



# MIND-BODY MEDICINE: interactions between mind and body

This Guide had been provided by Reliable Cancer Therapies (RCT) as a service to patients, to help patients and their relatives better understand the nature of mind-body medicine. We recommend patients to consult their doctor. The information described in this document is based on scientific research and has informative purposes only.

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### DEFINITION OF MIND-BODY MEDICINE

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This term is used for all kinds of treatments that are focused on the interactions between the mind (awareness, consciousness, and ability to think) and the body. These are techniques aiming at enhancing the mind's capacity to influence the body's functions and symptoms. Two additional terms need to be explained in this context: psycho-neuro-immunology and psycho-neuro-endocrinology.

Psycho-neuro-immunology (PNI) encompasses the knowledge about the mind, the brain, and the immune system. Psycho-neuro-endocrinology deals with the mind, the brain, and the hormonal system. Thus, there are complex interactions between all these systems.

The communication processes between the body and the mind cannot be understood as merely showing cause and effect. So many factors influence our inner balance. Within us, there is a huge communications network, yet research on this topic is still in its infancy. This research is focused on appropriate ways to make the invisible (our mind) visible. Possible imaging methods are brain imaging, mapping hormonal changes, and the analysis of certain blood cells.

It is important to realize that you have the chance to be actively engaged in your healing process because of these highly complicated interwoven systems. Your quality of life can be improved by choosing specific treatment modalities that can influence these regulative systems, such as mindfulness-based clinical interventions, relaxation techniques, guided imagery, and meditation.

Being diagnosed with cancer causes stress and everybody deals with it differently. Learning how to cope with long-lasting stress is very important, especially for you as a patient and for your family caregivers. Your treatment may also cause a lot of stress. Finding a way to be calmer enhances your quality of life.

There is a broad scope of treatment modalities that claim to stimulate the immune system through different mind-body approaches. It might not be easy to distinguish which one will work well for you. The most important question is: do you feel comfortable while using this modality? You are the only one who can answer this question. Ask other patients about their experiences with a certain therapy, as they can give you some hints on important questions to ask the practitioner.

Mind-body approaches, in a broad sense, also encompass the work of healers. These healers may come from a traditional background (e.g. African, Indian, Native American) or they may work as individuals without belonging to a spiritual tradition. Healing is very dependent on the skills and the integrity of the healer and on the receptiveness of the patient. Research on the effectiveness of healing, however, is still very scarce.