



SPIRITUAL HEALING ARTICLES

THERAPY: HOLISTIC METHODS BOOST; MANY BELIEVE THE BO

NATURAL HEALING; ENERGY SELF - IT JUST NEEDS HELP

By Laurie Lucas; The Press - Enterprise (Riverside, CA)

Along with physical therapy, Elisa Orlando credits yoga, breathing exercises, acupuncture, nutrition, prayer and massage with saving her life.

The Desert Hot Springs woman, who made a full recovery from a broken neck and back after a car accident two years ago, says:

"I brought thoughts of love to the injured areas. I learned that the body is capable of healing itself."

Orlando, 41, is among an increasing number of believers in the Inland Empire who embrace unconventional therapies to stay healthy or treat physical and mental problems.

That doesn't mean they reject traditional medicine, but bolster it with what's sometimes called "lifestyle" or "alternative and complementary" medicine. This includes relaxation techniques, nutrition, exercise, yoga, hypnotherapy, chiropractic care and other methods besides prescriptions and surgery. Orlando has become a massage therapist and opened her own spa, Ahhh . . . A Touch of Wellness in Palm Springs, to help others heal.

Her approach, called holistic healing, tries to integrate the body, mind, emotions and spirit. And since 2003 some of these therapies, especially hypnosis and massage, have soared in popularity, according to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, an arm of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"A lot of people think of 'woo woo' health and crystal healing," says Suzan Walter, president of the American Holistic Health Association in Anaheim. "Holistic just means the whole person and options."

In the United States, 36 percent of adults are using some form of alternative or complementary therapy. That figure jumps to 62 percent when you include megavitamin therapy and prayer,

according to a 2002 survey of 31,000 adults by the NIH.

More people than ever suffer from chronic illness and they're increasingly dissatisfied with conventional therapies, says Dr. Lawrence Palevsky, a pediatrician in New York and president of the American Holistic Medical Association. Within the past few years, he says, more health-care providers are receptive to healing patients beyond treating diseases and managing symptoms.

SMALL STRIDES

Acceptance is growing but far from universal, says Palevsky. Even so, he's encouraged by small changes. Nearly 1,000 physicians and health professionals belong to the 28-year-old organization. More medical schools are including holistic courses. Some insurance carriers will cover such treatments as massage, chiropractic and acupuncture.

The chief problem thwarting universal support is more anecdotal than scientific evidence to prove that holistic therapies work and are safe, according to the American Medical Association's policy on alternative medicine. "I tell skeptics and detractors to come into my office and watch me work," says Palevsky. "You must be willing to believe that all you know is not all there is to know." Lee Berk, an associate professor at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, has pioneered research on how laughter and other positive emotions affect the mind and body. Lifestyle medicine "is not as completely evidence-based as classical pharmacology," he says, "but the public is demanding the services." Doug Dick, 44, of Moreno Valley, says hypnotherapy and a form of energy medicine called reiki helped him handle grief from his father's death in 2000. "I can't prove that reiki works," says the nursing supervisor at Loma Linda University Medical Center, "but I know it works."

He was a client, then a student, at the Cernie Institute and Valley Hypnosis Center in Riverside. Sally Cernie, who has run her school for 20 years and her center for six, says the demand for her services is on the rise, mostly from clients disenchanted with drugs and surgery. Many suffer from headaches, tension and digestive problems. Debbie Almquist, 53, a nurse in Riverside, claims reiki has eased her glaucoma pressure.

HEALING BOOST

Cernie's holistic menu includes hypnosis, nutrition, iridology, reiki, pranic healing, quantum-touch healing, massage, meditation and homeopathy. Sessions cost around \$ 65 apiece.

Homeopathic remedies run \$ 5 to \$ 10 a vial.

Which is why many holistic healing practitioners refer to their services as "complementary," boosters to Western medicine, rather than "alternative." Says Sharon Seitz, who works out of her Riverside home as well as the Holistic Renewal Center of Beaumont: "I'm not a healer. I work with people who believe the body can heal itself. I prepare it to rewire."

Seitz emphasizes that she's not a miracle worker who can cure cancer, make the blind see or the deaf hear. Her work is slow, steady. She usually sees a client once a week for four to six weeks and teaches them home exercises.

Healthy clients are the best candidates, not those near death or seriously ill, she says. As the patient lays on a table, Seitz releases the scents of essential oils for aromatherapy, taps a crystal bowl or tuning forks and plays an aboriginal instrument like a fog

horn called a didgeridoo for sound energy.

She gently lays her hands in a specific pattern on the client. "I'm bringing God's energy down and out through my hands," Seitz explains. The purpose is to help balance energy that's out of whack - either too little or too much. She instructs clients to visualize their pain as a color draining out of their bodies. "I give them something to fight with."

Herminia Sanchez, 60, of La Quinta, says hypnotherapy eased her depression and recovery from back surgery. Sta-

cey McAloon, 35, of Upland, credits guided meditation and hypnosis with improving her relationships.

Their therapist, Jennifer McVey in Palm Springs, teaches self-hypnosis through mental and physical relaxation exercises. "I can't diagnose, treat or cure you," she says, "but I can help you help yourself."

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MEDICINE'S NEW FAITH; DOCTORS AND HOSPITALS ARE INCREASINGLY TURNING TO THE POWER OF RELIGION TO PROMOTE HEALING AND WELLNESS. BUT THE PARTNERSHIP HAS SOME OBSERVERS FEELING A LITTLE QUEASY.

By Jay Tokasz; The Buffalo News (New York)

Health care professionals for years have struggled to slow some of the Buffalo Niagara region's most chronic health problems: heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer.

Now they're turning to a powerful ally for help -- faith.

The increased mingling of spirituality and health includes new wellness programs linking the local medical community with area houses of worship, churches offering HIV testing and medical students studying the role of spirituality in healing.

Doctors pray more often with their patients, and a local hospital and nursing home train clergy to help their congregations handle serious illnesses.

But some critics worry that the collaborations could go too far, with religion being foisted on vulnerable people who don't want it.

Fueling the collaboration of faith and medicine is an expanding body of research that suggests religion and good health go hand in hand.

"We sort of put spirituality out," said Dr. Leeland A. Jones, a local psychiatrist. "Now we're realizing you can have all of the technology in the world, but we've neglected the soul in psychiatry and in medicine in general."

Some medical professionals view religious communities as an untapped resource in their efforts to tackle the deadliest health concerns in the area.

The Research Center for Stroke & Heart Disease at the Jacobs Neurological Institute, headquartered in Buffalo General Hospital, started working with churches in 2001 as a novel way to combat cardiovascular disease -- the No. 1 killer in Buffalo Niagara.

"There's something wrong if the rates are continuing to go up," said Gretchen Fierle, vice president of the center.

At a medical conference in Albany, Fierle met a Baptist minister and nurse practitioner who explained that "the medical community had failed them" in efforts to reduce heart disease and stroke, saw a program in New York City that brought medical professionals and churches together to address heart disease there.

Fierle and Dr. Frederick Munschauer III worked through Buffalo General Hospital's pastoral care director, Rev. Richard H. Augustyn, to find pastors who would help implement "Moving in Faith" -- an intensive wellness program including exercise and better eating -- in their congregations.

When a dozen or so ministers showed up for a meeting, Munschauer admitted to Fierle.

Six churches signed up for the pilot study. This year, the center is working with 20 faith communities in and around Buffalo. In the fall, the American Heart Association will begin a similar project.

Tapping churches' reach.

The program, "Search Your Heart," will be aimed at reducing high blood pressure and cholesterol, and preventing diabetes. So far, 25 churches have signed up.

The organization hopes to build "communities of wellness" through churches, where people "seem to be more open and willing to listen and learn," said Mary Craig, senior director of minority health initiatives at the heart association.

"You have a huge community that is looking for something and goes to church for those answers," said Craig.

"You have more churches in Buffalo than in almost any other place in the country," she added.

If it weren't for her church, Genevieve Richardson doubts she would have become involved in an exercise program on her own. "The likelihood of it would be slim," she said.

"Now we're realizing you can have all of the technology in the world, but we've neglected the soul in psychiatry and in medicine in general."

But for the past few months, Richardson has been sweating nearly as much as she prays at Bethesda World Harvest International Church.

Four or five times a week after prayers, the Erie Community College student retreats to the basement of the Main Street church for an hour of tae bo and elliptical training.

The routine is part of her participation in the stroke center's "Moving in Faith" program, and Richardson hopes it will ward off diabetes, a condition common in her family.

"We have a mission statement in our church: 'We're a body of believers who serve in the spirit of excellence by doing the little good things consistently.'

It helps you to live healthier," she said.

Research on the role of religion and spirituality in health and patient care has expanded dramatically over the past decade, much of it funded by private foundations.

At Harvard Medical School, scientists are currently studying whether intercessory prayer -- prayer said on behalf of others -- has any effect on people recovering from illness. The researchers expect to reveal their findings in a peer-reviewed journal.

The John Templeton Foundation in Pennsylvania funded the controversial study with a \$2 million grant.

The Rev. Kathleen Derushia has little doubt her faith has played a role in her ability to live with cystic fibrosis into her 30s.

When she was born in 1969 with the genetic disease, doctors told her parents that their baby girl wouldn't live to attend kindergarten. The affliction is marked by the accumulation of a thick mucus that clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening infections.

Derushia has survived several dangerous lung infections and frequent extended hospital stays, outliving most people who have the disease.

"Has my faith brought my healing, or has my healing brought my faith? The answer is yes," said Derushia, who serves as pastor of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in North Tonawanda. "I think some of the times I came through was because there were enough prayers out there."

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It is becoming more difficult for the medical establishment to look askance at such ideas.

Religion and spirituality's relationship to health and medicine has gained a foothold in prestigious medical teaching facilities.

One of the leading researchers in the field, Dr. Harold G. Koenig, founder and director of the Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health at Duke, spoke in April about the healing power of faith during a lecture at Roswell Park Cancer Institute and privately with medical students.

Koenig advocates that physicians take "spiritual histories" of their patients and include spirituality in their care -- as a way to treat the patient beyond symptoms.

New programs start locally.

Despite lingering skepticism, other signs indicate that faith and spirituality are getting more consideration from area health professionals.

Lutheran Campus Ministries at the University at Buffalo sponsored a seminar series last semester that drew an average of 25 doctors and medical students to discuss topics such as "Prayer and Healing" and "Why Spirituality Needs to Be Addressed in Patient Care."

"People are whole beings, they're not just the body," said Dionne Dillon, a medical student at UB who helped organize the series. "I know my faith is important to me and its impact on my life. I realize it can be just as important for other people."

Some churches have started offering testing for HIV and prostate cancer for their members.

"It's an integral part of our ministry now," said Pastor Roderick Hennings of Zion Dominion Church of God in Christ, on Genesee Street.

Roswell Park is offering a new comprehensive pastoral care visitors training program with 22 weeks of lectures and clinical training for church leaders interested in working with sick, hospitalized or dying people.

Call for 'secular counselors.'

All the attention to faith and spirituality in providing health care could have a negative effect on ill people who aren't religious, some critics argue.

Joe Beck, a certified social worker who works for the Council for Secular Humanism in Amherst, doesn't doubt that the support a patient receives from a doctor and network of family, friends and health care providers is crucial to the patient's recovery.

But there are limits, he said.

"There's no evidence which says a Christian support group is any better than a secular humanist support group," he said.

Beck worries that the interjection of faith or religion into the treatment of a nonreligious patient would make the patient extremely uncomfortable and impair his recovery.

To prevent that in hospitals, at least, Beck wants area hospitals to appoint "secular counselors" as part of the pastoral staffs -- in addition to priests, ministers and rabbis.

The counselors could better relate to nonreligious patients, he said.

But physicians like Jones, who doesn't shy from incorporating spirituality into his care of patients, say they don't force their beliefs on anybody.

"Anything you impose on a human being is ineffective and wrong," said Jones, who said many of his patients come to him because of his willingness to involve faith in treatment.

Dr. William Holley Jr., a podiatrist who also serves as pastor of St. James Missionary Baptist Church on Main Street, admits that he enjoys his work as a minister more than practicing medicine. But he said he knows the boundaries.

"I'm not supposed to be making believers out of those who don't believe," he said. "All I'm supposed to do is demonstrate the light of Christ."

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PRESCRIBING PRAYER FOR HEALTH CARE

CBS Evening News

(CBS) To treat her arthritis and her thyroid condition, 63-year-old Elizabeth Allendorf sees her doctor every few months, but she prays everyday.

"Without faith, without meditation, without God, I am telling you, it wouldn't be," says Allendorf. "It would be just awful, it would be just terrible."

It turns out, as CBS News Correspondent Elizabeth Kaledin reports, a lot of people feel the same way when it comes to prescribing prayer for health care.

One-third of Americans are using [prayer for healing](#).

Dr. Anne McCaffrey of the Harvard Medical School conducted the survey of 2,000 Americans and found that faith is a critical part of health care for many and something most doctors don't consider.

"It's not a fringe thing," she says. "I think very mainstream Americans are using prayer in their daily lives."

The survey found that of the one-third using prayer to address health concerns, 75 percent pray for general wellness, 22 percent pray for help with a specific medical condition like cancer and 69 percent said prayer was helpful.

There is no clinical evidence that prayer improves health, but that's not the point of the study, says McCaffrey. She's not advocating that doctors include prayer in practice, she just wants them to wake up to the reality that it's a big part of many patient's lives.

"Doctors need to realize that we don't have the market on what people are doing to make themselves feel better," she says.

Doctors now recognize that acupuncture, massage and even some herbal treatments can be useful when combined with traditional medicine. This survey suggests that prayer may be another powerful tool that can't be ignored.