

Medical Orgone Therapy

Peter A. Crist, M.D. and Richard Schwartzman, D.O.

Excerpted from the [The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Body-Mind Disciplines](#)

The American College of Orgonomy

Medical orgone therapy is a unique approach to treating emotional and physical illness by reducing or eliminating those barriers that block the natural expressions of emotion and healthy sexual feeling. This method of treatment was developed by Austrian psychiatrist and scientist Wilhelm Reich, M.D. (1897-1957). After years of clinical and experimental laboratory research, Reich concluded that emotions, sexual feelings, and all life processes are expressions of a biological energy in the body. He further concluded that this life energy is related to bioelectricity but is fundamentally different. He called this energy "orgone energy". Reich theorized that orgone energy fills the universe and pulsates in all living things. He believed that deep, genuine love and the ability to experience a gratifying orgasm mutually with one's partner are the fullest and deepest expressions of our being and are central to maintaining optimal health.

Reich contended that in almost all individuals, the flow and release of orgone energy are blocked by chronic muscle contractions in various areas of the body and by emotional attitudes adopted early in life. The "nice little girl" who never gets angry, and the "strong, brave boy" who never shows fear and sadness are but two examples of such attitudes that prevent the full and rational expressions of natural emotions. Blocked emotions interfere with pleasure in the life and cause sexual feelings to become disconnected from tender emotions of love. Without emotional release, anxiety develops, which further increases physical and emotional contraction. This cycle results in a range of problems such as feelings of emptiness, depression, irrational fears, and self-destructive behavior. Medical orgone therapy employs direct work on the body, especially on spastic muscles, with verbal therapy to bring about a healthy state accompanied by satisfaction in one's work and love life.

The History of Medical Orgone Therapy

Dr. Wilhelm Reich began his career as a student and colleague of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the founder of psychoanalysis. During his work as a psychoanalyst, Reich discovered that the individual's deep emotions were bound up in defensive character attitudes, which he called "character armor." To treat these problems Reich developed a highly effective technique of character analysis, still used today by other psychotherapies, which focuses on the individual's attitudes and present-day concerns and less so on past relationships within the family.

While working with patients, Reich observed that only those who developed a satisfactory, healthy sexual life fully resolved their neurotic symptoms.

Satisfaction was not determined by the mere presence of sexual activity. Rather, it required the ability to give in to both deep, tender love feelings and the intense sexual sensations that are experienced with a total body orgasm. Reich asserted that this all encompassing experience is possible only with a partner of the opposite sex, and concluded that only such a complete orgasm could regulate the energy metabolism.

Reich observed that defensive emotional attitudes are not just "in the mind" but are held in the body's muscles, and he called this the "muscular armor". He also found that inhibited feelings were accompanied by restrictions in respiration. These realizations let him to the groundbreaking conclusion that the successful treatment of emotional problems requires work on the body combined with verbal therapy.

Reich's theories about the link between sex, emotions, and the body, and his experimental work with orgone energy were very controversial. Legal action was taken against him by the United States Food and Drug Administration. He refused to defend his scientific work in a courtroom, believing the proper venue to challenge his research was the laboratory. He was found guilty of failing to obey an injunction and was jailed. He died in prison in 1957.

Reich's ideas about sexuality have often been misunderstood. This was especially true during the "sexual revolution" of the 1960's and 1970's, when his name and ideas were associated with the idea that one can become "free" by having sex. In fact, Reich clearly stated that loveless sexuality was neurotic and when harsh or mechanical was unhealthy.

Elsworth F. Baker, M.D. (1903-1985), Reich's associate, continued Reich's work in the late 1950's, overseeing the training of medical orgonomists and orgone research. He founded the Journal of Orgonomy in 1967 and established the American College of Orgonomy in 1968. The college actively continues the development of the science of orgonomy, and its journal publishes clinical and scientific research.

The Theory of Medical Orgone Therapy

Medical orgone therapy is based on Wilhelm Reich's theory of armoring. The method of treatment developed from observations on the movement and blockage of energy in the body. Infants and children naturally feel pleasure and reach out to the world. If these impulses are frustrated, the child contracts and develops methods to adapt to the stress. If frustrations continue, these defensive reactions become chronic and extend into adult life even when they are no longer needed. For example, a child may develop a submissive manner to deal with an angry parent and then as an adult react submissively to all authority figures, even

when it would be better to be assertive. Other common examples of "character armor" are found in individuals who present themselves as aloof, superior, "cool," sophisticated, cute, or special. Medical orgonomists consider these character attitudes to be manifested in actual muscular rigidities (muscular armor), which hold back intolerable or unacceptable emotions such as anger, fear, or sadness. Individuals are usually unaware of their muscular armor or that their physical problems, such as headaches, stiff neck, or back pain, are often rooted in repressed emotions.

Armoring forms in infancy and early childhood as defense against painful feelings, but it is not a satisfactory solution because it later interferes with healthy emotional life and energy discharge. Medical orgone therapy strives to eliminate chronic armor to restore the individual to more natural functioning in all aspects of his or her life.

Medical Orgone Therapy in Practice

The medical orgonomist is trained to understand the patient in all respects and diagnose the patterns of character and physical armor. Because all medical orgone therapists are physicians who also have specialized training in psychiatry, they are equipped to diagnose physical conditions and work directly on their patients. Treatment includes character analysis and the release of buried emotions facilitated by breathing and direct work on spastic muscles. The therapy does not focus much on psychological causes or delve deeply into past relationships with parents. Therapy is also used to treat infants and children. The removal of early armoring allows the child to develop with a natural energy flow, emotional aliveness, and a sense of well-being. Treatment helps to prevent the development of armor in adult life.

It is important to note that the techniques used in this therapy are not the same as those in some other methods used to address physical tension such as acupuncture, massage, and deep breathing. Character analysis also has its own specific techniques, which should not be confused with positive affirmations, guided self-examination, and similar therapeutic approaches.

In the *Journal of Orgonomy* (Vol. 28, No. 1), Dr. Charles Konia describes a representative course of orgone therapy:

"In medical orgone therapy, armor is intentionally dissolved. This invariably brings about anxiety, because the very function of the armor is to prevent the (individual) from experiencing such painful feelings. The medical orgonomists encourage the individual to experience and tolerate anxiety so that the underlying, contained emotions can be felt and then expressed. This brings about

the desired, positive, therapeutic effect: anxiety is eliminated and replaced by a sense of pleasurable well-being."

The Benefits of Medical Orgone Therapy

Medical orgone therapy is a unique approach to the prevention and treatment of a wide range of mental and physical conditions. Medical orgonomists report successful treatment of the full range of emotional symptoms and relationship problems. Serious conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, panic disorder, and ADHD can often be treated without resorting to medications. Reich concluded -- and present-day physicians who practice medical orgone therapy concur -- that the elimination of armoring, in and of itself, restores natural, healthy functioning. Patients regain their natural capacities to enjoy satisfaction in love, work, and the pursuit of knowledge.