

# Research Shows Mind's Ability to Battle MS

By Margaret Zulpo  
World Staff Writer

In people who suffer from multiple sclerosis, the body quits responding to nerve messages.

But a new technique called Mind Over M.S. helps ease the degenerative process.

The Mind Over M.S. research project was designed by the Association for the Development of Mind/Body Potential, a non-profit corporation.

Founders Denise Rodgers and Mary MacEachen began researching the mind's abilities more than 10 years ago. During that time, they have studied the mind's abilities and how to teach people to use more of their creative potential in careers, relationships and health.

"The field of alternative medicine, and specifically mind-body medicine, has quietly jumped into the mainstream," Rodgers said, adding that this trend has been bolstered by the increasing costs of traditional medical treatment.

In 1992 Rodgers, MacEachen and several medical and lay people formed a think tank to conduct a formal study of seriously ill patients. The group wanted to see if any measurable differences could be seen if people were taught to use their minds for healing.

"Because multiple sclerosis is a chronic degenerative disease of the nerves, the impulses are interrupted," said Rodgers, who maintains a South Tulsa office. "Lesions and plaque can develop on the brain and spinal cord, and they prevent messages from being sent."

The symptoms range from mild to severe. Patients complain of gradual or sudden weakness of a limb or a sensation of heaviness in the shoulders. Sensitivity may be lost in the fingers, and patients experience overwhelming fatigue,



Denise Rodgers

slurred speech and bladder or bowel problems. Sometimes patients may awaken to partial or complete blindness in one or both eyes, double vision or vertigo.

"There's not much more known about this disease than there was 65 years ago," Rodgers said. "There are no drugs available which will stop the progression. New drugs may help but have severe side effects and are very expensive."

In the Mind Over M.S. research project, Rodgers formed a 13-member treatment group that met three hours a week for six months. A control group of 10 people received no therapy, treatment or placebo. Both groups were evaluated before, during and after the experiment by Keith Khoo, a physical therapist and former head of rehabilitation at Tulsa Regional Medical Center.

"The overall response was very exciting," Rodgers said. "The treatment group showed a 35 percent improvement in overall cognitive

abilities and a 65 percent reduction in depression.

"The treatment group also peaked at its improvement at 16 weeks, and over the rest of time, there was a period of stabilization."

During the three-hour sessions, Rodgers taught the principles of how the conscious and subconscious minds operate and interact. She taught the patients how to use visual imagery, concentration, memory exercises, problem-solving skills and meditation.

Art therapy, expressive therapy, role playing and guided imagery tapes with music and voice-overs taught the group how to relax and interact, and as individuals, they learned to utilize emotions to their benefit, Rodgers said.

"We gave them written lessons every week and homework every day," Rodgers said. "They had to do exercises also every day. They were active participants in their own healing processes."

The Association for the Development of Mind/Body Potential employed the assistance of the neuropsychological department of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center to evaluate cognitive abilities.

Patients were tested in learning and memory capabilities and were evaluated in how fast they processed information. They also were tested in coping skills, abstraction, vocabulary comprehension and depression. The treatment group reported a 30 percent improvement over the control group in cognition.

"In the control group, the depression level remained the same," Rodgers said. "The depression level lowered 60 to 65 percent in the treatment group according to Beck's Depression Test. Multiple sclerosis is a very depressing disease to be diagnosed with. Symptoms come on at different rates for different people.

"In the treatment group, every region of sensitivity in the hand improved as much as 15.7 percent. That's a drastic change in such a short period of time."

After seeing the treatment group peak at about 16 weeks, Rodgers decided to complete the next Mind Over M.S. project in that time frame. She said she thinks the power of group study and support helped the individuals maintain the concentration they needed to help themselves.

Rodgers said she also plans to include family members and loved ones in the support group to give MS patients more outside support.

"We recently visited a Harvard conference where we heard a professor describe our study almost verbatim," Rodgers said.

"That's when I knew we must be doing this right. We now have confirmation that medical technology is realizing the potential of self-help."

The excitement of unlocking the brain's potential and helping people with the rising costs of medical treatment has spurred Rodgers to do more research.

Her association hopes to get financial aid to further the multiple sclerosis study to include Magnetic Resonance Imaging. MRI tests would show if therapy resulted in any changes in the nervous system.

The association also plans to do a Mind Over Cancer and a Mind Over AIDS project.

Rodgers said that because of rising health-care costs and the growth of alternative health processes, doctors will be taking on a different role in health care.

"This is an education, not a treatment because it's not an invasion of the body," she said. "By learning the nature of your thoughts and how you can control them, it's to everyone's purpose to utilize the brain.

"Why call it alternative treatment,

anyway? When did the mind become an alternative? It's always been there for our benefit, and we are just now learning those benefits."

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## Community Calendar

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19

Exhibition: Paintings by Beulah Farley and Nancy Hopkins. Free. Shown through July 31. 1-3 p.m., Oklahoma Art Workshops Studio, 6953 S. 66th East Ave. Call 492-8863.

Karate. Cost is \$25 per month. 4:30-6:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays, Glenpool Community Center, 94 W. 145th St., Glenpool. Call 746-3790.

Step By Step Aerobic Classes. Beginning to intermediate low-impact bench and step class. Cost is \$15 per month or \$3 per class for adults; free for ages 12-18. 8:10-8:50 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, Bixby Community Center, 226

tion Training. First-year cheerleading basic certification. Cost is \$15 per year. 6:30-9:30 p.m., Glenpool Community Center, 94 W. 145th St., Glenpool. Call 746-3790.

Before Conception. Learn how optimal health prior to conception provides the best chance of having a healthy baby. Free. 7 p.m., St. Francis Education Center, 6161 S. Yale Ave. Call 494-1196.



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