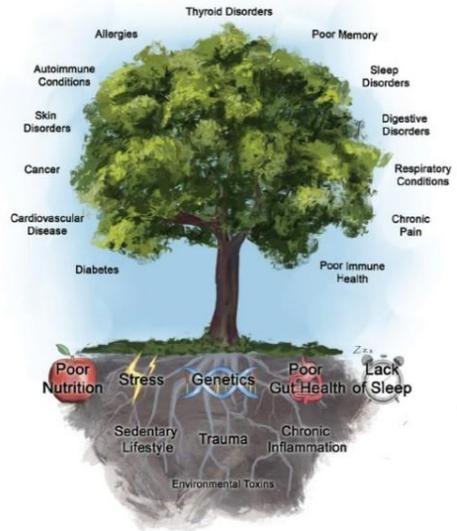
# Key Takeaway

Functional Medicine shifts from:

“What disease does this person have?”

to

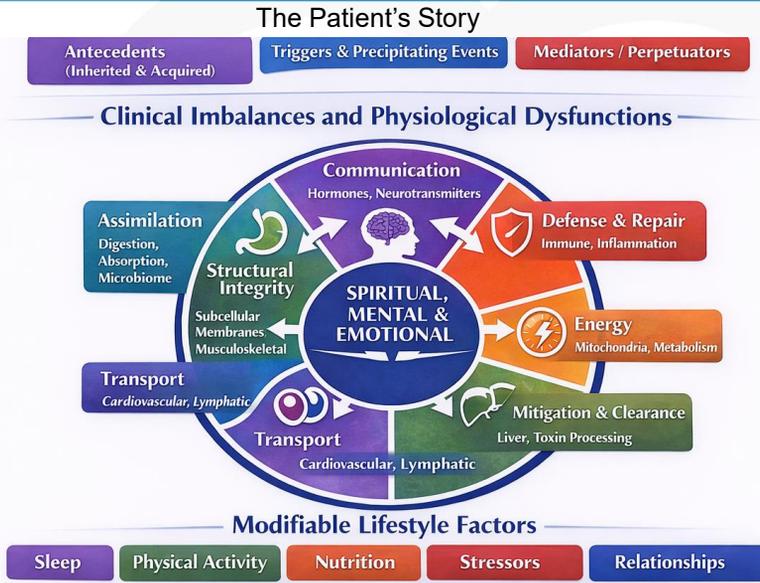
“Why is this person experiencing these symptoms?”



(Sager, 2024)

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# The IFM Functional Medicine Matrix



(OpenAI, 2026)

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## The Patient's Story –Clinical History Taking



Functional Medicine Timeline

Gather Patient Information



Mediators/Perpetuators

In tandem with Current Concerns



Triggers and Precipitating Events  
(symptoms occur within seconds to weeks)

In tandem with the onset of Chief Complaint/Clinical findings to include symptoms, physical exam signs, evaluative or diagnostic test results, diagnoses or diseases reported, and operations, procedures, and/or surgeries



Acquired Antecedents  
(can be delayed by months to years)

Any acquired factors that predispose or confer susceptibility to a disease, diagnosis, or dysfunction. Inform the Subjective and Objective history.



Inherited Antecedents (months to years)

Any inherited factors that predispose or confer susceptibility to a disease, diagnosis, or dysfunction.

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## NMC & The Institute for Functional Medicine (IFM) Partnership



- IFM and NMC have collaborated in a variety of ways since 2021 to include
  - Collaborating on webinars and presentations to healthcare professionals
  - Licensing and study use of materials
  - Supporting the education of key champions within the college with a vision to grow functional medicine in academic coursework and beyond.
- NMC Faculty Champions Identified:
  - Gina Crudden DNP, APRN-CNS, ACCNS-AG, CMSRN, FCNS
    - DNP Geriatric Curriculum Coordinator
  - Kiley Petersmith DNP, RN, CPEN, CPN
    - DNP Coordinator of Public Health Policy Track

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## Faculty Champion Course Enrollments with IFM



### • Dr. Gina Crudden-

- 2025-
  - Applying Functional Medicine in Clinical Practice (AFMCP)
  - GI APM
  - Hormone APM
  - Lifestyle Medicine
  - Immune APM
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)
- 2024-
  - Intro to Functional Medicine
  - Environmental APM
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)
  - Therapeutic Food Plans
  - Cardiometabolic APM
- 2023-
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)
  - Introduction to Functional Nutrition
  - Applying Functional Medicine in Clinical Practice (AFMCP)

### • Dr. Kiley Petersmith-

- 2025-
  - Lifestyle Medicine
  - Hormone APM
  - Fasting
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)
- 2024-
  - Bioenergetics APM
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)
  - Applying Functional Medicine in Clinical Practice (AFMCP)
  - Cardiometabolic APM
- 2023-
  - Environmental APM
  - Annual International Conference (AIC)



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## Functional Medicine – IFM Certifications

- Candidates for certification must complete accredited functional medicine education and training.
- Two Pathways Launching in 2026
  - **Functional Medicine Certified Professional – Medical™ (FMCP-M)**
    - certifies licensed physicians (DO, MD, and ND)
    - nurse practitioners (NP)
    - physician assistants (PA)
  - **Functional Medicine Certified Professional™ (FMCP)**
    - certifies licensed health practitioners in specialized disciplines
- Questions? Contact [IFMCP@ifm.org](mailto:IFMCP@ifm.org)
- Learn more!
  - [FAQ](#)
  - [Certification Webpage](#)

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## Functional Medicine Certification Program

- **Eligibility:**
    - Minimum Academic Degree
    - Active Licensure
    - Minimum 100 hours of accredited functional medicine education\*\*\*
  - **Assessment:**
    - FMCP-M or FMCP has a written exam
    - Case based test questions
  - **Maintenance of Certification:**
    - Confirm ongoing, active licensure every two years
    - 75 CE/CME or professional development hours every 6 years.
- \*\*\*All completed IFM core curriculum (AFMCPs and APMs) will count as eligible hours towards the new certification program.

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## DNP/EDD Faculty Course Enrollments/Completions

A total of **10** Doctoral Faculty have completed/enrolled in IFM modules/courses (including NMC/IFM Faculty Champions identified) :

- Lifestyle: 4 enrollments
- Intro to Functional Medicine: 6 enrollments
- Dr. Crudden is actively working with doctoral faculty to incorporate faculty tool assets into curriculum provided by IFM for NMC use.

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## Why is Functional Medicine Important to Students?

During March Survey Madness we asked our students what topics they might be interested in, and this is what 116 students reported as interest areas:

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Integrative and alternative medicine approaches in modern healthcare | 53% | 61 |
| Ethical dilemmas and decision-making in patient care                 | 20% | 23 |
| The role of technology and AI in transforming healthcare systems     | 15% | 17 |
| Narrative medicine and the power of storytelling in healthcare       | 5%  | 6  |
| Cultural competency and addressing health disparities                | 3%  | 4  |
| Climate Change and Environmental Health                              | 3%  | 4  |
| Other (please specify):  | 1%  | 1  |

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## Student Involvement with IFM

- Student Membership with IFM is currently: 11 Total
- DNP Student Course Enrollments/Completions:
  - Lifestyle Course: 2
  - Introduction to Functional Medicine: 9
- 1 DNP Project in Collaboration with IFM 2024/2025-
  - DSP Project Entitled: Enhancing Knowledge and Confidence in Patient Counseling Among DNP Students Using a Functional Medicine Approach
  - Primary DNP Faculty: Chris Vejnovich DNP, APRN-CNS, AGCNS-BC, CDP, CADDCT, PCCN-K
  - Project Completion Date: July 2025

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# Admore Institute of Health Grant Opportunity & IFM Membership Enrollment Instructions

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## Grant Pilot Project

- Ardmore Institute of Health (AIH) awarded IFM \$30,000
  - Incorporate IFM's **Lifestyle: The Foundations of Functional Medicine** into traditional and non-traditional medical school curricula
  - Funds up to 250 registrations, NMC is one of five dedicated academic institutions for this grant with hopes of attaining at minimum 50 students/faculty that enroll in this free course offering.
  - Project Start Date: June 1, 2025
  - Project End Date: June 1, 2026

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## Lifestyle: The Foundations of Functional Medicine

- Six hours of on-demand content
- 6 months to complete from time of registration
  - Complete post-course survey to receive a certificate of completion
- What's Included
  - Patient education materials and handouts
  - Customizable food plans, including a weekly planner and recipes
  - Assessment tools and patient lifestyle journals
  - Strategies for supporting behavior change

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## Lifestyle: The Foundations of Functional Medicine

### Learning Objectives

- Key foundational information about the impact of lifestyle—including sleep and rest; exercise and movement; nutrition; relationships; stress management; and behavior modification—on health and well-being.
- How to design lifestyle interventions that appropriately address the causes of chronic conditions and dysfunction.
- Tools and techniques to personalize lifestyle interventions and meet each patient where they are.
- How to improve patient engagement with lifestyle treatments and the important factors in making lifestyle changes sustainable, improving their resulting outcomes.

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## Grant Pilot Project

### Data Collection and Analysis

- To evaluate the project's success, both process and quality improvement post-surveys will be distributed to participating faculty and students.
- Faculty will report on the impact of implementing the lifestyle program into their course curriculum
  - How modifiable lifestyle factor content enhanced students' learning and application of key medical concepts and what parts of the course are most impactful.
- Student surveys will assess new knowledge, personal impact, and effect on patient care.

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## Next Steps...

- Create an IFM Account
- Apply for NMC Academic Membership
- Register for Lifestyle Course or share registration instructions with students
- Let us know how we can support you further in engaging your students with this project

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## IFM Offering Free Course Opportunity

### Introduction to Functional Medicine

- Introduces the core features of the functional medicine framework, explains how it can support conventional medical practices, and discusses the emerging research that is beginning to validate its impact on healthcare cost reduction and long-term patient outcomes.
- Length: 30 minutes
- Duration: 60 days to complete

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## Questions



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THANK YOU!

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