

Mind + Body + Spirit = Zero

In response to patients' increased interest and demand, physicians and allied-health professionals have started to integrate Eastern and Western approaches to health care.



By Debora Romanchock

One such cutting-edge technique is Zero Balancing, a type of bodywork that incorporates the concepts of Western sciences with Eastern teachings. It is a method of aligning body energy with body structure.

Developed by physician Fritz Smith, this healing modality incorporates the Western sciences of anatomy, physiology and body mechanics with the Eastern concepts of energy anatomy, energy movement of the body and mechanisms for healing. This approach is taught to licensed health-care practitioners as an advanced studies program.

TOUCHING MEMORIES

Smith, an osteopath trained in Chinese classical acupuncture, has been teaching Zero Balancing since the early 1970s. He

believes that the body holds memories, both emotional and spiritual, and that touch can impact the body, mind and spirit.

"The place where Zero Balancing works is at the interface of structure and energy" said Karen Senffner, PT, and supervisor of the Physical Therapy Department of Mercy Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago, Ill. Senffner is certified in Zero Balancing, massage therapy and bodywork. She compares Zero Balancing to a sailboat and its sails.

"The place where the wind meets the sail is the point of movement, or the potential for movement," Senffner said. "That point of interface is where there's potential for change in the body."

Dorsett Edmunds, MEd, PT, at the University of Arizona Medical Center (UMC) in Tucson, Ariz., explained that the term "Zero Balancing" came from a patient's response following a treatment session in which Zero Balancing techniques were being employed. "When the

patient was finished, she got off the therapy table and said, "Wow! I've feel like I've been balanced to zero!" The term stuck," Edmunds said. "When you think about zero, that's when you don't have any pluses or negatives, you're in a state of harmony and balance."

Edmunds became Zero Balancing certified in 1993 and went on to become a Zero Balancing instructor in 1996. As a staff

Senffner admitted that the term "Zero Balancing" is difficult to define, but she explained that it is: "A hands-on system that uses touch to align our two bodies: The structural body and the energetic body of a person. It really has effect where the structural body meets the energetic body."

Zero Balancing provides patients with a clearer, stronger field of energy that helps to realign the structural and ener-

Balancing

physical therapist and coordinator for pediatric services, Edmunds performs all Zero Balancing treatments at UMC.

THREE DOMAINS

Smith teaches there are three primary energy domains: The first domain is the universal life flow that runs vertically through the skeletal system and connects to the energy of life. The second domain is the internal energy flow that operates on

getic bodies.

"Each day we wake up with the same physical body," Senffner noted. "But sometimes when we get up in the morning we have an energy about us. We are ready for the day. Things fall into place. Life is easy. Things work themselves out."

QUESTION OF BALANCE

On other days, however, we feel exhausted and things "just aren't clicking,"

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three levels. This moves like a figure eight within the skeletal system and is activated by movement. The third domain is the background energy that permeates the space within and around the body and is responsive to mood and emotion.

she explained. Senffner said that the bad days are examples of when the body has "misaligned energy." The goal of Zero Balancing is to achieve a balanced state, she said.

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"When we are in balance, there is a natural flow that connects us to the universal life flow," Senffner said. "Vibration has less potential to stick to our physical body when we are in alignment."

When our bodies are not balanced, they become exhausted at the end of the day because it requires a lot of energy to live in an unbalanced state, she explained. "Our

treats all kinds of patients with Zero Balancing, including pre-cardiac patients.

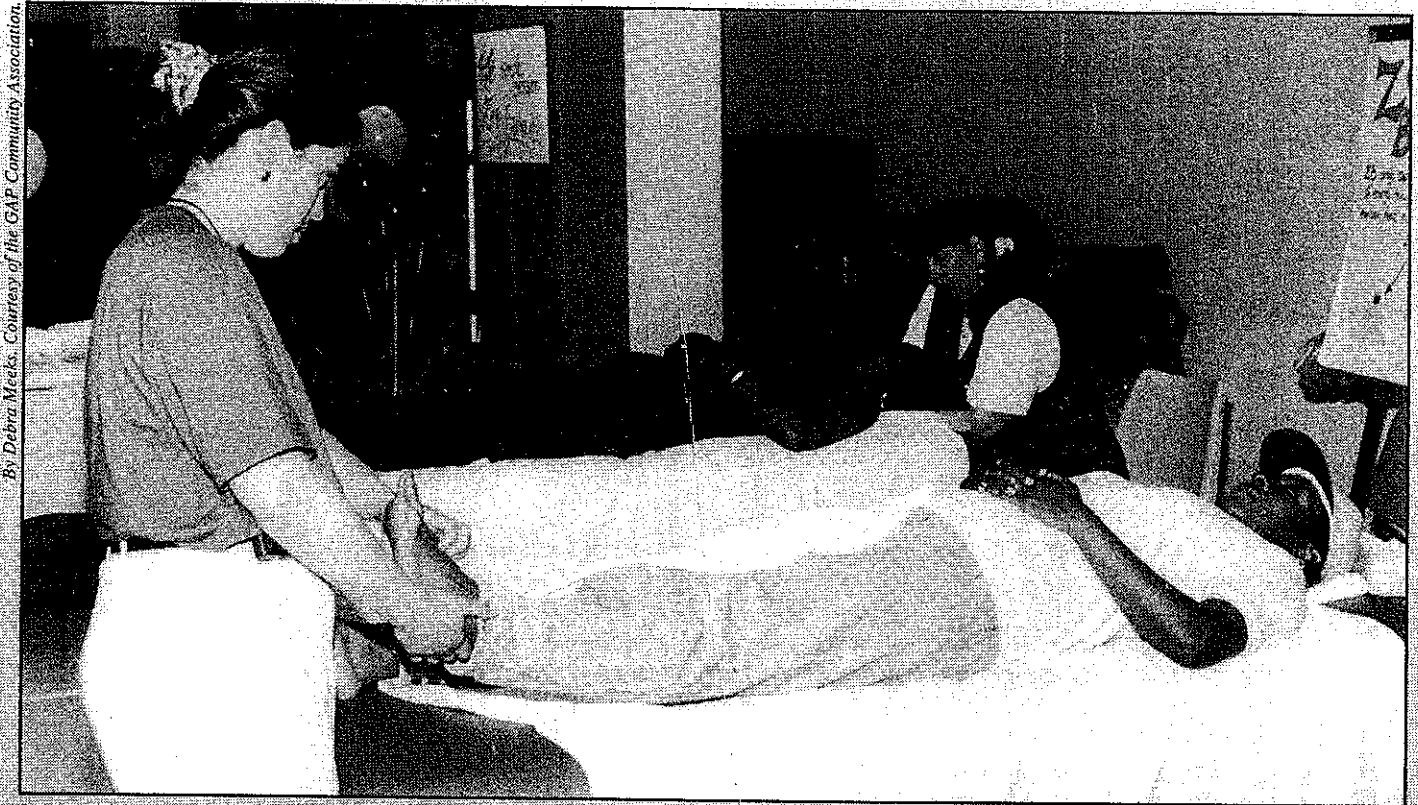
"We have a big referral source of physicians who are aware of the services that we offer," Senffner said, including cardiologists, rheumatologists, neurologists and anesthesiologists.

A variety of patients can benefit from Zero Balancing, according to Senffner. She treats patients with chronic pain,

Senffner acknowledged that she often doesn't know how she impacts a patient. "What I do know is that the type of touch Zero Balancing uses is so much based on boundaries and on mutual trust that something moves. Something is affected," she said.

THE PROCESS

She explained to PT & OT TODAY the



By Debra Meeks. Courtesy of the GAP Community Association.

Medical professionals performing Zero Balancing

energy is taken up trying to mend this state of not being in alignment," Senffner said. "Therefore, we absorb stressors. [They] have more impact on our being when we are living out of alignment."

Senffner said it is not difficult to tell when an individual is misaligned. A misaligned person will look tired and haggard, while a balanced individual will have a clear look in his or her eyes and a spring in his or her step. These outward features are assessment tools commonly used in Western and Eastern medicine.

Mercy Hospital and Medical Center offers Zero Balancing through *WellSpace*, a program for balancing mind, body and spirit. Senffner mentioned that Mercy

fibromyalgia, migraine headaches, arthritis and heart problems, including patients who have hypertension and are at risk for heart disease.

USE OF TOUCH

A hands-on modality, Zero Balancing is administered through the clothing in a sitting and lying position. An "Interface Touch," which involves no energy transfer, is used, Senffner explained.

This therapeutic touch is used to help the body in need of healing to know exactly what it needs once it has been touched.

"[The body] just needs a gate to be opened," said Senffner. "Touch allows that 'gate' to be opened."

Zero Balancing process: In a seated position, the therapist evaluates the patient's body and locates the congested energy flow. The therapist then places their hands on the patient's shoulders to evaluate the quality of motion and makes a pass down the spine.

Next, the therapist determines where there is free-flowing movement. Then the sacroiliac (SI) joint is evaluated with a gentle bending movement. After that, the patient lies on their back with their legs straight and their hands on their belly.

Initially, the therapists follows the same protocol with each patient, but within that framework, treatment becomes specific for each person's needs.

The next phase opens the flow of energy down the body. It involves a fulcrum or a point around which movement takes place. For example, with a person lying on the table, a "half moon fulcrum" is used in the ankle area.

"I hold the ankles and I give a curved movement," Senffner explained. "That energy goes all the way up the spine." Fulcrums are held for three to five seconds to allow the body to realign around the clearer, stronger energy field.

Next, the therapist moves from the feet to the hips, performs a gentle evaluation of the sacroiliac (SI) joint, proceeds to the lower ribs, evaluates again and then transverses the spine back to the SI joint, Senffner said.

Once someone accepts that the idea exists, it becomes evident everywhere.

This process is repeated several times before moving to the neck area, where the trapezius muscles are palpated and the upper ribs evaluated. Next comes an evaluation of the cervical spine.

In the areas where blocked energy can be palpated, the practitioner should hold that area with the interface touch for three to five seconds and allow the body to reorganize. When that energy is released, there are reactions or signs that can be observed in the body," explained Senffner. These signs include a shift in breathing patterns, a change in the eyes, rapid eye flutter or rapid eye movement.

Touch continues down the spine followed by an evaluation of the shoulder with a gentle shoulder movement. Then the SI joint is evaluated with a gentle bending movement. After that, the patient lies on their back with their legs straight and their hands on their belly.

After the ribs, several neck fulcrums are inserted before proceeding down the body to a "closing sequence" with the rib cage, the pelvis and the feet.

CERTIFIED

Senffner received her Zero Balancing certification last June. The process normally takes about two years, but Senffner completed the program in one year.

Edmunds has a small private practice where she does Zero Balancing and Process Acupressure, another alternative therapy. She utilizes Zero Balancing mostly with patients who have chronic pain syndrome, back, neck or stress-related pain or pain as a result of old injuries that haven't been resolved.

"We really go to a different level," Edmunds said. "When you access the energy body, you're working with something that needs to be in balance with the structural and the physical body in order for the body to work at its optimum level. We don't heal, we don't cure, we don't fix. We help a person access their own healing potential, so their own body wisdom knows what to do."

Edmunds admits that Zero Balancing is not for everybody. "I have come to believe that there is no magic wand, except what each person has inside of them," she said. "Each one of us has our own internal magic wand."

The hospital sponsors Edmunds' Zero Balancing sessions at its new Wellness Center.

Edmunds comes in contact with professionals who are skeptical about Zero Balancing, because it talks about energy, and energy is not something with which the Western-trained, scientific person is comfortable. "I understand that's where their skepticism arises from," she said. "It's not something that you can easily see or prove." However, Edmunds is convinced that once someone accepts that the idea exists, it becomes evident everywhere.

See "Calendar of Events" in this issue for information on an upcoming Core Zero Balancing workshops.

