

# PSYCHIATRY NOTES

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*Psychopharmacology and Psychotherapy for Adults, Adolescents, and Children*

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## ***Meditation May Change Brain Structure***

Daily meditation over a consistent period of time changes gray matter density in parts of the brain associated with memory, sense of self, empathy, and stress. According to a report in *Psychiatric Times*, Harvard researchers examined MRI scans of participants over a period of 8 weeks. Daily meditation sessions of 30-minutes' duration produced measurable changes in subjects with no previous meditation history. Increased gray matter was discovered in the hippocampus, the learning and memory region of the brain. The anxiety and stress region of the brain, the amygdala, produced less gray matter. In a non-meditating control group, these positive changes did not take place.

## ***Post-Partum Depression***

Postpartum depression should be distinguished from postpartum blues (commonly known as the baby blues), a relatively common condition that can affect 50% to 80% of women and is characterized by emotional lability, irritability, anxiety and sleep disturbance that usually resolves within two postnatal weeks. Treatment for postpartum blues includes reassurance and validation of the woman's experience, as well as assistance in caring for herself, the home and the baby. However, follow-up of women with postpartum blues is important, as up to 20% go on to develop postpartum depression

Postpartum depression is the most common psychiatric disorder that occurs in the puerperium, and it affects approximately 10% to 15% of women. Women without a history of major depression have a 10% risk of developing postpartum depression, though the risk of depressive symptomatology may be higher. With a history of major depression, the risk for postpartum depression rises to 25%, and with a history of a prior postpartum depression, the risk of recurrence rises further to 50%. In addition to prior history of depression or postpartum depression, there are many risk factors for developing a postpartum depression.

The few months after childbirth represent a time when women may be vulnerable to experiencing postpartum depression. Women should be followed during this period, especially if they have a history of depression or depressive symptoms during pregnancy. Treatment should be multifactorial, including consideration of psychosocial as well as pharmacologic options. Adequate recognition and treatment of postpartum depression is essential to the health and well-being of the mother, the infant and the family.

### ***Beaumont Hospital Visits***

In the event that you or a family member is hospitalized for medical reasons in William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, Dr. Belkin is on staff and is available to make hospital calls. Please ask your hospital physician or the nurse to call the office for a consult and Dr. Belkin will see you at the hospital.

### ***In the News***

Dr. Belkin has been interviewed several times over the last few months. He has appeared on Fox 2 News, WXYZ-TV, ABCNews.com, and other media outlets. Please check out the media section of our website to view and read the clips. Dr. Belkin has also recently received a faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, scheduled to enroll it's first class of medical students in Rochester Hills, Michigan in the Fall of 2011.

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