

ESM Partner

The Center for Mind-Body Medicine

*Dedicated to Reviving the Spirit
and Transforming the Practice of Medicine*



James Gordon

Self-awareness and self-care are central to the prevention and treatment of all illness.

Over the last 30 years, increasing numbers of Americans have experienced the limitations and adverse side effects of conventional medical care. Many are seeking care that integrates the best of conventional care with the most effective alternative and complementary therapies. In a 1997 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a survey indicated that 42% of all Americans were using such therapies as herbal supplements, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic, and group support as part of their health care.

The Center for Mind-Body Medicine is at the forefront of a movement to revive the spirit and transform the practice of medicine, leading efforts to create and disseminate—in their own words—“a more effective, comprehensive, and compassionate model of healthcare and education.” It has set the standard for excellence in mind-body healing and has created a system of professional education and training based upon the best practices each healing system has to offer.

The model the Center has developed places self-awareness and self-care at its core; it combines the precision of modern science with the best of the world's healing traditions. Center creator and director Dr. James Gordon, MD, and his staff believe that all of us have a tremendous and largely untapped capacity to improve our own health and well being through mind-body approaches, nutrition, exercise, and group support. He says, “The premise of our work is that self-awareness and self-care are central to the prevention and treatment of all illness, that everyone can be taught, and that group support is a powerful force for healing.” A non-profit educational organization, the Center has worked with the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute, and the World Health Organization, as well as many medical schools, to educate healthcare professionals and the public in the U.S. and around the world.



Center for Mind-Body Medicine

www.cmbm.org

The Center for Mind-Body Medicine is particularly committed to developing new models of care; integrating mind-body approaches into the education of medical students; and serving the underserved (the Center's patient services are available to all regardless of ability to pay). Their goal is to bring this empowering approach into the heart of American medical practice and to make it the core of the education of all health care providers. Already their success is evident; the Center's staff has trained 16 faculty members at Georgetown University, the center's 'model' medical school, to teach mind-body skills to all first-year medical students.

According to Dr. Gordon, research on the experience of these students indicates that, in contrast to the typical highly isolating and competitive atmosphere in many medical schools, these students "feel less anxious, study better, feel more compassionate, and begin to reclaim the ideas that prompted them to become doctors." And faculty from such schools as Duke, Columbia, Howard, Michigan, and Connecticut have attended the Center's trainings and brought the mind-body approach back to their schools.

In an era of strict attention to "the bottom line," the organization has demonstrated the cost-effectiveness and universal appropriateness of mind-body medicine, important values of Ecologically Sustainable Medicine. Their work has become a shaping force in the current debate on health care reform.

See interview with Dr. Susan Lord, Director of Nutrition Programs and Associate Director of Medical Education at the Center for Mind-Body Medicine in this issue.

What Is Mind-Body Medicine?

Mind-body medicine focuses on the interactions between mind and body and the powerful ways in which emotional, mental, social, and spiritual factors can directly affect health. Emphasizing techniques grounded in this approach, it is an orientation that respects and enhances each individual's capacity for self-knowledge and self-care. Techniques include self-awareness, relaxation, meditation, exercise, diet, biofeedback, visual imagery, self-hypnosis, and group support. Mind-body medicine explores and integrates the healing practices of other cultures, such as acupuncture and acupressure, meditation and yoga, as well as alternative Western approaches including herbalism, massage, musculo-skeletal manipulation, breathing, movement, and prayer. These approaches can make a significant contribution in the treatment of illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, chronic pain, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, diabetes, asthma, and anxiety. Many of these techniques are medically proven, and research studies are ongoing. In mind-body medicine, illness is seen as an opportunity for personal growth and transformation; health care providers can act as catalysts and guides in this process.



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Training Programs at the Center for Mind-Body Medicine

The Mind-Body Medicine Professional Training Program is designed for healthcare professionals who wish to integrate the best of mind-body medicine into the clinical practice of medicine, psychology, social work, nursing, and the other healing professions.

CancerGuides helps health care providers guide and support cancer patients. This training program prepares health and mental health professionals to work as CancerGuides on their own or in conjunction with cancer centers or oncology practices.

The Food As Medicine training program in nutrition presents the best current scientific evidence for the critical role of food in health and disease. (For more about this program, see our interview with its creator, Dr. Susan Lord.)

For the last several years, the Center for Mind-Body Medicine has brought their powerful model for healing to countries whose people have been traumatized by war. Healing the Wounds of War is an effective, cross-culturally adaptable way to help heal the psychological wounds and trauma that affect and disable children and adults affected by war and other kinds of mass upheaval and dislocation. 