

Answering Questions



The key to great medicine is experience. Just ask Cherry Hill's Jeffrey Simon MD. A South Jersey native himself, Dr. Simon has traveled the country through his training and experience, completing a variety of fellowships in Child and Adolescent psychiatry, at Mt. Sinai Medical Center UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, as well as a fellowship in Addiction Medicine and Psychiatry at Dartmouth Medical Center.

He also worked with children and adults in post-Katrina New Orleans, treating PTSD, substance abuse and addiction, and depressive and anxiety disorders. It's because of these fellowships, and his experience, that Dr. Simon is able to offer South Jersey a totally unique and revolutionary level of psychiatric care.

"For me personally, I recognized the national shortage of trained physicians for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine," says Dr. Simon. "[I] want to contribute and make a difference in peoples' lives where there is such a great need."

Individualized Child Care

Dr. Simon provides his patients with an abundance of resources and completely individualized treatment options. Children who face the same problems as adults may require totally different types of interventions. Dr. Simon makes it a priority to demystify mental health and neuro-psychiatric issues to ensure that both the parents and the child gain insight and symptom relief before issues develop into larger problems.

"Untreated, undiagnosed, or misdiagnosed ADHD or other psychiatric disorders in a child may lead to increased consequences academically and socially which can drastically affect both the child and their family. Studies show that any of these disorders left untreated greatly increase the chance of substance abuse," explains Dr. Simon. As an example, untreated ADHD often manifests symptoms of anxiety and depression due to the frustration experienced. However, proper and early treatment of ADHD can alleviate secondary symptoms which were not the primary diagnosis." When treated successfully, there is often a plethora of improvement in academics, peer and familial relations, and self-esteem while symptoms of anxiety and depression dissipate.

Recently, Dr. Simon is joined in his office by therapist Steven Gursky MSW, LCSW, a long-time colleague who mirrors the treatment direction of the office and adds valuable contributions in his own way.

Psychiatrist **Jeffrey Simon MD** is providing patients with personalized care.

By **Isabel Reynolds** | Photography by **Alison Dunlap**

“We both want to make sure that we use a wellness approach rather than a pathological approach,” explains Gursky. “Kids with anxiety, depression, and ADHD may try cognitive behavioral approaches before medication, or employ both. Research shows therapy and medications together are more effective than either alone,” explains Dr. Simon. “I believe in the efficacy of many of the available medications but always convey a conservative approach, trying to manage symptoms with the smallest dosing regimens and the least amount of medication possible.” Accessing a physician who is trained in this sub specialty will lead to more therapeutic options and better outcomes.

Dr. Simon and Gursky also work to provide children with a healthy self-esteem, which means parental involvement and understanding interventions that best support the whole child. “We plan to establish groups, for parents and children, so that we can put people together who share the same issues so they can talk and share experiences and ideas,” explains Gursky.

Addressing addiction treatment

As the former Medical Director of the Malvern Institute in Pennsylvania and the current Medical Director of Humble Beginnings’ Intensive and General Outpatient programs in Cherry Hill, Dr. Simon has experience to back up the extensive addiction treatment he offers patients out of his personal office.

“One of the main goals is to de-mystify addiction. Imagine walking around with a disease that’s devastating or potentially fatal and you can’t even describe it, because everyone else is too busy asking what is wrong with your willpower,” explains Dr. Simon. “For years patients have lacked knowledge on the real science and information, and I give that to them. The relief behind knowing that there is

a science behind their illness, gives them the tools and reassurance that they have the control to survive their addiction. That is priceless.”

Dr. Simon can give people suffering with addiction a treatment plan that doesn’t necessarily mean leaving everything else in their life behind. “There are medical treatments, and ways to taper people off of certain drugs in an outpatient setting while keeping them safe and comfortable. You can go home to your job and your family every day, and you can seek the treatment that you need and no one would be the wiser.

Suboxone is one type of treatment available for opioid addiction. “I ensure that a patient will be guided through the process with individualized treatment regimens for both induction and cessation. Realistic goals are set that will help minimize dosing and length of treatment and provide patients with the skills and resources to remain sober after medication treatment ends. Many patients come to me and express their gratitude that these qualitative aspects of care were missing in other office or clinic settings where providers were not trained or skilled in the nuances of this disease, available medications, and ability to educate them, which sadly and often leads to continued relapse, dysfunction, and worse.”

Dr. Simon and Gursky’s shared experiences make them an optimal team. “During the years that [Dr. Simon] and I have known each other we have grown to respect the work that each of us does. Gursky, who is trained in EMDR therapy as well as single incident trauma, addiction therapy and more, states “I’m excited to be in a practice that has a greater reach to clientele. It’s helpful to have a psy-



chiatrist and a clinician together who understand each other. [Dr. Simon] and I will be able to bounce possibilities off of each other in a way that helps to support the patient best.”

A revolutionary approach

Be it treating a child or adult, Dr. Simon is able to offer his patients one of the most revolutionary tests in the medical field, the Milenium PGT test. “We now have the ability, through PGT testing, to better target the effective medications for each patient which leads to better treatment efficacy and outcomes,” explains Dr. Simon. “It does not replace good physician care, but gives the doctor and patient more useful tools in the tool box to guide treatment.”

“Ask yourself: Why one person does well on Prozac but doesn’t do well on Zoloft? These drugs are in the same drug class and are designed to have the same end result, but one medication that works well for one, does not ensure that it will work the same for the next patient,” explains Dr. Simon. “That’s the beauty of this test: we are not all alike. Based on our genetics and metabolism we all absorb medications differently. PGT testing can help better understand how your body may process certain

medications and which medications may be the best option for you, whether beginning a new medication or changing current medications that have not been working.”

The test is simply an oral swab and results are obtained in just a few days. The patient is provided with information that can be useful in other medical circumstances so that other professionals can see what medications you metabolize well and what ones are less likely successful for your body.

It’s just another way that Dr. Simon creates an individualized experience for each and every patient.

“Effective treatment with medication and therapy can be short term.” says Gursky. “The idea isn’t that you’re coming to us for life, but that you’re finding the factors that brought you to us so you can get on with your life.”

“We’re not a turn style practice; there aren’t strict limits and each appointment has their own approach,” says Dr. Simon. “Our brain is who we are, and needs the same nourishment and strengthening as any other organ in the body in order to combat, avoid, or prolong the onset of any neuropsychiatric disorder, and to help us live a healthy, fulfilling life.” ■

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