

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

# How Mainstream Medicine Is Stepping Out of the Mainstream

'Total Recovery: Solving the Mystery of Chronic Pain and Depression' offers a glimpse into the nontraditional practices that are working their way into mainstream medicine

By **LAURA LANDRO**

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Integrative medicine is a hot topic in health care these days, as even the most traditional providers offer alternative and complementary therapies that promise to treat the whole person.

Integrative practitioner Gary Kaplan makes a pitch for the more holistic approach in the treatment of chronic pain and the depression that often accompanies it. He argues that doctors too often focus on symptoms without ever getting to the root cause of a patient's problems and rarely take time to listen to the patient's entire history to look for cumulative patterns and evidence of how disease has evolved over time.

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TOTAL RECOVERY: SOLVING THE MYSTERY  
OF CHRONIC PAIN AND DEPRESSION

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Gary Kaplan with Donna Beech

Rodale Press \$26.99

An osteopath by training who specializes in family medicine, pain and acupuncture, the author runs the Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine in McLean, Va. The book often reads like a pitch for its treatments, many of which aren't well-supported by scientific evidence or covered by insurance. He is also a clinical associate professor at Georgetown University

in the department of family medicine, and he worked on a federally funded initiative to incorporate complementary, alternative and integrative medicine into the school's

medical curriculum.

Drawing on emerging theories about the role of inflammation in the body, Dr. Kaplan argues that tiny cells known as microglia in the brain secrete inflammatory chemicals as part of the body's response to trauma or infection. Over time, he suggests, there is a cumulative effect, as every injury, infection, toxin, trauma and emotional blow triggers the same reaction. Eventually, that leads the microglia to go haywire, continuing to spew out inflammatory chemicals even when the trauma that originally caused them is no longer present.

The response can show up as unremitting pain, anxiety disorders, chronic headaches, fibromyalgia, or PTSD, Dr. Kaplan says, and by the time they come to him, patients have seen many doctors who often prescribe painkillers that add to the problem or cause new issues. He offers compelling stories of patients his clinic helped, including a woman who had unremitting pain for years after a horrific car accident even though surgeries had fixed her body. He used the osteopath's technique of manual manipulation to help with disc problems in her spine, physical therapy to improve flexibility and range of motion, and prolotherapy, the injection of a mild irritant to stimulate the natural healing process in the joints and ligaments. Cognitive therapists worked on relieving the patient's post-traumatic stress from the accident and a gluten and dairy free diet helped with gastrointestinal issues.

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"By bringing so many approaches to bear on her case, we were reworking the neurocircuits to bring them into balance," he says. "Because our team was working with the tissues and structure in Emily's body, all the way through the central nervous system to the vital organs, we were literally changing the body image in the brain. That's why it worked."

While there is no way to verify such claims, "Total Recovery" is worth reading for its glimpse into the nontraditional practices that are working their way into mainstream medicine.

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