

CAN THE MIND CURE DISEASE?

What role, if any, do emotions play in preventing or curing illness? This question is older than western medicine. Throughout the years, a host of different mind-body therapies have evolved in different parts of the world. Some are fairly recent while others developed thousands of years ago. Advocates of each therapy have argued strongly for its effectiveness, but now science is coming up with innovative ways to

actually measure the mind's impact on the body's health. Scientists are studying whether, and to what extent, disease can be affected by the use of mind-body techniques such as meditation, yoga, group therapy, guided imagery and relaxation.

Dr N. Herbert Spector, a neurophysiologist at the US National Institute of Health, is a firm believer in the potential of mind-body therapies. He is convinced that when researchers pin down the appropriate clinical uses for the therapies, the result will be "a revolution in medical practice."

For many patients the revolution has already begun. Increasingly, people are using mind-body therapies by themselves, even while seeking conventional medical treatment. They might try a therapy out of conviction, or on the recommendation of friends, or in desperation when conventional therapies do not appear to be effective.

Stories of seemingly miraculous recoveries may grab the public's attention, but in fact the real work is being done quietly and out of sight. In laboratories around the world, medical researchers are exploring the mind-body connection, separating myth from reality, intuition from fact, belief from science.

Some doctors urge patients to supplement routine medical care with mind enhancing therapies. Last year, for the first time, more patients at the New England Deaconess Hospital's mind-body clinic had been referred there by doctors than by friends and family. At the clinic, patients in groups learn how to achieve a relaxation response, a physical state of deep rest. Nearly 80% of patients suffering from high

blood pressure manage to lower their blood pressure, thus requiring less medication, and many cancer patients report that they suffer less from nausea during chemotherapy.

Many doctors are still suspicious of mind-body therapies, and apprehensive about the harm they may cause. They are concerned that such techniques will do more harm than good when patients abandon traditional treatment to try unproven therapies.

Doctors are also concerned that patients may develop mistaken conceptions about the power of mind control. If therapies aren't successful, they may blame themselves for not being able to control their illnesses.

But the advocates of mind-body therapies believe that these therapies should be a component of standard medical care. Though they may not cure the illness, they can improve a person's quality of life – and that just might alter the disease.

Even with modern tools, science is still far from finding the body's hidden healers. In the meantime, though, the search seems to be uncovering new ways in which doctors can help their patients. That ought to make everybody feel better.

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. In the past, ...

- a) mind-body therapies cured many diseases.
- b) there was no scientific proof that mind-body therapies worked.
- c) only a few of the mind-body therapies were successful.
- d) some mind-body therapies were more successful than medicine.
- e) None of the other answers are correct

2. Researchers are ...

- a) now able to prove scientifically that mind-body therapies work.
- b) comparing the effectiveness of ancient and modern therapies.
- c) looking for new and more effective mind-body therapies.
- d) not yet certain that mind-body therapies really work.
- e) two of the other answers are correct
- f) none of the other answers are correct

3. According to one neurophysiologist, ...

- a) mind-body therapy will not change the nature of medical treatment.
- b) researchers are very sceptical about the value of mind-body therapies.
- c) researchers give doctors advice about which therapies to use.
- d) medical clinics are helping research by trying out different therapies.
- e) none of the other answers are correct.

4. According to the article, there are many sick people who ...

- a) go to their regular doctors when mind-body therapies don't work.
- b) don't want to listen to other people's advice.
- c) supplement regular treatment with mind-body therapy.
- d) sometimes try mind-body therapies they don't really believe in.
- e) don't believe in these treatments.
- f) are looking for effective ways to change the future of medical treatment

5. Reports of dramatically successful mind-body therapies ...

- a) are almost always untrue.
- b) are investigated by researchers.
- c) often impress many people.
- d) are published by medical researchers.
- e) sometimes impress.
- f) None of the other answers are correct

6. In New England, mind-body therapy ...

- a) has cured many cancer patients.
- b) is becoming increasingly popular with doctors.
- c) is done by doctors at the Deaconess Hospital.
- d) is replacing many conventional forms of treatment.

7. Doctors say that patients, who choose mind-body therapy, may ...

- a) become mentally ill if the therapy fails.
- b) encourage others to reject traditional treatment.
- c) become sicker than they were before.
- d) be over-confident about its chance of success.

8. Supporters of mind-body therapies ...

- a) say they don't yet know the secret of how they work.
- b) believe they should be used together with regular treatment.
- c) are continuously developing new forms of therapies.
- d) admit that they don't always do any good.
- e) think that they should not be used with regular treatment.