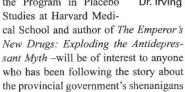
Rogers Prize keynote speaker shows antidepressants no better than placebos

he 2013 Dr. Rogers Prize for Excellence in Complementary and Alternative Medicine will be celebrated with a gala award dinner and free

afternoon colloquium in Vencouver on September Thile organizers are the list of short noved nominees for the biennial \$250,000 prize, the work of their Gala Award Dinner keynote speaker, Dr. Irving Kirsch – Associate Director of the Program in Placebo Studies at Harvard Media



with UBC's drug review team.

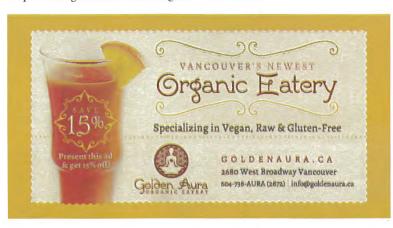
Kirsch's research, which is based on the drug companies' own data, dismantles the case for antidepressants, showing there is little or no differ-

ence in effect from placebo. His findings were provocative enough to compel the UK National Health Service to complete their own review of the antidepressant clinical trials, which resulted in the NHS dramatically revamping the way antidepressants are prescribed. Dr. Tim

Kendall, Co-Director of the Review, told 60 Minutes that the published evidence significantly overestimated the effect of the drugs and understated the side effects.



Dr. Irving Kirsch





In addition to relating his experiences as a 'troublemaker' at the dinner, Dr. Kirsch will open the afternoon colloquium "Exploring the Mind-Body Continuum" with a brief appearance to describe the placebo effect and its significance, which will set the stage for further exploration of the day's topic. Given the latest revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which lowers the criteria for diagnosis of some mental health conditions while broadly expanding the definitions of others, Dr.

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Kirsch's insights should be of great significance to the general public and medical community alike.

Past revisions of diagnostic criteria have resulted in increases in diagnoses greater than originally predicted and the recent removal of "bereavement exclusion" (i.e., grief as a factor to be considered) from the DSM for clinical depression is cause for concern. The increasing medicalization of everyday human experience and emotion has been a boon for big pharma. In the 30 years since the introduction of Prozac, prescriptions for antidepressant drugs have increased hy more than 400%. Without a sea change in doctor and patient awareness, these most recent revisions could well foreshadow a boom for pharmaceutical companies marketing psychotropic drugs

Dr. Jeffrey Dusek, formerly of Harvard Medical School and now Director of Research at the Penny George Institute for Health and Healing, will present his work at the Colloquium. Dr. Dusek was co-author of the 2006 STEP Proiect (more commonly referred to as the Templeton Prayer Study), a \$2.4 million dollar study that showed, contrary to expectations, that cardiac patients who knew they were being prayed for had significantly worse outcomes than those in the blinded study. "We thought that the certainty of knowing about the prayers of outsiders would reduce complications that accompany bypass surgery. But the results were paradoxical." The study researchers don't believe the study refutes the power of prayer so much as it reveals the possibility that participants may have believed they had been assigned to the prayer group because they were at greater likelihood of negative consequences. "We found increased amounts of adrenalin, a sign of stress, in the blood of patients who knew strangers were praying for them," explains Dr. Dusek. "It's possible that we inadvertently raised the stress levels of these people."

About the prize

The \$250,000 Dr. Rogers Prize for Excellence in Complementary and Alternative Medicine is awarded every two years to celebrate the achievements of researchers, practitioners and others in the field of complementary and alternative (CAM) health care. The largest prize of its kind in North America, the first Dr. Rogers Prize was awarded in 2007.

Open to individuals whose complementary or alternative medicine activities are carried out within Canada, the recipient of the Dr. Rogers Prize is an individual who embodies the vision, leadership and integrity as that of Dr. Roger Hayward Rogers for whom the award is named. A Canadian pioneer in the field of CAM, Dr. Rogers was among the first to provide non-traditional therapies for cancer patients. He was appointed to the Order of British Columbia in recognition of his ground-breaking work.

September 26: Free afternoon colloquium 1-5PM, Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. Reception and award dinner follow in the evening. Registration and ticket information for hoth events at www.drrogersprize.org See display ad this issue.

www.commonground.ca