

NORTH AMERICA: UNITED STATES

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to wellness or wellbeing?

There are several movements gaining momentum in the United States. We are seeing various nature movements such as Earthing, Forest Bathing, Localvores, Farm-to-Table, etc. that all point to a desire to return to the land. As Thoreau said “I believe there is a subtle magnetism in nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright.” There is a primal connection to the land being reignited. We instinctually know of nature’s power to heal and restore our equilibrium.

Brain health and brain state optimization are also becoming very popular as we understand more about how stress affects us physically and how technology can negatively impact our mental capabilities. Meditation, brainwave optimization and other tools will continue to become more commonplace.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think are important developments in your country for each of the following:

Spas: Techniques that regulate the Autonomic Nervous System such as Manual Lymph Drainage, hydrotherapy, castor oil packs, Craniosacral work, etc. to address stress and encourage the body’s natural healing ability.

Wellness Tourism: Iconic American thermal water facilities are being restored as we recognize the numerous benefits of balneotherapy.

Wellness Living Communities/Real Estate: For years these developments were marketed to aging populations but now we are seeing projects aimed at populations of all ages simply looking to create community with like-minded individuals aspiring to create a wellness oriented lifestyle.

Beauty: Growing awareness of toxic ingredients in skin and body care products has improved research on safe, yet effective alternatives.

Fitness: There is less focus on exercise for weight reduction and more attention given to movement for other reasons such as to encourage lymph flow, address chronic pain, and to spend time connecting with other people.

Nutrition: Transdermal nutrition, via algae and other nutrient rich sources, is becoming more important as we face rapid soil erosion and nutritionally void produce caused by modern agricultural practices.

3. How would you describe the state of workplace wellness in your country?

For years employers have been demanding increasingly more hours and more productivity. Advances in technology have compounded the problem changing expectations about accessibility and connectivity.

I believe we are coming to a tipping point. Research is linking most chronic diseases to a root cause of stress and employers are taking note of rising healthcare costs. We are starting to see many companies increase their workplace wellness offerings not only to reduce the benefits burden but also to attract and retain talent now that the economy is gaining momentum.

Millennials have pushed back against traditional work structures and are creating new models to work smarter, not harder. Older generations are also reflecting upon what really matters to them and an elevated consciousness is causing them to draw their own boundaries which is ultimately proving to be effective in setting a new work-life expectation.

4. What has been the general attitude about investing in spa/wellness in your country in 2015? Specific examples?

Investors have taken note of the impressive growth in our industry. In 2007 wellness tourism was valued at \$60 billion and is expected to be valued at \$678 billion by 2017. This enormous growth in one decade is attracting investors who are looking for similar colossal returns. However, many are looking to the wrong places hoping for short term gains from machines and products with ambitious claims.

At the same time we are experiencing rapid growth in demand of wellness services, we are also facing a serious shortage in a qualified workforce to support this growth. Yet little investment is being made in the education necessary to grow spa therapists, often accustomed to working from protocols, to wellness therapists, who require much more sophisticated methods of intake and consultation as well as analytical and science-based treatment skills.

Delegates of the 2011 Global Spa & Wellness Summit in Bali, Indonesia, rated “training/education” as the #1 challenge facing the spa industry today, and also rated “lack of professional human resources” as the #1 obstacle to growth for their own

businesses. Historically we have expected trade schools to produce a qualified workforce but very few institutions have evolved their curricula to suit the growth of the wellness industry.

Significant investment by employers in post-graduate therapy programs for their teams is critical to meeting the demands of the booming wellness industry. The wellness client demands significant results and only facilities with exceptionally knowledgeable staff will thrive.

5. Whose responsibility is it to create a well world?

It is the responsibility of all humanity, including governments, the medical community, both traditional and alternative, individuals, educators, the media, and employers, to unite in working toward this common goal.

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