

A Progressive Approach



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Imagine a wellness center where Western medicine and Eastern philosophies unite. Where a patient can participate in a laughter yoga session and giggle away the pain lingering from chemotherapy treatment. Where a range of holistic therapies work to strengthen the mind, body and spirit. This was Sue Goodin's vision. Today, it's Progressive Health Center.



"I saw that there was such a gap between complementary and holistic therapies and traditional medicine," says Goodin, the center's chairwoman and CEO. "The concept of integrative medicine made so much sense." Located in Englewood, Progressive Health Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing a patient's quality of life through holistic therapies that are combined with conventional medical treatments. "Our objective is to look at people and get to the root cause of why they're sick," Goodin says. "A lot of traditional medicine treats the symptoms, but it doesn't really get to the root cause." To identify that underlying cause, patients must learn to become aware. Progressive offers programs to help individuals get in touch with their spirituality while teaching them to recognize and work toward achieving their optimum health. Classes like Movement Therapy and Yoga concentrate on the connection between mind and body. They incorporate breathing techniques to release stress and movement to improve circulation and enhance vitality.

The center is one of the few places that offers Tai Yi, a 4,000-year-old Chinese therapy that focuses on the flow of energy to maintain good health and a balanced lifestyle. "Tai Yi gets to some of your core issues and works with the emotions that are attached so that you really identify where you're going and what you're doing—with passion," Goodin says. Linda Bartolotta, a nurse at the neighboring Swedish Medical Center, learned about the holistic treatments happening next door. She began taking Tai Yi for headaches and noticed a distinct lessening of severity. "I am able to continue with my usual activities instead of passively waiting it out," Bartolotta says.

Energy work is a popular therapy that's had a significant impact on cancer survivor Stephanie Slipke. After being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, Slipke began energy work in conjunction with chemotherapy. "I truly believe in mind, body and spirit healing, and I love the idea of using a combination of Western and Eastern medicine," Slipke says. "The side effects of the chemotherapy have been relatively minor, and I've been able to regain my energy quickly."

While many patients who come to Progressive suffer from illnesses like cancer, Parkinson's disease and women's health issues—the center is open to anyone. Dominique Bravo, the center's wellness coordinator, began acupuncture therapy for severe allergies. She no longer needs to take two or three allergy pills a day.

The most successful case that Goodin has witnessed in the two years since Progressive began is that of a 79-year-old woman with an inoperable brain tumor. The elderly woman suffered from an acoustic neuroma—a painful tumor that grows on the cranial nerve between the brain and inner ear. "After three acupuncture treatments, her pain went from a level 15 on a one-to-10 scale to almost nothing," Goodin says. "She went from seven medications down to two." Witnessing that degree of success is the most gratifying part of Goodin's job. "When you see somebody whose quality of life has really changed, that makes it all worthwhile," she says.

Progressive also conducts massage therapy and energy work at Swedish Medical Center. Goodin hopes to become more involved with the hospital in the future. "Our goal is to do more pre- and post- surgical [therapy] because the outcomes are really strong—whether it be stress management, acupuncture, massage or energy work," she says. "We feel like if we really put a team together, it can be very beneficial to that patient."

From a nurse's perspective, Bartolotta believes that Progressive's approach to healing and wellness mirrors the traditional belief of using multiple components to achieve optimum health. "For example, diet and exercise, stress levels and sleep patterns are as important in the treatment of diabetes as medication and therapy," Bartolotta says. "Holistic and complementary treatments are part of the complete package in our approach to health."

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