

Welcome to the Center for Integrative Medicine

MISSION

The Brown Family Medicine Center for Integrative Medicine (“the Center”) seeks to elucidate and develop the role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) as it becomes more fully integrated into our country’s medical care system. The Center supports three interrelated initiatives, each providing the others with opportunities to fulfill the Center’s mission. The three initiatives involve Research, Clinical Practice, and Medical Education.

RESEARCH

Research at the Center for Integrative Medicine follows two investigative currents. Non-treatment-specific healing effects, such as awareness, touch, empathy, and the effects of specific treatments, such as acupuncture, herbs, or osteopathic manual medicine.

Existing scientific evidence suggests that CAM practitioners can elicit therapeutic benefits through non-specific-treatment effects. Current research at the Center focuses on these non-specific effects, and seeks to understand how these therapeutic benefits are achieved, as well as how these non-specific effects apply to conventional primary care settings. We hope to discover and understand these effects, and to teach them to both conventional and CAM practitioners in order to enhance the therapeutic benefit of all patient-practitioner interactions. Scientific investigative methods, designed originally to study contemplative practices, are being employed in research on the non-treatment-specific effects of CAM modalities.

Current research seeks to combine the most recent validated neuroscientific understanding of chronic pain and pain modulation with decades-long expert training in Asian healing (acupuncture) and mind-body healing modalities (mindfulness and tai chi). Research findings will be utilized to create discreet packages of practitioner-patient skills and pain-related interventions to be used by the whole healthcare team in Integrative Medicine practice. The goal is to train primary care physicians to implement these specific skills and practices to deepen and enrich their interactions with patients while teaching them a pragmatic approach to chronic pain treatment. The goal is to enhance the doctor-patient relationship by implementing simple mindfulness and a highly effective and pragmatic style of acupuncture to enhance and deepen the practitioner experience of the clinical encounter and strengthen the therapeutic benefits to the patient.

Additionally, the Center has a variety of CAM treatment modalities used by Center associated practitioners in their clinical practices. Future research projects will investigate the healing benefits of these specific treatments. We are especially interested in the ways that specific healing modalities, such as acupuncture or homeopathy, modulate and retrain attention and awareness in chronic pain and other patients. The acupuncture clinic within the Brown Family Medicine Residency Program

serves as one site offering a specific modality that can be investigated. Other sites affiliated with the Center offer homeopathy, bodywork, and narrative medicine.

The Center is especially interested in educating primary care physicians to deliver integrative medical care by implementing simple scientifically validated techniques derived from Asian and other CAM modalities. The Center seeks to elucidate both non-treatment-specific and treatment-specific effects and create training modules applicable in the primary care setting.

CLINICAL PRACTICE

The Center currently runs an acupuncture clinic that is an integral part of the Brown University Department of Family Medicine. Housed within the Family Care Center (FCC) at Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island's Pawtucket campus, the clinic offers acupuncture treatment to patients of the FCC, which is the Family Medicine Residency outpatient clinic. The FCC is an extremely active clinic in which Family Medicine residents and Brown medical students receive outpatient primary care medical training. Residents and students spend time in the acupuncture clinic and have the opportunity to learn about acupuncture- from what constitutes appropriate referrals, to how to evaluate and formulate an effective acupuncture treatment. Acupuncture effects are observed firsthand in the clinic setting.

Additional affiliated practitioners offer other CAM modalities, from narrative medicine to bodywork and homeopathy.

In addition to providing treatment to patients, the Center's clinical settings provide opportunities for research and education. For instance, students involved in the acupuncture clinic both learn about acupuncture and conduct research about the non-treatment-specific effects of the practitioner-patient relationship within the setting of an acupuncture office visit. We hope to use the understanding of these effects gained by our research to more effectively train residents and medical students to obtain therapeutic benefits from their interactions, and to be able to work with patients to create integrative medicine treatment plans to enhance patient care and healing.

EDUCATION

The Center will share new discoveries and understanding with both the public and professionals. Our research and clinical opportunities are used to enhance medical education, with many students and residents participating and learning from experienced CAM practitioners.

The Family Care Center clinic training facility serves as a primary vehicle for the education and training of residents and medical students. Residents spend time in the acupuncture clinic, and many students rotate through as well. Family Medicine residents have the opportunity to participate in acupuncture treatment of their patients. In addition to introducing them to specific acupuncture skills, which some will elect to

continue in their primary care practices, residents witness firsthand the therapeutic effect of acupuncture treatment. Residents participate in the acupuncture office visit, which embodies and teaches specific habits of mind, awareness, and presence that Asian healing systems teach as an implicit aspect of their training. These habits of mind are applicable to all therapeutic encounters between practitioner and patient, whether CAM modalities or conventional medicine.

The understanding of non-specific therapeutic benefits derived from mindful patient-practitioner interactions is an implicit part of the Center's approach to educating practitioners to enhance their relationships for the patient's benefit. Patients can also benefit by being aware of the importance of patient-practitioner communication and relations, and so become a true member of their healthcare team.

As new knowledge is gained about treatment-specific effects of modalities, such as bodywork or acupuncture, residents and students learn about how to use efficacious CAM therapies safely, and how to integrate those therapies into their primary care practice. Additional programs for community-based physicians are also being developed, for example the use of Chinese pulse taking as a clinical art.