

News Release



University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
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New "Center for Spirituality and the Mind" at Penn Unites Intellectual Resources to Study the Relationship Between Spirituality and Science in the Human Brain

(Philadelphia, PA) - A new "Center for Spirituality and the Mind" has been created at the **University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine** to support campus-wide researchers from a wide variety of academic disciplines who will further our understanding of what it means to be "religious" and "spiritual." The multi-disciplinary teams of researchers will study the issue from a number of related perspectives -- including psychological, social, biological, and ideological.

The Center, which evolved from work initiated in Penn's Department of Radiology, will embrace and encourage researchers from the fields of medicine, pastoral care, religious studies, social work, nursing, and bioethics to expand our knowledge of how spirituality may affect the human brain.

"Many of us think of the mind, brain, and body as an integrated system, and so there is much to study in this area of how beliefs affect our health and behavior," explains **Andrew Newberg, MD**, Assistant Professor of Radiology, Psychiatry, and Religious Studies, who will also direct the Center's investigations. "Our Center will emphasize mental health research, as well as address issues of the relationship between spirituality and neurosciences."

Center scientists will conduct empirical research and develop grants to explore the underlying neurophysiology of religious beliefs. Newberg would also like to expand the research to social and cultural behaviors, encompassing the areas of social work, anthropology, and sociology.

"Our researchers are intensely interested in the religious, theological, and philosophical implications of the research in this field," adds Newberg. "It cuts across so many disciplines, and it is at the center of the whole discussion of what religion and spirituality are to us as human beings. Ours will be the first Center in the world to explore this from the perspective of the mind."

"When we look at human beings, there have been two major forces in human history: the religious/spiritual force and the science/technological force," he continues. "They've both had such an important role throughout time that we really need to look at how these two are inter-related, for humanity, in a global way."

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***PENN Medicine** is a \$2.9 billion enterprise dedicated to the related missions of medical education, biomedical research, and high-quality patient care. PENN Medicine consists of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (founded in 1765 as the nation's first medical school) and the University of Pennsylvania Health System.*

Penn's School of Medicine is ranked #2 in the nation for receipt of NIH research funds; and ranked #3 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's most recent ranking of top research-oriented medical schools. Supporting 1,400 fulltime faculty and 700 students, the School of Medicine is recognized worldwide for its superior education and training of the next generation of physician-scientists and leaders of academic medicine.

The University of Pennsylvania Health System includes three hospitals [Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, which is consistently ranked one of the nation's few "Honor Roll" hospitals by U.S. News & World Report; Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital; and Penn Presbyterian Medical Center]; a faculty practice plan; a primary-care provider network; two multispecialty satellite facilities; and home care and hospice.

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