

*Medical Giant,
Whole Child:*
New Center Offers
Integrated Care

By *Melissa B. Stoller*

Beth Israel Medical Center has taken what some would term a very brave step. Recognizing that increasingly consumers are giving credence to natural alternative therapies — thinking about health holistically — this modern-day medical center has just opened up the **Continuum Center for Health and Healing** in the Flatiron District. Doctors and medical specialists staffing the new center are combining conventional approaches with complementary and alternative therapies. If your family is struggling with health issues or is interested in an approach that expands current thinking about health, healing, wellness and growth, this new Center may be just what the doctor ordered.

Dr. Lawrence B. Palevsky, or "Dr. Larry" as he is known to his patients and their families, is the Center's pediatrician. His approach applies a combination of Western and Eastern medical theories and he views the patient as a whole child. He looks at the child's symptoms — and environment. Dr. Palevsky works with families to address asthma, eczema, inflammatory bowel disease, ear infections, chronic congestion, diabetes, learning disabilities, developmental delays, side effects of chronic medication use, and perceived vaccination damage.

Dr. Palevsky questions parents about any toxins in the home, stress in the family,

traumas, and nutritional patterns. If the child is showing particular symptoms, he focuses on all dimensions: emotional, spiritual, physical, mental and nutritional. His goal is "to educate and empower parents to make informed decisions about their families because parents are the primary care providers for their children." In many cases, a child's illness can be the catalyst for the parents to stop and rethink their environment, to deal with issues such as stress in the home.

Dr. Palevsky first attempts to strengthen the child's body and overall health through nutrition and intestinal well-being. The idea is that instead of waiting for illness to strike, preventive health care strategies can be put into place. Dr. Palevsky believes that if the immune system of the child is built up, the symptoms will be less intense if an illness does occur. He counsels families about using healing modalities including meditation and other relaxation techniques, massage, accupressure, reflexology, and chiropractic work. He also incorporates theories of Chinese dietary medicine into his nutritional counseling. Dr. Palevsky states that "children have an unbelievable ability to heal. Often, however, when a child is sick, there is a diversion away from the child to come up with a remedy. Instead, the focus should be placed back on the child to find the remedy."

In general, he does not advise using over-the-counter remedies, and rarely prescribes antibiotics. He asserts that the high "fear factor" in this culture causes parents to seek an immediate remedy. However, he cautions that, except in the case of serious illness, it is often best to wait. In addition, he does not like to suppress a child's symptoms. Sometimes a child's symptoms are a non-verbalized cry to stay home, lie quietly and rest.

Dr. Palevsky's approach may make him sound like a New Age physician, but in fact he came to his position through a traditional route. He graduated from NYU School of Medicine, and completed an internship and residency in pediatrics at Mount Sinai Hospital. He completed a one-year pediatric ambulatory care fellowship at Bellevue Hospital/NYU School of Medicine. Following his fellowship, he spent nine years in pediatric emergency and pediatric intensive care, with his latest work at Lenox Hill Hospital, where he was the Chief of the Pediatric Acute Care Unit, and also worked in the neo-natal intensive care unit.

Dr. Palevsky describes his move toward integrative medicine as a "journey." He remembers "starting to observe how much some of the things I was doing were not making the kids any better, and in certain cases, may have made the kids worse." He started to explore the underlying causes of the children's conditions in addition to simply treating them. Most significantly, he focused on nutrition and intestinal health. He explains, "Unfortunately, nutrition is not viewed by the general medical community as a valuable tool in understanding disease process and healing. When I went through medical school and my residency, I was trained how to be a physician,

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but my experience has taught me how to be a physician and a healer."

A goal at Continuum is to create a healing environment that is based on teamwork between the staff and the family as opposed to a hierarchical model where the doctor is all-knowing. Executive director Dr. Woodson Merrell is a leader in the field of integrative medicine. The staff includes a medical director, director of clinical medicine, psychologist, psychiatrist with extensive experience practicing homeopathy, internist, family practitioners, family nurse practitioner, gynecologist, physician's associate who specializes in women's health issues, and holistic nurse specialist. The staff also includes licensed and credentialed complementary therapy providers such as a nutritionist, chiropractor, acupuncturist, and massage therapist.

The Center is a fee-for-service practice and therefore does not accept insurance. However, patients may submit claim forms and will get reimbursed according to their out-of-network insurance schedules.

Aside from offering clinical services, Continuum offers educational programs, maintains a resource center that is available for patient research, and houses a large classroom for exercise and meditation. The Center's physical space was designed to be a sanctuary of calm and well-being. Currently, they are offering a lecture series on pediatric issues. Upcoming topics include: "Safe Alternative Treatments for Everyday Pediatric Illnesses" (March 7, 9:30-11am); "Mindful Parenting-Tips on Childrearing and Discipline" (March 14, 6:30-8 pm); and "Nutrition for Infants and Children-A Different Look at the Food Pyramid" (March 28, 6:30-8pm). The fee is \$20 per lecture. Call to register and to receive the complete program listing.

The Center is located at 245 Fifth Avenue at 28th Street. For more information, call (646) 935-2220. The Center's website, www.HealthandHealingNY.org, should be operational in this month. ♦