

# UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine

*Dedicated to increasing knowledge about safe and effective complementary and integrative medicine approaches.*

## I'm Interested in Integrative Health, Where do I Start?

Ronald Glick, MD, Medical Director

The Center for Integrative Medicine is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We were founded in 1997 by Shadyside Hospital, before it became a part of the UPMC hospital system. Our connection with UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh has positioned us among the more established and busiest university hospital-based integrative medicine programs in the country. Our primary mission is clinical care with over 8,000 visits/year and we are involved in medical education and research as well. I have served as the Medical Director for the Center for the last 20 years. Over this time, I've been fortunate to work with Carol Greco, PhD, the Research Director for the Center and the Director of our Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program, which she started in 2005. We have a tremendous cadre of skilled clinicians and administrative support staff.

Patients come to the Center seeking complementary and nonpharmacologic approaches to manage health conditions which have defied standard biomedical approaches. Common problems include issues with pain, mental health, fatigue, and general health.

As patients may have a combination of these problems, each individual will have a unique program of treatment. While each condition and each person is different, we find that many of the same basic approaches are helpful across conditions.

Patients seeking integrative care often have conditions with a biological component that can't be greatly changed with western medical or complementary treatments. For example, a man with degenerative disc disease and spinal stenosis has been told that surgery is not advised. He will still have the same basic spine anatomy after receiving acupuncture, although his pain may improve. We try to identify any targets or components that may be amenable to treatment.

We start by selecting treatments that may directly help the primary symptom. For an individual with chronic pain, we may look at massage, chiropractic treatment, or acupuncture. Other examples of symptom-related

treatments include energizing supplements for fatigue or mind-body practice for insomnia.

Beyond direct symptomatic treatments, what else can a person do to enhance their quality of life & possibly help for the primary symptoms as well? To address this, we look at what problems tend to travel along with the presenting complaint? If a person experiences a condition that is chronic, interfering, adversely affects quality of life, and has not responded fully to medical treatment, what other problems might they experience? Here's the short list: stress & anxiety, depression, sleep problems, inactivity & associated musculoskeletal problems, cardiovascular deconditioning, poor diet, weight gain, and fatigue.

Why do we care about these secondary problems?

- They tend to aggravate the primary symptoms creating a vicious circle, eg pain keeps a person up at night and the sleep problems worsen the pain experience;
- On the flip side, helping any of these problems may improve both quality of life and the primary symptom—eg exercise may improve pain as well as mood, anxiety, and sleep;
- A person may benefit from addressing these areas even if they don't see them as a problem—eg meditation may help for pain, even for the person who is not particularly stressed.

How do we identify the problem areas to be addressed? An important part is history, specifically the chronology of events. As one example, a woman has a history of infrequent migraines which evolve into a severe chronic daily headache picture. For her a trigger was a difficult divorce situation. Even though the divorce is in the past, stress management will likely be a key part of our treatment recommendations. For a patient who developed irritable bowel syndrome after several courses of antibiotics for sinus infections, we may focus on gut health, diet, and microbiome.

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## Research Opportunities

### Got Back Pain?

#### Volunteers needed for a Pitt Research Study

Are you:

- age 18 or older?
- currently experiencing low back pain?

You may be eligible for a University of Pittsburgh federally funded research study exploring different therapies to treat low back pain and prevent it in the future.

There is no cost to you to participate in this year-long study. Compensation will be provided.



To learn if you may qualify for a screening appointment, visit [www.pacback.org](http://www.pacback.org)

### Research Study: Acupuncture for Pain Related to Advanced Cancer

If you or someone you know has cancer & pain, you may be eligible for acupuncture at no charge.

A research study at the UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine is offering acupuncture for cancer-related pain.

*Acupuncture is the practice of inserting needles into specific parts of the body and can be helpful for pain, nausea, fatigue, and other physical symptoms.*

#### WHO can participate?

Adults with advanced-stage cancer, associated pain, and in treatment at a UPMC facility

#### WHAT is involved?

Free acupuncture sessions  
Questionnaires  
Free parking

#### WHERE does it take place?

UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine

For more information, contact:  
412-623-6872 // [CIM\\_Research@upmc.edu](mailto:CIM_Research@upmc.edu)



## Researchers Need Help on Study of Low Back Pain

The University of Pittsburgh is conducting a research study to better understand the contributors of low back pain. We are looking for adults who have experienced low back pain for **more than 3 months** in the last 6 months.

Are you interested?

See if you qualify by going to [lb3p.pitt.edu](http://lb3p.pitt.edu), call 412-459-6719, or email [lowbackpainstudy@pitt.edu](mailto:lowbackpainstudy@pitt.edu)



### Are you bothered by chronic low back pain?



You may be eligible to participate in a research project studying Mindfulness training for patients with chronic low back pain.

Participation in this research study may include:

- Completing surveys and video calls with research staff
- Attending weekly group sessions via zoom
- Compensation for participation

Contact us at our website to see if you are eligible for the OPTIMUM research study!  
Visit our website: [www.optimum.pitt.edu](http://www.optimum.pitt.edu)

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## I'm Interested in Integrative Health, Where do I Start?... continued

We recognize that patients are often interested in receiving treatments such as acupuncture or massage. It may not be as glamorous to engage in a lifestyle-oriented program. Patients may come in looking for a “fix”. However, they often feel empowered when we direct them to self-care practices and services which help them learn to control and manage their problems.

What are some of those lifestyle areas?

We'll look at 3 topics:

**Stress Management:** We ask our patients how they manage stress. Surprisingly, many have good answers, such as journaling, prayer, gardening, or time with friends to wind down. We hear a lot of “I used to”, referring to practices such as yoga, or meditation. Also, given our multi-tasking electronics-driven world, it's very common to hear “I can't meditate—my mind doesn't quiet down”. For those folks, it's fine to look to movement-based mind-body activities such as yoga or tai chi, but they may benefit most from a contemplative mindfulness practice. We understand that we are all better off with some form of daily mind-body practice. This is so basic that it should be taught in elementary school. In fact, our Research Coordinator, Leah Northrop did just that, taught yoga and mindfulness to elementary and middle-school students in her prior work.

**Diet:** There are 2 main aspects that we address. The 1<sup>st</sup> is the general quality of the diet. Most people can tell you if their diet is health promoting or not. We look at portion size, the amount of carbs—particularly simple or high glycemic index carbs, how lean or fatty our protein sources are, & the amount of fruits and vegetables. Several health conditions, including pain states and depression, are associated with inflammation and the typical American diet is pro-inflammatory. We're learning more about microbiome—referring to the diversity of the bacteria in our guts and the balance of health promoting vs. potentially unhealthy organisms. A poor diet can lead to microbiome imbalance, which may contribute to multiple health problems. The 2<sup>nd</sup> question is if there are any specific food triggers. We see this most commonly with migraines and IBS. Even without these conditions, a number of people have an intolerance to certain foods such as milk products or gluten.

**Exercise:** As with diet, there are 2 main issues: the general level of aerobic activity and exercise specific to imbalances in the musculoskeletal system. Our primary focus is on helping patients step up their aerobic activity. This often suffers due to the conditions a patient is experiencing, particularly: musculoskeletal pain, headaches, depression, and fatigue. The lack of activity may worsen the primary problem. Along with poor diet, limited aerobic activity may contribute to obesity, which further worsens other problems. Resumption of regular aerobic exercise can greatly help these problems. Musculoskeletal weakness or imbalance tends to go along with pain conditions as well as other problems that limit activity. Our clinicians provide recommendations for stretches and exercise to support what they address in the bodywork. This can help maintain the gains of treatment and allow patients to further step up their aerobic activity.

How do we get started? Individuals interested in services at the Center can start by seeing any of the clinicians, such as acupuncture, chiropractor, other bodywork practitioners, or naturopathic medicine and nutrition services. I am glad to see anyone requesting services at the Center. I can be most helpful by providing an in-depth consultation for patients experiencing complex chronic problems.

We are pleased to introduce Leslie Lesoon, PA-C. Leslie is a physician assistant who worked previously in rheumatology. Additionally, she is trained by the Center for Mindfulness as an instructor for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. She has a passion for integrative health, as described in her bio. As a hospital-based integrative medicine center, we feel that it is important to offer a medical consultation to as many patients as possible. Leslie will review health issues to ensure that we're not missing anything medically and help point patients in the right direction as far as their integrative treatment.

To schedule a consultation with Dr. Glick, Leslie, or any of our clinicians, call 412-623-3023.

***We look forward to meeting you!***

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## Introducing Leslie Lesoon, PA-C, PhD

***It's always interesting to hear how individuals find their way to becoming integrative health practitioners. Have you always been oriented towards holistic health, was this a gradual evolution, or did you wake up 1 day and find a need to change the direction of your life?***

Probably a combination of all three. I have always practiced healthy eating habits, exercised, and yearned to be in nature. Over time, with my understanding of physiology and medicine, I became curious about Eastern medicine, the use of natural products, and meditative practices. I studied transcendental and mindfulness meditation, Tai chi, and Kundalini yoga. These experiences have led me through a life-changing trajectory. One of my mentors said "We make our resilience."

***How do you see the role of a physician assistant in helping guide patients seeking integrative healthcare?***

Many people struggle with issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, chronic pain, and finding balance in life. Patients may not know how to bring these topics up and may be resigned to feeling miserable or unsatisfied. Advanced Practice Providers (APPs), including Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners, often provide a ready ear and help guide their patients.

APPs can help patients develop language to open up this type of discussion. I feel fortunate to be working at the Center for Integrative Medicine and have such amazing resources available. Listening and empathy are a great start. I'm pleased to connect patients with the skilled and gifted clinicians at the Center who can help with these kinds of problems. Also, I'm able to provide counseling around lifestyle issues.

***If you could make one change in the healthcare system what would it be?***

I look forward to the day when more complementary and integrative health services are covered by insurance. Chiropractic care has been covered routinely for several decades. Several regional insurance companies, led by the UPMC Health Plan, have covered acupuncture for specific conditions for the last 5 years. As one example, I would like to see health insurance companies endorse the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program that we offer at the Center. There have been thousands of research studies showing the benefit of mindfulness practice for stress, anxiety, sleep, pain, general wellness, quality of life, and a number of health conditions. As a longtime meditator and a trained MBSR instructor, I speak from personal experience when I share with patients how powerful these approaches can be.



## UPMC Center for Integrative Medicine Team

Ronald Glick, MD, Medical Director

Carol Greco, PhD, Research Director

### **Administration**

Brittany Kail, BSBA  
*Administrative Manager*

Kathy Hecht  
*Administrative Assistant*

Heather Vardzel  
*Administrative Assistant*

### **Research**

Carol Greco, PhD  
*Research Director, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Certified MBSR Instructor*

Leah Northrop, LPC, MSCP  
*Research Coordinator*

### **Practitioners**

Kelly Beck, PhD  
*MBSR Instructor*

Sari Cohen, ND  
*Naturopathic Doctor*

Deborah Grice Conway, PhD  
*Psychotherapist*

Dinnie Goldring, LCSW  
*Meditation Instructor*

Karl W. Holtzer, MD, MS  
*Functional Medicine Physician*

Pediatrician

Amanda Hunt, LAc  
*Acupuncturist*

Barbara Ivanko, LCSW  
*MBSR Instructor*

John Laird, ND  
*Naturopathic Doctor*

Jessie V. Larson, LMT  
*Massage Therapist*

Leslie Lesoon, Ph. D., PA-C  
*Physician Assistant*

Khara Lucius, ND  
*Naturopathic Doctor*

David Lesondak, BCSI  
*Structural Integrator, Myofascial Specialist*

Daniel Miller, DC  
*Chiropractor*

Angie Phares, PA  
*Integrative Health Coach*

Dezza Pastor, ATSI, E-RYT  
*Structural Integrator,*

LuAnn Scarton, RDN, LDN, CLT  
*Integrative-Functional Nutritionist*

Tricia Smith, LAc, MAC  
*Acupuncturist*

K.K. Teh, LAc, MAC  
*Acupuncturist/Chinese Herbalist*

Alicja W. Walczak, MS, CRS  
*Biofeedback, Yoga Instructor*

Craig Weimer, DC  
*Chiropractor*