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SPECIAL



SECTION

HOLISTIC CENTER STRESSES SPIRITUAL HEALING

Her own experience with "body work" inspired Sr. Joanne Schuster, SFP, to create the Franciscan Wholistic Health Center on the campus of Providence Hospital in Cincinnati. Through body work, persons use activities such as exercise, massage, and meditation to become more aware of their body's relationship with the mind, the emotions, and God's healing presence.

"Body work gets you in touch with what your body is trying to tell you. You learn how physical health is interconnected with your emotions and your entire way of thinking," explains Sr. Schuster, who is former president of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Health System, New York City. "My personal experience showed me there is no duality between the mind and body. This is a whole new way of looking at the human person."

As she explored body work and complementary therapies—treatments that complement traditional Western medicine—Sr. Schuster found a new dimension of faith: "faith in seeing yourself, your body, as a container of the sacred," she says. "We place value on the intelligence of the mind, but alternative therapies help people tap into their spiritual core and realize the mystery that lies in the intelligence of their body. We have to get people in touch with the divine presence within themselves."

Sr. Schuster was so impressed by this personal healing power that she persuaded key personnel in the system that a holistic center would be a way of carrying out the congregation's healing charism. They sup-

*A Team
Approach to
Therapy
Helps
Clients Tap
Their Inner
Healing
Powers*

ported the center as a means to augment traditional medical practice with the dimension of spirituality.

CENTER'S SERVICES

The center, which opened in March 1995, offers both clinical and educational services for healthcare providers, patients, and the public. Sr. Schuster says the center's quiet, peaceful ambience (it is in an old mansion on a lake) gives people a sense of security.

The hospital's board supported the center from the beginning, but physicians were initially skeptical about its value. The system kept them informed during the planning and assured them the intention was not to replace medical science but to work with it.

The Franciscan Wholistic Health Center's connection with Western medicine distinguishes it from freestanding centers that offer body work but do not connect it with the medical component of healing. The center's director, Henry Kenkel, is a medical doctor, a fact that enhances the center's credibility with physicians. If a client has no physician, Kenkel assesses the client for disease at the beginning of treatment.

The center uses a team approach in which the various therapists (all of whom are licensed) approach the body in different ways. At present, individual therapeutic services include adult and infant massage, craniosacral therapy, biofeedback, acupuncture, hypnosis for surgery, help in dealing with terminal illness, smoking cessation, Alexander technique (posture awareness and correction), and pastoral counseling. The center also offers classes on mind-body-spirit healing, t'ai chi, qi gong, yoga, scriptural lessons on healing, and smoking cessation.



Sr. Schuster



Franciscan Wholistic Health Center

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SPIRITUAL HEALING

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STARTING A HOLISTIC HEALTH CENTER

For anyone launching a holistic health center, Sr. Schuster recommends obtaining the following:

- Commitment from administration
- Support from the medical staff
- A credible director
- An advisory committee that includes top managers, physicians, and community representatives
- Fund-raising expertise

The center's staff addresses stress management, help in dealing with terminal illness, the mind-body-spirit approach to cardiac rehabilitation, headache management, mind-body-spirit treatment of cancer, and chronic pain treatment.

Yearly operating expenses are about \$250,000, and the center is looking for foundation grants to augment income derived from fees for services and classes.

FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

Sr. Schuster sees the Franciscan Wholistic Health Center as a model for the future of healthcare. As inpatient costs soar and managed care grows, she predicts a strong demand for therapies that use the enormous healing potential people have within themselves. Sr. Schuster recently resigned as president of the system but plans to continue as president of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Foundation and to devote more time to integrating holistic concepts of health into our mainstream healthcare delivery system.

Studies continue to confirm the benefits of complementary therapies, she says, and, in time, insurers will cover them. The center will realize its ultimate goal: to enhance the practice of medicine by helping patients tap into their spiritual core, which is, as Sr. Schuster says, "the core of real healing."
—Judy Cassidy

EMPLOYEE FITNESS

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rehabilitation services

- A spirituality and general well-being component that emphasizes meditation and prayer, stress management, alternative therapies, and education on topics such as self-esteem, blood pressure control, smoking cessation, substance abuse, and time management


- A medical self-care component that assists participants in making appropriate healthcare decisions

FUTURE HEALTH PROMOTION EFFORTS

The system has focused its efforts on its employees because healthcare employees have historically used medical services at a far higher rate than any other employee group. We believe that if we can demonstrate a significant

decrease in medical claims as one measure of improved health—and also document improved attendance and job satisfaction—we can use this information to attract the broader community to our programs. Our experience with our employees will help us create a more effective approach.

An advantage of the systemwide program is that affiliates can learn from each other. Although the affiliates will promote healthy communities in different ways, depending on the circumstances in their communities, all system organizations need to direct more effort toward improving their employees' health status. □

 For more information, contact Mark Dundon at 502-349-6350.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM

The Health Promotion Task Force followed these guidelines as it developed the recommendations for the employee wellness programs of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Health System:

- Programs must be tailored to each individual's specific goals and needs.
- The program must place equal emphasis on individuals' physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being.
- The program must help employees understand the importance of their personal health to the overall health of a specified community (e.g., employee group, insured individuals, local community).
 - Top management must support and participate in the program.
 - The program must include research and monitoring to demonstrate effectiveness.
 - A self-care component should motivate participants to take an active role in their care.
 - The program should emphasize proper nutritional habits and the training of dietitians.
 - Collaboration with other organizations is essential to avoid "reinventing the wheel."
 - The system should encourage the development of professional staff who can implement the program throughout the organization.