

PODCAST Interview with Dr. James Nicolai for Dr. Weil's Integrative Wellness Program at Miraval Arizona Resort & Spa.

WellnessFYI: Hi everyone, I'm **Donna Adinolfi** with **WellnessFYI.com** and today I have the distinct pleasure of speaking with **Dr. Jim Nicolai, Medical Director at the Dr. Andrew Weil Integrative Wellness Center at Miraval Arizona.**

WellnessFYI: Welcome to our show, Dr. Nicolai.

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director:

Thank you so much, it's great to be here.

WellnessFYI: We have a lot to talk about today. I want to mention that the Integrative Wellness Program is new at Miraval and I think a necessary addition to fulfill a life of healthy living. Because we have so much to cover, let's get started.

WellnessFYI: Dr. Nicolai, what makes Miraval's Integrative Wellness Program unique?

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director:

You know, I really think that Miraval is offering the future of medicine – at least the kind of medicine I want to practice and I think the kind of medicine most individuals want to have access to.

I think that most people would want their physician to be someone who has the time and can take the time to sit down and talk with them in a language that they understand about the nature of their issues and in a language that they understand; who won't just push drugs and surgery as the only treatment options; who can answer intelligently about the use of dietary supplements; who won't laugh in your face when you mention alternative therapies like Chinese Medicine, chiropractic manipulation, nutritional therapy and homeopathy; who is open to using Lifestyle management as treatment and who can be a model and motivator of that healthier way of living.

I think that's what people are looking for in a physician and I feel very fortunate to have been trained by Dr. Andrew Weil to be that kind of doctor. But you know I think what makes this program unique is not necessarily that I'm a physician doing that kind of work, but it's really being in a setting that is as unbelievably healing oriented as Miraval is and having a team of individuals that I'm working with that can allow lifestyle change to occur. So our wellness team at Miraval includes not only me but experts in nutrition, exercise physiologists, amazing array of experts in lifestyle mgmt and alternative therapies to choose from to point people in the right direction for their health.

Take that and put it within a place like Miraval where when you literally walk in to the doors you breathe a sense of relief that it's this unbelievable energy of healing that can allow those experiences to be fostered. I really think it the amazing combination of the right team and the right place to get people to move closer to healing and to change their lives in the direction that they want to. It feels great to be a part of this program at Miraval.

WellnessFYI: I just love what you just said about Miraval's Integrative Wellness Program. I don't think we get the time to talk to the doctor and you can't say anything in 5-minutes. I agree with you wholeheartedly about Miraval, you can really get started with feeling like your life is changing and I do think it makes the difference between having a successful program. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director: You're welcome.

WellnessFYI: I know there are three program levels to Miraval's Integrative Wellness Program. Would you briefly review the levels and the benefits for our listeners today?

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director:

Absolutely. So, one of the things that we want every Miraval guest who sees us to have access to is to have the time and spend quality time reviewing their overall health history. Dr. Weil talks about health as being more than just the absence of disease, but as this positive sense of wholeness and balance and a sense of strength that allows you to interact with your environment without getting sick and for us that is really what we base health on. And, we use a tool, an intake information form that is designed for guests to not only fill out their medical information – medical problems, drugs and supplements, past medical history, surgical procedures, family history – but also as an assessment tool to see where they are in a holistic fashion - mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socially, with their relationships. I want to get a sense of what their stress levels might be; what their sleep might look like; how their job is impacting their lives, are relationships fulfilling; what their spiritual life might look like. This allows us to get a more accurate picture of where a guest is and what their health truly looks like and where they want to go. So that's the first component that every Miraval guest gets.

And as we divide the program into three parts, the first part, Miraval's Introduction to Integrative Medicine, because that's what it offers guests to do – they can spend fifty minutes with me after we take their information on this intake form - to sit down with me and talk with me about the nature of their issues. So, my goal is to work with them to get an accurate sense of what the components of their health concerns might be and to take a look at what their health concerns are in relationship to their life story and to develop a realistic plan of action that is manageable to them right now.

I might recommend an initial plan of vitamins and nutritional supplements. I might recommend some stress management techniques, seeing one of Miraval's experts for Lifestyle modification – either in the realm of nutrition, exercise physiology, or addressing any emotional resistance or component that might be deterring their health. I might also recommend therapies available at Miraval's Spa – whether it's acupuncture, craniosacral therapy, various forms of massage – or suggest that guests do one of our challenge exercise, or experience a metaphor for change that they could actually do right now. And then there are a whole host of classes and various different practitioners at Miraval that I might refer people to while they are here that may offer a different strategy or alternative approach to what their health might look like so that is the first component of the program.

There may be situations where people need more information or when I may need more information or there may be a clinical situation that may be more complex for me to just spend 50 minutes with. So, these may be chronic issues that may involve more diagnostic assessments and I may have to do some lab work which we have a lab to be able to do with. I might use the 2nd level of Miraval's Integrative Wellness Program to have people do an initial set of actions and then come back to see me while I'm reviewing some this information and then get them to move

and do a second series of steps. Or, people may see me where they need more than 50 minutes of time and we may need 100 minutes to be able to delve a little more into the situation. So the 2nd step of Miraval's Program is about taking more time and getting more in depth about learning an individual's story or giving somebody a little bit more in depth program or set of recommendations.

And finally, as a physician who appreciates that lifestyle change doesn't happen overnight, I am really looking to create an ongoing relationship with guests. I think that creating trust and having a partnership with people is essential especially as people come here and then leave. You know Miraval is a place that is a destination site and it's great to come but what happens when you go home and try to implement those action steps in that different setting. So part of what we want to do is offer a program where over a series of phone calls or e-mails or working on a week by week basis or over various intervals of time we can begin to create a link and a coaching dynamic to be able to offer people assistance in that way. And that is what our third tier of Miraval's program - 8 Weeks to Optimum Health – is about. Not only do we see you here but over a series of weeks or months we want to create a link to keep you moving in the right direction.

So my goal at Miraval as we continue that experience is that I'm looking for guests to not only be more knowledgeable about their conditions about what the first steps might look like but to get a sense to try to be here for guests and to listen to them without judgment and be able to look at Miraval guests and find out what's the most important series of steps to offer and to start building positive momentum to begin their process. I think when you give hope to individuals they have a sense of renewed energy, a sense of assurance that they're not in this alone and by focusing on healing first, I really want Miraval guests to get a sense of what living well can feel like. Often times it brings that better sense of energy and vitality and people have less pain, better sleep and improved self image and confidence in moving forward and that's what we're looking to give guests when they go through this experience and that's our goal to maintain and not only here, but when they go home from Miraval.

WellnessFYI: You know the third level for Miraval's Program that you mentioned is of major interest to me and so one other question on that is when people do return home, how long do you think those calls would be – are you thinking a 10-minute call or is it just open to the needs of the guest.

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director:

It's a great question and I think the answer to that is really – yes. In a sense that, what I'm looking for is to giving people an opportunity to say that we're throwing you a life line so when you go away, you're not alone. You have a team that is ready and available and that Miraval team includes me – and I'm always available to give one-on-one sessions with individuals – so we have scheduled opportunities for 30-minutes or 50-minutes with people that we can create scheduled time for so that people really want a series of minutes to allocate to getting more into what their needs may be and how to address them. And what I also want to have available is the assurance that if you want to send a quick e-mail or a quick call or maybe you received lab results or information that a physician gave to you and you need more navigation or someone you trust to talk you through that. We want to be able to provide an avenue for that – a minute, 5 minutes or 10-minutes – something that just allows you to know that if you want to do something quickly or something more extensive we want you to know that we're here for you.

WellnessFYI: And again, with Integrative Wellness, I think that our belief is that our body has the capacity to heal itself and when you do a program like this one at Miraval - it's such a major tool – a tool for accountability, a tool for achievement and for success. And again, I'm so excited about Miraval's program.

Again, I'm Donna Adinolfi with WellnessFYI and today we're speaking with Dr. Jim Nicolai, the Program Director of the Dr. Andrew Weil Integrative Wellness Center at Miraval Arizona.

WellnessFYI: So, Dr. Nicolai, you touched on this in that last question we just reviewed. If you could just offer some final comments, more specifically on what participants would take home from the Miraval Integrative Wellness Program to implement to make it worth their investment of time and money. So, any closing remarks about the program.

Dr. Nicolai, Miraval's Integrative Wellness Center Director: My thought process about what you just talked about with Lifestyle Modification, often from a conventional medicine standpoint, is that we're managing disease and what we end up doing in that regard is allowing a problem to be at least lived through, whether it's high blood pressure or high cholesterol, is that we keep that 'controlled' but we don't necessarily ever change our conditions to turn that blood pressure around so we don't necessarily have to change it with an outside agency. So our whole focus at Miraval and through the Integrative Wellness Center is to really try to create lifestyle change so that when you ring that about whether you eat better, lose weight or change the dynamic that can cause those problems to keep going – when you do that, I think you not only eliminate the control of it – so you take the drugs away –but you create a different sense of energy, awareness, confidence and accountability and so that's what I'm ultimately looking to address and create and part of what we really have to be able to do is not only create hope and a positive feeling of 'I can do this,' but also create manageable steps for people to do.

And I think that's one of the biggest challenges in talking to people about how they changed their lives is how do I not only do it now, but also how I can keep doing it in a way that's realistic and applicable now but also when I'm in challenges and so one of the things I want to be able to offer as we create action plans are things that are realistic and doable; I often give people simple strategies, whether it's a particular series of dietary recommendations or a particular series of vitamins and supplements to try and to continue to move forward with. And if I can begin to create a better level of energy or a better level of motivation that can keep people moving forward, to me the next step is then to keep checking in on individuals and making sure that they're progressing in the right way and if they're not, then it's a matter of trouble shooting what resistance or impediments might be going on. And I think the challenge from a destination site, like Miraval, is that you often start a process but you never really see where it's moving. What we're really trying to do here at Miraval in creating programming to make that happen is to not only begin the process; begin with energy and vitality and hope, but also connect with individuals, give them a team – a sense of team work - and a sense of belonging and a sense of freedom from judgment and somebody they can turn to set so that they can keep those strategies moving in the right direction and when you do that I think that it's set up to make lifestyle change happen in a more permanent fashion and a way that can be done for a very long time.

WellnessFYI: I have to say that I'm very inspired and encouraged by everything you said today about Miraval's Integrative Wellness Program. I think it's so needed by so many people. I'd really like to thank you for joining us today. Thank you for everything you said and I think

listeners will really get some hope from this and I do hope it changes as many lives as I believe it will. Dr. Nicolai, thank you for joining us today. I'd like to thank our listeners as well.

I have a feeling we'll do another podcast with Miraval's Dr. Nicolai in the next month or so as I believe there is a lot more information to cover.

More information can be found at www.wellnessfyi.com and at www.miravalresorts.com
Thank you for joining us.