

# HOLISTIC health magazine

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# Holistic Healing at Holy Cross Hospital

By Scott Lebowitz

There is something new and very exciting at Holy Cross Hospital in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The Harry and Beatrice Feldman Center for Optimal Health opened in April, 2006. It offers a veritable smorgasbord of evidenced-based complementary therapies.

The center is located in the Zachariah Family Wellness Pavilion in the main hospital building and is open to the general public as well as all patients at Holy Cross. The primary goal of the center is to enhance the conventional treatment patients receive at the hospital.

The numerous programs are each led by a qualified experienced professional. The team works closely with medical advisor Robert A. George, MD, an internal medicine doctor, and each other to ensure that every patient receives the exact therapeutic remedy that will help them best. A sampling of the programs includes stress management, acupuncture, massage therapy, meditation therapy, hypnosis and nutritional counseling. There is also a special massage program available for patients in the cancer center.

The inception of the Feldman Center can be traced back to January, 2004 when Manohara Ferretti, M.Div, Reiki Master, Meditation and Stress Relief Therapist at Holy Cross, suggested to the hospital CEO that it try mindfulness based stress reduction and meditation as a stress relief tool for the patients' benefit.

Scott Denny, PhD, heads the acupuncture department. Denny is a licensed acupuncturist and holds National Certification in Acupuncture. He also is a Fellow of the American Association of Integrative Medicine. Denny stresses the need to meld conventional and complementary medicines into one.

"We want people to think integrative, not alternative," says Denny, "Acupuncture is a traditional medicine, not really an alternative medicine. It is effective for neck and back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, neuropathy and headaches, and many other conditions according to the National Institutes for Health and World Health Organization. It is also very effective for maintaining general wellness.



**Scott Denny, PhD.**

"Oriental medicine has had millions of patients over thousands of years. Acupuncture is one component of oriental medicine and it is a very effective way of dealing with patients with chronic pain and it also works very well with pain management procedures like epidurals. There are also more modern forms of acupuncture such as electro acupuncture, auriculotherapy (non-needle/laser acupuncture) and these are often combined with infra-red heat therapy. There is a great synergy when conventional medicine and oriental medicine are applied together."

Pamela Shenk is a certified pre-surgical counselor and certified hypnotist. She offers hypnosis for anyone who is about to undergo surgery, wants to stop smoking or requires pain management and many other conditions as a means of a patient helping himself or herself.

"What the mind believes the body achieves, real or imagined," says Shenk. "My mission is to get the patient to focus on where they want to be and not where they are. It is so important to be proac-

tive in the healing process, it's not just 'Doctor, heal me.' So-called miracles happen all the time."

Shenk states that most people find hypnosis extremely relaxing and contrary to what many think, this is not achieved by swinging a watch piece. Most people think hypnosis will render them completely helpless, but rather the senses are enhanced 200 percent, Shenk notes. She also adds, "Hypnotic anesthesia has been around a lot longer than chemical anesthesia."

Massage therapy has been offered at Holy Cross for the past seven years and has been incorporated into the Feldman Center. The massage coordinator is licensed massage therapist Doreen Lechler, who has been on staff for seven years. The massage therapy department operates full time coverage and also offers lymphatic draining through massage therapist Joya Spalding.

Lechler is also a walking testimonial for the center. (Considering she had total knee replacements to both knees, she considers herself blessed to be a walking anything!) The therapies she utilized to optimize the success and minimize the stress from the surgeries included pre-surgery hypnosis, massage and acupuncture and the 'healing touch' program post-surgery.

Rebecca Gibbons, a certified music therapist, plays a harp bedside to post-op patients, as well as in the outpatient waiting room. There is also a volunteer singer, Marcel Rasa, to sing soothing melodies. This is called the Voices of Healing program and the whole idea is to create as relaxing and comforting an ambience as possible.

The center offers a nutrition program called 'weight matters,' led by licensed dietician Renee Brunetti. This personal nutrition program runs eight weeks and includes a weigh-in and teaches healthy eating habits, stress relief techniques, and "smart" supermarket shopping among other things. Discounts on massage therapy are also provided for people signing up for this program. The nutrition program is not a dieting class. It teaches a way of life that promotes nutritional awareness, balance and responsibility within the patient.

Still another little known therapy offered through the Feldman Center is pregnancy massage. For all expecting mothers, Jenny Vogel, a licensed massage therapist, massages the entire body before, during and after labor. In conjunction with this program, hypnotic childbirth is also offered.

Many patients seek relief from migraine headaches at the Feldman Center. Acupuncture is a great remedy for treating migraines. "Migraines



### Massage therapy at Holy Cross.

are unique and treated differently from patient to patient," explains Denny. "Sometimes they are stress generated, sometimes it's nutritional factors and so on. If the best remedy is not acupuncture, I'll recommend massage therapy or some other program. This is just one example of how the team works together holistically to best treat a patient."

Also offered by the center is a variety of educational programs, including a free bi-monthly lecture series called the Mind Body and Medicine Lecture Series, a Qi Gong (pronounced 'Chee-Kong') vision workshop based on oriental medicine concepts, smoking cessation workshops, and the Stress Relief Clinic, which is a six week series, teaching Buddhist meditation as a foundation for stress management. The clinic starts in January, 2009 and is designed to allow people to distance themselves from what bothers them, improve stress related health conditions (such as high blood pressure) and help people feel more in control of their lives.

In addition to being offered through the Feldman Center, massage therapy, acupuncture and hypnosis are also offered bedside for patients with physician approval and at a reasonable cost. Stress therapy, 'healing touch' and 'voices of healing' at bedside are all available at the patient's request free of charge. All services are offered throughout the hospital.

A separate facility at the hospital is the Zachariah Family Wellness Pavilion, a state-of-the-art fitness center located on the first floor just beyond the main lobby. Housing hi-tech exercise equipment,

Fitlinxx,<sup>TM</sup> a computerized monitoring and tracking tool, personal training, and over fifty group fitness classes a week, this facility has a strong connection with the Feldman Center. The Wellness Pavilion, which caters to community members of all ages and health conditions, promotes a no pressure, friendly environment that is both safe and backed by decades of experience. The Wellness Pavilion and the Feldman Center blend together perfectly, says Zaynab Bakir, who manages both.

While the Feldman Center is proud to have helped a large number of people, its continued survival and growth depends on the philanthropic support of our friends in the community. The center was opened with funds donated by its benefactors and namesakes, Harry and Beatrice Feldman. "Because of the Feldmans' dedicated support, the center has been able to assist hundreds of patients and community members," says Bakir. "However, as we continue to grow, we strive to maintain a sustainable Center so many more people may continue to benefit from the success of our holistic, integrative medical model well into the future.

"Nationwide interest (in complementary and alternative therapy) is ever mounting, but especially with our latest economic downturn, paying out of pocket is becoming harder and harder for a lot of our members. Thankfully, we are seeing more and more insurance coverage for these wonderful services."

"We are hoping to start a grass roots movement for insurance coverage," Ferretti adds, "We are starting to see that trend with acupuncture but not in all of the modalities."

With increased insurance

coverage, the center could not only expand current services but many more people could benefit from these therapeutic treatments. "Patients are demanding access to holistic therapies," Bakir states, "and as a result more conventional doctors are learning about this integrative model of care and are referring patients to the center."

If the response to the center from hospital physicians is any indication, there is hope for increased insurance coverage for the center's services. While the Feldman Center took time to gain acceptance with some of the physicians, it has come a really long way, from skepticism to acceptance to patient referrals. Also, the nursing staff is most supportive of modalities.

The Wellness Pavilion currently does offer two programs which are covered by insurance. Silver Sneakers, a fitness program offering an innovative blend of physical activity, healthy lifestyle and socially oriented programming, is offered by leading Medicare health plans and Medicare Supplement carriers throughout the country at no additional cost. Another such program is Forever Fit, which has the same basic coverage under several commercial insurance plans.

"We are definitely seeing a positive response from community members, patients, doctors, and insurance companies alike," Bakir says. "Furthermore, everyone here loves what they do and has such a passion for it. We have faith that the wonderful services that we offer will continue to benefit the multitudes of people that approach us every day." ✨

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*For more information on the Feldman Center for Optimal Health or the Zachariah Family Wellness Pavilion, please call 954/229-7908.*



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