Almazán is working to help gifted children receive intellectual stimulation.

"That means there are over a million gifted kids in Mexico but 95 percent of them are not receiving the care and support they need," Almazán said as he explained the sense of urgency he felt in addressing the problem. "Parents and educators need to recognize the signs of children with advanced abilities as early as possible to avoid the problems that often arise when those abilities go undetected."

In addition to being misdiagnosed with ADHD, many gifted kids lose interest in school or other activities and act out of frustration, develop psychological or behavioral problems, have difficulty with socialization processes or actually lose their high level of intelligence over time due to a lack of appropriately challenging mental exercises.

"Society tends to gravitate towards an average," Almazán said. "For kids with advanced abilities, this means it's especially important for them to receive individualized attention or they risk losing those abilities, sometimes as early as eight or nine years old."

> **It's especially important for them to receive individualized attention or they risk losing those abilities.••**
> **ANDREW ALMAZÁN**

This is why he is drawn to neurological research and is already working on several projects to help identify and evaluate intellectual capacity in children, and more importantly, how best to stimulate that natural potential in settings like that of Cedat.

Almazán noted that intelligence is 20 percent genetic and 80 percent environmental, so having centers like Cedat is of paramount importance in meeting the needs of the gifted children it serves.

Currently there are over 300 kids participating in the center's programs. Almazán and a staff of specialists test and evaluate prospective students, and if admitted, they are given a wide range of psychological, academic, social and family support through a variety of classes, workshops and other activities.

The children have the opportunity to study subjects not normally offered to their age groups in traditional academic settings, such as computer science, advanced mathematics, Mandarin, human anatomy, and even an "Introduction to Surgery" class for kids like Almazán who yearn to open up a cow's heart to see what makes us tick.

He explained that an interest in seemingly odd activities like these are a telltale sign that a child may be gifted, and that parents, especially those with kids struggling in school or acting up, should look for these and other traits before assuming they are dealing with a personality or learning disorder.

Other characteristics of a heightened intellect might include a need to always be moving, boredom with routine activities, gathering and remembering information easily, a risk-taking and speculative nature, responding well to responsibility, persuasiveness and a persistent focus on one topic.

Personality traits like these are often the reason kids are misdiagnosed with physiological or psychological disorders, Almazán explained. However, whereas a condition such as ADHD is an ongoing problem rooted in the brain's biochemistry, the behavioral problems common in gifted children generally only appear when they are bored, and if they are given the chance to learn something strange or new, the problems almost always disappear.

It is important for parents to recognize these traits as early as possible, ideally at one or two years old, Almazán said. That is the optimal age to begin a program of activities that stimulates and encourages cognitive functions and reduces the chance that a child may develop behavioral problems associated with gifted kids.

For more information about Almazán's work and the programs offered at Cedat consult the webpage www.cedat.com.mx.

Yoga may help treat orthopedic problems

BY **JANE E. BRODY**
The New York Times

MCT PHOTO/DIEDRA LAIRD/CHARLOTTE OBSERVER
A 72-year old displays the strength and flexibility that comes from yoga.

With the costs of medical care spiraling out of control and an ever-growing shortage of doctors to treat an aging population, it pays to know about methods of prevention and treatment for orthopedic problems that are low-cost and rely almost entirely on self-care. As certain methods of alternative medicine are shown to have real value, some mainstream doctors have begun to incorporate them into their practices.

One of them is Loren Fishman, a physiatrist – a specialist in physical and rehabilitative medicine affiliated with NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia Hospital. Some in the medical profession would consider Fishman a renegade, but to many of his patients he's a miracle worker who treats their various orthopedic disorders without the drugs, surgery or endless months of physical therapy most doctors recommend.

Many years ago, I wrote about Fishman's nonsurgical treatment of piriformis syndrome, crippling pain in the lower back or leg caused by a muscle spasm in the buttocks that entraps the sciatic nerve.

Fishman developed a simple diagnostic technique for piriformis syndrome and showed that an injection into the muscle to break up the spasm, sometimes followed by yoga exercises or brief physical therapy, relieves the pain in an overwhelming majority of cases. Fishman, a lifelong devotee of yoga who studied it for three years in India before going to medical school, uses various yoga positions to help prevent, treat and, he says, halt and often reverse conditions like shoulder injuries, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and scoliosis.

For many years, yoga teachers and enthusiasts have touted the benefits to the body of this ancient practice, but it is the rare physician who both endorses it and documents its value in clinical tests.

This year, Fishman received a prize at the International Conference on Yoga for Health and Social Transformation for a paper he presented on a surprising yoga remedy for rotator cuff syndrome, a common shoulder injury that causes extreme pain when trying to raise one's arm to shoulder height and higher. He described a modified form of a yoga headstand that does not require standing on the head and takes only 30 seconds to perform, and presented evidence that it could relieve shoulder pain in most patients, and that adding brief physical therapy keep the problem from recurring.

For patients facing surgery to repair a tear in the rotator cuff and many months of rehabilitation, the yoga maneuver can seem almost a miracle. It is especially useful for the elderly, who are often poor candidates for surgery.

Fishman said he successfully treated a former basketball player, who responded immediately, and a 40-year-old magazine photographer, who had torn his rotator cuff while on assignment.

Instead of an operation that can cost as much as US$12,000, followed by four months of physical therapy, with no guarantee of success, Fishman's treatment, is an adaptation of a yoga headstand called the triangular forearm support. His version can be done against a wall or using a chair as well as on one's head. The maneuver, in effect, trains a muscle below the shoulder blade, the subscapularis, to take over the job of the injured muscle, the supraspinatus, that normally raises the arm from below chest height to above the shoulder.

The doctor discovered the benefit of this technique quite accidentally. He had suffered a bad tear in his left shoulder when he swerved to avoid a taxi that had pulled in front of his car. Frustrated by an inability to practice yoga during the month he waited to see a surgeon, one day he attempted a yoga headstand. After righting himself, he discovered he could raise his left arm over his head without pain, even though an MRI showed that the supraspinatus muscle was still torn.

Fishman, who has since treated more than 700 patients with this technique, said it has helped about 90 percent of them. The initial yoga maneuver was repeated in physical therapy for an average of five sessions and the patients were followed for an average of 2 1/2 years.

The doctor and his co-authors reported that the benefits matched, and in some cases exceeded, those following physical therapy alone or surgery and rehabilitation. All the yoga-treated patients maintained their initial relief for as long as they were studied, up to eight years, and none experienced new tears.