

## Operations

The Whole Child Center, in Oradell, New Jersey, combines traditional pediatric care services with an integrative approach to wellness. Some of its less-traditional services include: infant massage, nutritional counseling, clinical homeopathy, yoga and mind/body therapies.



# To life, and the pursuit of wellness

Practice finds success with integrative approach to medicine

by **DANIEL R. VERDON**, *Group Content Director*

## HIGHLIGHTS

**01** Practices that help model healthy behavior will ultimately change it, especially as it relates to nutrition, development, exercise and mind/body connection.

**02** Physicians are educators, and their tools include patient health apps, lab reports, motivational communication, group meetings within the practice, classes, and special events.

► **HE WANTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD**—one patient at a time.

In fact, pediatrician and author Lawrence Rosen, MD, of Oradell, New Jersey, founder of the Whole Child Center, combines a traditional practice in less-than-traditional ways. The practice says it blends integrative medicine with ecologically sustainable healthcare for children and families.

“We are struggling in healthcare to do just that—to create health,” Rosen explains. “Not just cheaper care, but better care. What does it mean to be healthier? At the same time we need to recognize that there are significant economic difficulties in our healthcare system.” As a result, healthcare needs wholesale changes as it relates to how and why pediatricians and family physicians provide healthcare, Rosen says.

Consider the types of diseases most primary care physicians are seeing—obesity, asthma, autism, attention deficit disorder, metabolic disorders in adults. “We are treating sicker and sicker people later in life with after-the-fact solutions,” Rosen says. A truly preventive strategy, he adds, is not just patient-to-patient, but a philosophical decision we have to make as a country and as a society as it relates to long-term outcomes.

Rosen made the philosophical switch after 20 years of practice. The Whole Child Center, a four-physician practice with a pediatric nurse practitioner and clinical coordinator, combines traditional adult therapies with integrative approaches to nutrition, fitness, and mindfulness.

Similarly, the practice combines traditional pediatric care services with services

## Getting social

Social media can be a powerful tool to help educate and engage the community in healthcare.



A case in point is **Lawrence Rosen, MD**, founder of the Whole Child Center in Oradell, New Jersey. Rosen uses Facebook (search for The Whole Child) to share information about the practice and health education. He has 23 videos on a YouTube channel, and he is just as actively using Twitter (@LawrenceRosenMD).

"It quickly became evident to me that this is a great way to engage the community. I could share information about our practice, and about other health activities in the community or things related to integrated health that supported the mission or the work we are doing. It's also a way to allow families, patients or parents, share what's happening in their lives," he says.

Most people, he adds, are not asking for healthcare advice either. "If it happens, and they are a patient, we ask them to contact us offline; and if they are not, we ask them to contact their healthcare provider." In 2013, his social media work netted the practice The Beautiful Award from athenahealth for its holistic approach to child care.

Check out his YouTube videos at [bit.ly/14M7dXu](http://bit.ly/14M7dXu)



The approach to medicine is really about engaging patients in many new ways. The Whole Child Center aims to teach patients how to remain healthy through visits, classes and even events.

such as nutritional counseling, acupuncture, clinical homeopathy, nutritional counseling, yoga, Reiki, infant massage, mind/body therapies (biofeedback, hypnosis, and guided imagery), and prenatal and preconception consultations.

The practice was built to help facilitate and enhance the relationship between its doctors, staff, and patients. Rosen, with Heather Jeney, MD; Stacey M. Linwood, MD; Penelope Gay Sheely, MD; Rebecca Ganz, CPNP; and Karen Overgaard are trying model healthy lifestyles early on for children and families.

It's also about engaging patients. "We want to give patients a voice, empower them whether it's using mobile technological solutions or access to their healthcare through a patient portal and guide them through solutions that promote wellness

and health prevention," Rosen says. During a typical 30-minute encounter, 25 minutes are spent with the physician. He calls it quality time. "We are trying to develop relationships over time, and that is exactly how communication develops, and it's crucial to how we keep kids healthy," he says.

The approach, Rosen adds, is really about engaging patients in many different ways. Physicians are educators, and their tools include not only a stethoscope but also patient health apps, lab reports, motivational communication, group meetings within the practice, classes, and special events. The technological tools available today to facilitate that communication are helping exponentially, Rosen adds.

Along with being considered one of the first green pediatric

→ 36



→ 35 practices in the United States, the Whole Child Center was also designed to use technology to facilitate communication among patients and staff. Close to 70% of the practice's patients now use a patient portal (athenahealth), Rosen says. "Our phone call volume dropped in half, and it has not just been patients calling about health issues. That's included laboratory notifications, appointment requests and those kind of things."

The center's practitioners decided to keep computers out of the examination

rooms because they do not want to distract from the encounter, but Rosen uses an iPad to facilitate education. He enters his notes into the electronic health record following the encounter. This approach to medicine has not only helped him improve adherence rates, but it has changed some of his patients' lives and habits.

"When people are engaged and feel control over their own health, they get excited—even more so than just being compliant, they are vested (in their own health)." And that's what is really going to change healthcare. ■

# Going green

## SO, WHAT IS A GREEN PRACTICE?

"It's about being mindful of the [impact of the] environment on health and the impact of healthcare on the environment," explains Lawrence Rosen, MD, founder of the Whole Child Center in Oradell, New Jersey.

The broad definition of a green design is a facility that uses materials that have been either recycled, produced locally, are energy conserving, and are non-toxic and non-allergenic. Rosen's practice, considered one of the first green pediatric practices in the country, was designed by DRG Design Group. It uses everything from natural linoleum flooring tiles to PVC-free leather furniture to nontoxic stains and sealers.

## PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Pediatrician Lawrence Rosen, MD, founder of the Whole Child Center in Oradell, New Jersey, and author of the book, "Treatment Alternatives for Children," offers this prescription for healthy living in a blog post on athenahealth.com.

### Rx food

#### EAT REAL FOOD

Teach your kids that eating is a mindful process, one that is not only about ingesting calories but also about nourishing your body, mind, and soul. Eating is and ought to be a community activity.

### Rx activity

#### MOVE YOUR BODY

"Experience what author Richard Louv calls the 'transforma-

tive power of the natural world' and refuse to let your children suffer from nature deficit disorder."

### Rx rest

#### MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY

Create opportunities for rest, especially for teens. They always need far more sleep than they get.

### Rx mindfulness

#### BE HERE NOW

Help your children build their stress-coping toolboxes. Take time to look someone in the eyes, listen to her story, and let her know that you hear her. Be willing to sit in the mud until it settles and the water clears.



**THE GREEN EVOLUTION:** The Whole Child Center is said to be one of the first "green" practices in the United States, and it uses everything from "enviroleather" to many energy-conserving building materials.