

Let's get to the heart of the matter

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Although the official "heart day" is Valentine's Day, the whole month of February is devoted to matters of the heart. National Heart Month is intended to raise awareness of heart disease, which claims more than 1 million lives annually in the United States.

How much do you know about this powerhouse the size of two fists put together? To quantify the value of the heart in numbers, consider this, from the Institute of HeartMath, a nonprofit research organization: The heart beats about 100,000 times a day. It also generates 40 to 60 times more electrical impulses than the brain. The body's vascular system is about 60,000 miles long. And the heart pumps about 100 gallons of blood per hour.

But explaining the heart's function with numbers doesn't do it justice. For the past decade, IHM researchers have been studying the effects that

emotions have on the heart.

"The heart does more than pump blood," said Howard Martin, executive vice president of HeartMath. "It plays a role in controlling our emotions, including that overall feeling we call 'love.' The heart is also a hormone-secreting and hormone-producing organ, much like a gland."

This connection — the brain as an "intelligent" organ with its own hormone-producing capabilities — is just beginning to be accepted by the scientific community, said Dr. Rollin McCraty, IHM director of research.

"Poets have been right all along. For thousands of years, they have written about the heart as having intelligence — maybe they were right" said McCraty, IHM director of research.

"Sometimes modern science just reproduces what people have known for years and presents itself in a different context only when we are ready to receive it."

To find out more about HeartMath and its programs, check out its Web site: www.heartmath.com.

body
mind, spirit

