



Welcome to Alternative Mental Health news! Check out the latest research and events. Many thanks to Craig Wagner, author of [Choices in Recovery](#), for curating newsletter content.

Dan Stradford

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## Biomedical Research

**Cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) testing: gateway to a better diagnosis?** A [single case](#) of refractory depression was brought to dramatic remission by supplementation with BH<sub>4</sub>, a protein found deficiency through cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) testing. This success led to a detailed [evaluation](#) of 33 treatment-refractory depressive patients. Each had their CSF evaluated for hundreds of potential metabolites imbalances. 21 of these subjects had abnormalities, 12 of which were identical: cerebral folate deficiency. 10 of these 12 folate-deficient patients responded quickly to high doses of folinic acid. Testing found different metabolic gaps for the other 9 patients, and each benefited from treatment targeted at their specific gap. *Implications:* consider CSF test protocols for refractory cases of depression and perhaps more broadly.

**High-dose Vitamin B-complex supplementation for healthy adults.** A [study](#) of 215 healthy adult men found that high-dose vitamin B-complex supplements with Vitamin C (Berocca ®) improved ratings of stress, mental health and vigor as well as improved cognitive performance. Previous studies have shown multi-vitamins, sometimes in mega-doses, helpful for [mood disorders](#), [anxiety](#), and [schizophrenia](#). *Implications:* although detailed test panels can identify more targeted nutrient responses, broad nutrient supplementation appears appropriate as a preventive measure for mental health.

**Resveratrol and Alzheimer's.** Resveratrol, a natural phenol found in blueberries and the skin of red grapes, appears to restore the integrity of the blood-brain barrier in people with Alzheimer's. [Researchers](#) indicate that it reduces neuronal inflammation and slows cognitive decline. This is follow-up to a [2015 study](#) that showed that high dose (2 gr/day) resveratrol slowed the decline of the Alzheimer's biomarker A $\beta$ 40. *Implications:* consider dietary resveratrol-rich berries as a component of Alzheimer's care.

## Psychosocial Research

**U.S. Open Dialog pilot shows positive outcomes.** A small one-year feasibility study of Open Dialogue (OD) for crisis intervention in first-episode psychosis was successful and is recommended for expansion. Results included improved functioning and significant reduction in

symptoms. Half of participants stopped using antipsychotics and had outcomes similar to those who remained on drugs. OD, based on intensive team-based dialogue and self-determination, has found strong [success](#) in limiting or avoiding antipsychotic use. A previous [5-year study](#) found that after giving OD to people with first-episode psychosis, 82% did not have any residual psychotic symptoms and 86% had returned to their studies or a full-time job. However, evidence is limited and further studies are needed.

**Positive impact of volunteering.** A variety of studies have shown that people who volunteer their time and energy tend to have better mental health. Volunteering is an act of self-transcendence - a central concern of transpersonal psychology. Interestingly, a [new study](#) found that the mental health benefit of volunteering seems related to age: Young adults gain little, a marked benefit occurs for those over 40, and an even larger positive impact occurs for those over 70 years of age. *Implications:* Consider advocating volunteering as an activity to enhance the mental health of those over 40.

**Transgender identity: an invalid diagnosis?** The ICD-10 and DSM-5 - the diagnostic manuals of psychiatry - both classify transgender identity as a mental disorder. A [study](#) of 250 transgender adults found extreme stigma: 76% experienced social rejection and 63% experienced violence in reaction to their gender. Researchers concluded that symptoms of transgender individuals (primarily depression) are largely fueled by stigma, rather than transgender identity itself. As such, the team calls for transgender to no longer be classified as a mental disorder. Another [study](#) found that the psychological distress experienced by the broader LGBT community was strongly associated with external stressors such as presumed heterosexuality, prejudice and victimization. *Implications:* Understanding a patient's sexual orientation may help identify sources of stigma that impinge on their mental health. Labeling their identity a mental disorder may inadvertently increase stigma and, therefore, symptoms.

## Wellness Research

**12 weeks of aerobic exercise improves schizophrenia cognitive symptoms.** A [meta-analysis](#) of 10 controlled trials involving a total of 385 individuals with schizophrenia showed aerobic exercise significantly improved cognitive functioning including attention, social cognition, and working memory. Those who engaged in greater amounts of aerobic exercise showed the biggest improvements in cognitive functioning, and exercise programs that were best for improving physical fitness were also most beneficial for cognition. The lead researcher notes, "Using exercise from the earliest stages of the illness could reduce the likelihood of long-term disability, and facilitate full, functional recovery for patients." *Implications:* Exercise should be considered as an important part of mental health care.

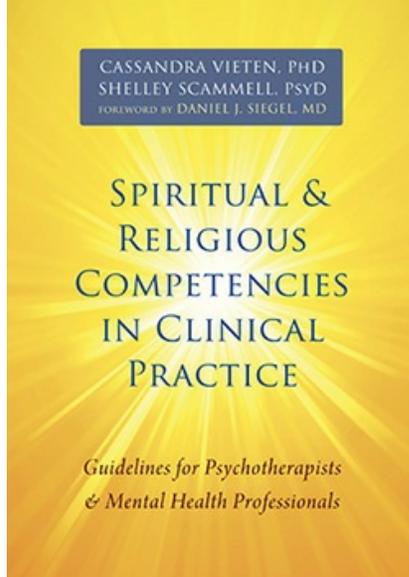
**Yogic breathing aids stress and cardiovascular autonomic function.** A small [study](#) of newly admitted medical students sought to determine the impact of pranayama (yogic breathing) on stress and cardiovascular function. Participant stress score improvement was highly significant. They also had increased parasympathetic output to the heart and better sympatho-vagal balance. *Implications:* pranayama can be added to the list of slowed-breathing techniques that can promote stress reduction.

## Books & Web information

**Spiritual and Religious Competencies in Clinical Practice: Guidelines for Psychotherapists and Mental Health Professionals**, by Cassandra Vieten (president, Institute of Noetic Sciences) and Shelley Scammell.

The book describes these competencies and provides training guidelines for teaching new mental health professionals. With a foreword by psychiatrist Daniel Siegel and endorsements from a variety of psychologists and physicians, the American Psychological Association's [PsycCritiques](#), which reviews psychological literature, says:

"... Spiritual and Religious Competencies in Clinical Practice is a timely and important book that provides both trainees and clinicians the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for clinical practice in a manner that is



sensitive to spiritual and religious issues. It is and will be an invaluable resource for this and subsequent generations of psychotherapists and mental health professionals..." An online course providing continuing education units is in development.

## Conferences & Events

- **Sept 15** - 14th Annual International Restorative Medicine Conference. Hilton Head, SC. [More](#).
- **Sept 16-18** - 14th Annual International Restorative Medicine Conference. Hilton Head, [More](#)
- **Sept 29- Oct 2** - 7th annual Integrative Medicine for Mental Health (IMMH) Conference. Washington DC. [More](#).
- **Oct 6-9** - IPS Mental Health Services Conference. Washington DC. [More](#).
- **Oct 14-16** - Psychiatry MasterClass: Intensive Clinical Training in Integrative Psychiatry. Denver, CO. [More](#).
- **Oct 15-18** - Mastering Brain Chemistry Physician Education Workshop (covering all major mental health diagnoses). Walsh Research Institute, with William Walsh PhD, Mary Megson MD, and Malcom Sickels MD, Oak Brook, IL. [More](#) [Email](#). 630-299-4466.
- **Oct 28-30** - International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis (ISPS), US 15th Annual Meeting, Boston, MA. [More](#).
- **Oct 30** - AIHM Annual Conference. San Diego, CA. [More](#).
- **Nov 5** - Nutrient Resolution: Breaking the Cycle of Stress and Chronic Inflammation - a CAM Conference with BANT (British Associ. for Applied Nutrition and Nutritional Therapy), [More](#).
- **Feb 5-12, 2017**. 2nd International Integrative Mental Health exchange. Havana, Cuba. Limited attendance. [More](#).

## Staff



### Dan Stradford, President/Founder, Safe Harbor.

Dan is the lead author of a book for physicians, [Complementary and Alternative Medicine Treatments in Psychiatry](#), and the author of the book, [The Men's Code of Honor: 66 Principles That Make a Man](#).

He has published over 250 articles and technical papers. His writings and commentary have appeared in *Time Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Record* (Scotland), the college textbook *Social Problems* and many other publications.



### Craig Wagner, Editor.

Craig is an author, speaker, educator and freelance editor in the field of Integrative Mental Health. He is a trainer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and editor of *Codex Alternus*, the most comprehensive practitioner reference on alternative therapies.

His book, [Choices in Recovery](#), is the first to extract the full range of non-drug mental health therapies from the bowels of scientific research and transform it into a pragmatic recovery tool for those with mental health issues and their supporters. He writes and curates this newsletter. See [www.OnwardMentalHealth.com](http://www.OnwardMentalHealth.com).

