

# “You’re all there... that’s the difference”

In the December 2004 issue, we took a look at Transcendental Meditation, the potential benefits it could bring to both dental phobic patients and dentists themselves in reducing levels of stress in daily life, and spoke to both a dentist and a patient who have found the meditation technique to be invaluable in helping them cope. In the concluding part of our two-part series, PATRICE GLADWIN speaks to Dr Michael Musgrave, a general practitioner in North London, to discover if the technique has any basis in scientific fact...

**I**N THE last issue, I spoke to dentist Kevin Esplin about Transcendental Meditation and also to Sue Cates, a patient of Kevin’s, about how TM changed her life.

I had found Sue to be charming, but I needed a more objective view. So I visited Dr Michael Musgrave: “I’m a GP and I’ve been in general practice in North London for 25 years. I’ve recommended TM to more than 200 of my patients in that time, with many benefits and advantages. I’ve been practising TM myself for years and have found it superbly beneficial in my personal life. I’ve also found it helps deal with professional stresses. It’s made me calmer; it gives a certain efficiency to life; it makes one feel more tolerant and I believe it has helped me to handle better the many pressures one encounters in running a busy practice. In the past, I often felt left with the emotional weight of difficult consultations after the patient had gone. Once I’d learned TM this changed. I slept better, I handled frustrations with more equanimity, especially those concerning the lack of resources.

## Stress buster

“What I’ve discovered through studying the research findings on TM is that it’s very effective at reducing the various measures of stress. At a physiological level it’s shown to reduce the stress hormones such as cortisol; the respiratory rate goes down; the heart-rate goes down; the blood-pressure goes down while people meditate.

*But there’s also been a fair body of medical research which shows benefits in specific medical problems such as asthma, high blood-pressure, even that it’s beneficial in reducing cholesterol. So, having had a look at the research I felt that it would potentially be of benefit to my patients.*

Dr Musgrave feels that recommending TM to patients has been beneficial to both him and them: “Over the years I have been recommending it, I’ve been very pleased with the results, and I believe they have been pleased too. I find it particularly beneficial for patients who have stress-related disorders, which we see occupying perhaps 60 or 70 per cent of consultations in general practice. Patients presenting with anxiety symptoms, with depression, with difficulties in relationships, and stress relating to their jobs: these sorts of things are likely to benefit from using TM. There are specific medical situations as well such as tension headaches, back conditions, migraine, peptic ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome: those sorts of things often get better if patients practice TM regularly, I have found.

## Deep form of rest

“TM appears to induce a deep form of rest and tranquillity so that patients are calmer, less stressed and more in control of their lives. A lack of a sense of control is often a symptom which patients present with. TM for my money represents a form of self help and I think it is very discreet and very dignified in that sense. Patients find that

*it is easy to do, it’s pleasant, it doesn’t require any outside equipment, it doesn’t require any special change of lifestyle and it can slot into even a busy professional life.*

“Apart from being very natural and very enjoyable for patients to practise, one of the benefits of TM is that it is cumulative over time. Patients find that the longer they’ve been doing it the more they can take on stress, the more they feel freedom. They tend to be more positive, to develop better relationships and to feel more efficient in their daily lives.”

The fact that Transcendental Meditation is a natural therapy appeals greatly to Dr Musgrave: “One of the reasons that I select TM as a form of therapy for my patients is because it contrasts very favourably with the existing modes of treatment. Nearly all drugs have side-effects. Many create a dependence; not only the tranquillisers but we are increasingly finding that the various anti-depressants create a strong psychological dependence so that patients have difficulty giving up. There is also the phenomenon of drug-therapy requiring increasingly heavy dosages to exert its effects. So, where possible one tries to use drugs with great caution in general practice.

“The mental, talking therapies, the various forms of counselling and psychotherapy, are very time consuming and they are very labour intensive. They generally require a one-to-one relationship between the patient and the therapist and the overall outcomes are very variable. In some cases they even make patients worse. And certainly there is no clear predominant school of therapy, which is evidenced by the wide variety of different kinds that we have at the moment.

“So there really is quite a case for something else to help our patients dealing with stress problems, and I think TM fits this role very nicely.”



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## TM for everyone?

I went back to Kevin with more conviction about TM, but with a question: “Why isn’t everyone doing this?”

The reply was encouraging: “That’s what people often say to me! Of course, it can take years before some patients believe me, that TM is agenda-free, effortless and brings benefits for anyone who learns properly. Now another client, David, had high blood-pressure and everything else... but even though I recognised early that he’d love the TM experience, he had to come to it in his own time. And now, at last, he’s grateful to me! That’s a perk... but the real pay-off is that I’ve calm people to treat.

“I recommend TM on a purely personal basis, but knowing that a huge body of peer-reviewed research backs it up, especially in the area of high blood-pressure. Dentists recognise that people are often at their most stressed in a dentist’s chair. But the real problem is elsewhere in their


lives. They have the power to reverse all of that pressure... if they get to the lovely deep place Transcendental Meditation brings you. It’s there waiting... all people need is easy access.”

## You’re all there...

Although TM is something that Kevin completely advocates, he did have this to say: “Learning Transcendental Meditation is not cheap. You have professional instruction and fantastic follow-up. But there’s no intrusion into your life: you take advantage of the teacher’s expertise as much or as little as you like. It’s totally ancient... and totally modern. I know my kids will love TM when it comes to exams, peer pressure and all of that. TM just makes life easier... because you’re using more than the average 10 per cent of the mind. You’re all there... that’s the difference.” □

● For more information about Transcendental Meditation, or for details of one of the 60 TM teaching centres in the United Kingdom, contact 08705-143733.

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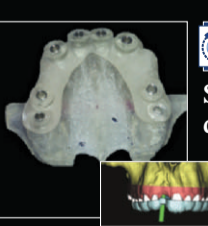
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