In 1991, Dr. Berman launched the first integrative medicine program at a U.S. academic medical institution. The Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine was a trailblazing effort that emphasized a focus on whole person care and evidence-based research. Dr. Berman’s work and that of his colleagues at the Center resulted in more than 1,000 scientific articles contributing to the field, and he gave hundreds of invited presentations around the world as well as media interviews that helped advance awareness of a broader view of medicine and patient care. In 2000, Dr. Berman became the first tenured professor of integrative medicine in an academic setting.

In 1992, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) established the Office of Alternative Medicine (OAM). Elected to the OAM Advisory Council, Dr. Berman co-chaired a report, “Expanding Medical Horizons,” and testified before Congress about complementary medicine. He served on the Council for 10 years as it solidified its status, first as the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and later as the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. As NIH Director Francis S. Collins, MD, Ph.D, explained years later, “Without this work, the American public would lack vital information on the safety and effectiveness of many practices and products that are widely used and readily available.”

Within three years of OAM’s launch, the NIH awarded Dr. Berman the first of five, multi-year Center of Excellence grants to evaluate the potential impact of integrative medicine for chronic pain disorders.
The reach of these efforts extended beyond the United States. In 1996, Dr. Berman co-founded the Complementary Medicine Field of Cochrane, a global organization dedicated to evaluating the evidence for all healthcare practices. The field, supported by NIH funding since its inception, promotes and disseminates systematic reviews of complementary, alternative, and integrative therapies, linking the shared interests of researchers, practitioners, consumers, and healthcare policymakers. At the time of its founding, only 500 clinical trials and no systematic reviews existed; today, Cochrane Complementary Medicine’s database contains more than 80,000 clinical trials and more than 1,000 systematic reviews. Its members and supporters come from more than 190 countries, united by their passion to improve health outcomes globally.

In 2002, Dr. Berman joined colleagues across North America to found and serve as inaugural chair of the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health, a group that has grown from eight to more than 75 academic medical institutions, representing thousands of researchers, educators, clinicians, and health professionals. Two years later, in a groundbreaking milestone for patients debilitated by chronic pain and for therapies that had been on the fringe and lacking in scientific evidence, the Annals of Internal Medicine published, as a lead article, Dr. Berman’s study on acupuncture for osteoarthritis. The largest clinical trial in acupuncture conducted to date, the study set the stage for a surge of well-designed research in integrative medicine. A year later, he received the Bravewell Leadership Award for Integrative Medicine in recognition of his achievements.

Dr. Berman used the Bravewell Award as an opportunity to step back and assess where healthcare needed to go next. He and his wife and life partner, Sue, were inspired by organizations that led to quantum leaps forward in other fields and professions and by broad thinkers such as American virologist and researcher Dr. Jonas Salk. In 2007, they embraced the concept of an “institute without walls” that could link together great minds and hearts from diverse disciplines to re-envision how we think about health and well-being. Together they founded The Institute for Integrative Health.

“I really get it! The Institute is like Switzerland — a neutral meeting ground, a place where all are welcomed and all views are considered.”
— U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski