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March/April 2021

what's inside

7 Medical News

Avoid Heart Break with a Cardiac CTA

11 Natural Options

Moving Beyond PPIs for Indigestion

16 Integrative Medicine

The Case for a Low-Carb, Healthy-Fat Diet

18 Through the Generations

Dreams and Nightmares During the Pandemic

21 Fitness

Fit at Any Age: Getting Back on Your Feet

23 Fresh Cuisine

Flavorful Goodness at Koutouki Greek

ALMOST there

The Champagne is chilling, and we're all about ready to POP! Things are beginning to open up, and there is light at the end of the tunnel. We can't wait for the days of hugs, hospitality, friends and festivals to return; these previously presumed pleasures are starting to feel within reach.

March marks a full year since we retreated to our personal pods and most of us are ready to burst out of our bubbles. Much comparison has been made to the 1920s when spirits soared, celebrations ensued, innovation accelerated, and consumerism was king. The Roaring '20s were referred to as the Age of Intolerance, the Mad Decade, the Golden Age, and the Age of Wonderful Nonsense. Young people were called the Lost Generation - "living gaily on gin and love," as Malcolm Cowley famously penned.

As we emerge from this fog of uncertainty and isolation, what decade will we create? What will our '20s be remembered as?

We certainly hope for a similar economic boom as we step out of our sweat pants and return to

civilization, supporting local shops and restaurants which need us now. Innovation already abounds as new means of moving forward and staying connected are absorbed by all ages. Just think of the many new things you've had to learn this year...

The fashion and spirits industries are both projecting booms. We'll be toasting friends with tailored looks, well-coiffed hair and painted nails. The mere thought of it brings a smile to the face!

These exceptionally hard times have changed us all in some way. Reestablishing routines and reconnecting with old friends are certain to lighten our hearts and ease anxiety, making us happier and healthier human beings. Hopefully, we will move forward with lessons learned during darker days, and taking care of our health should remain at the top of the list.

We are almost there and deserve all the merriment we can make. This is our decade, and while the history books have yet to be written, each of us plays a part in emerging with hope, heart and good health.

Tending to BIG T and little t Trauma

By Simone Ravicz, Ph.D.

What led me to write this article is the noticeable increase in clients seeking help for their mental and emotional distress, particularly as the pandemic has drawn on. Is the rise in people seeking psychological help coming from the stress of the current pandemic's circumstances? For many, it is. However, I've also seen a surge in clients coming for help because the pandemic has intensified unresolved trauma they experienced previously in life. When individuals do not work to process earlier traumas, it is much more likely their reactions to and symptoms from the current trauma will be more intense.

The pandemic is boosting the experience of trauma worldwide.¹ Some wonder about the use of the word "trauma." Doesn't trauma refer to violence and aggression? People typically think trauma involves life-threatening events like battle, child abuse or domestic violence. These can be called "Big T" traumas. Equally important, are the "little t" traumas such as bullying, financial or legal worries, separation/divorce, family conflict and the like. Because these experiences are not as extreme, people experiencing them often minimize them and see their reactions as overreactions. Trying to resist or deny symptoms of

trauma can be very harmful. A single "little t" trauma is not likely to lead to major trauma symptoms, but as more occur over time, their destructive impact intensifies.

As psychiatrist Julian Lagoy, MD told Healthline, "...the current COVID-19 pandemic has qualities that qualify as a traumatic experience as it takes a physical and emotional toll on many people." He states that some of the key indicators of PTSD trauma, feeling threatened and guarded, and seeing the world as a fearful place, are being experienced by many.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, trauma can manifest in a long list of physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms, including difficulties with memory and concentration, anxiety, irritability, fear, confusion, nausea, headaches and jaw clenching.² Other common consequences include depression, anger, loss of motivation, reduced energy, hyperarousal, sleeping problems, appetite changes, decreased physical health, increased substance use and a greater risk of suicide or self-harm. Trauma can also lead to withdrawal from social connections, numbness and the inability to find pleasure in activities formerly enjoyed.

Continued on page 9

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— Albert Einstein

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The Magic of Mindfulness

Over the past year, I've been working to bring mindfulness into all aspects of my life. In addition to starting my day with slow, deep breathing, happy thoughts, a crafted coffee, meditation and sunshine, I've been consciously working to "come back to the now" when thoughts race and actions get harried.

Returning to sports has helped, as many can probably relate. There is nothing better than being "in the zone," especially as an equestrian where a calm, focused demeanor lets your partner know you are right there supporting their efforts.

The results have been surprising and noticeable to those around me. My overall happiness has increased; I've become a more thoughtful listener, more even keeled, and a more compassionate friend. Life just feels better.

This past week, our daughter and granddaughter came to town for a few days. Her school break fell on deadline week for me, which would normally create stress as I figured out how to juggle work and rare time with the pre-teen in our lives. I made the conscious choice to spend all waking hours with them during their four-day visit, to be whole-heartedly present in our activities and time together....and it was magical. My husband even commented on what a kind, thoughtful and fun person I was to be around. We hiked, spent a day at The Living Desert, played in the pool, cooked nourishing meals and ate ice cream for breakfast.

When they left, the workload fell into place with no added stress, which is the beauty of "going with the flow;" everything just seems to work out.

Later that week, I sat down to a meditation that further shed light on the magic of mindfulness. Daily Calm narrator Tamara Levitt introduced the Pali word sati, which means mindfulness. In its earliest origins, however, sati meant to remember or recollect. How could a practice about living in the present be named for a word that represents the past?

One explanation Levitt offers is that every moment of awareness is colored by the outlook we bring to it. A key element to mindfulness is to recollect an outlook you wish to bring to each experience and the qualities that follow, including focus, clarity, acceptance and compassion. "This is not easy," she notes, "because our busy world often makes us forget these softer qualities. We are pulled back into harsher ways of viewing things. In practicing mindfulness, we are reminded to bring those qualities and our chosen outlook with us into all we do, even when we are not sitting down to meditate."

This is mindfulness, remembering to not only be present but to be patient, accepting, compassionate and softer in each moment.

What a wonderful awakening that was for me. I didn't realize I was practicing these qualities; they just came with the conscious effort to be present in the moment.

The Daily Calm concluded with this quote from Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hnah:

"We try many ways to be awake, but our society still keeps us forgetful. Meditation is to help us remember."

May we all strive to incorporate mindfulness into our lives. The gifts that follow just might surprise you, and the memories created can be magical.



In the moment with loved ones and nature. Lauren and Tommy with granddaughter Bella.

Lauren
Lauren Del Sarto
 Founder/Publisher



An Independent Publication

(760) 238.0245
 PO Box 802, La Quinta CA 92247
 lauren@deserthealthnews.com
 www.DesertHealthNews.com

[f](#) [t](#) @DesertHealth • [i](#) @DesertHealthNews



Erika Z. Byrd, APR
LEAD EDITOR



Doris Steadman
EVENT MANAGER & EDITOR



Heather McKay
GRAPHIC DESIGN
 mkaydesign.com



Michelle Steadman
SOCIAL MEDIA
 @steadmansocialmediagraphics



Benjamin Katz Creative
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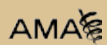
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Vaccines: Your Questions Answered

By Lauren Del Sarto

In February, *Desert Health* hosted a livestream with Trilogy at the Polo Club featuring Desert Regional Medical Center's Director of Pharmacy Services Tim Perlick, PharmD, MHA to answer your questions about vaccinations.



Desert Regional Medical Center's Director of Pharmacy Services Dr. Tim Perlick

As stated in a recent *New York Times* report, the evidence so far suggests that a full dose of the vaccine – with the appropriate waiting period after the second shot – effectively eliminates the risk of COVID-19 death, nearly eliminates the risk of hospitalization and drastically reduces a person's ability to infect somebody else.¹ But education is key to eliminating this virus, says Perlick, whose answers to audience questions follow:

Will getting the vaccine become easier than it is now?

In an effort to access more practitioners, the state is partnering with Blue Shield to manage distribution. Appointments will be booked through MyTurnCA.gov, which will enable the insurer to see where vaccine quantities should be directed. You sign up, answer a few questions, and the program aligns you with the vaccination tiers. You will receive a text when vaccinations are available to you with appointment locations. So, all are hopeful the process will be improving, but we all need to be patient with supply.

Can you switch types of vaccines, say Pfizer first, then Moderna?

The study data was based on two shots of the same vaccine, so the FDA recommendation is to stick with the same one. However, the CDC recently released a statement based on ongoing studies which show the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are similar enough that you can receive one of each, so you may switch. We recommend that if you get the opportunity for your first and then a second vaccine, take either to ensure you are being vaccinated in a timely manner.

If you've had COVID, why wait 90 days until you get vaccinated?

Waiting was a recommendation early on as vaccines were sparse. It's been proven that when you've had COVID, you have strong antibodies for up to 90 days after symptoms disappear. Thus, you don't need to rush to the front of the line for a vaccine allowing others the opportunity. Now we are recommending that if you've had COVID, wait until at least 14 days after your symptoms have disappeared. Receiving the shot while experiencing symptoms may impede your body's own response to building antibodies and the long-term efficacy of the vaccine. Secondly, there is concern that the vaccine may enhance symptoms, so a mild headache or trouble breathing may become more severe if the vaccine is administered at that time.

Most symptoms are gone, but I still have no sense of taste or smell.

These symptoms do tend to linger a bit longer for some, and, no, you don't have to wait until senses have returned to get your vaccination.

What if I get COVID between the first and second vaccinations?

We have seen a few of these cases already. If you have mild symptoms, don't miss your second appointment, but if you are experiencing more severe symptoms, like trouble breathing, then do wait and give your body time to heal. Remember, you actually have up to 42 days between shots, but you won't have to start over if you go past 42 days.

What if I need other vaccinations like flu or pneumonia?

The mainstay is to wait two or more weeks between different vaccinations. We



Publisher Lauren Del Sarto and Dr. Perlick at the Trilogy at the Polo Club livestream event

want your body to respond to its fullest potential to the COVID vaccination and don't want that response to be impeded by your body's response to another vaccination at the same time.

Will we need more booster shots down the road?

Unfortunately, I think the answer to that will probably be yes, largely because of the number of variants floating around. Right now, there are over 100, but not all of them are problematic. The vaccines are still working on these variants,

but not to the same degree, so boosters will help. It's similar to what we've seen with previous vaccinations.

Why are the side effects from the second vaccination more severe?

With the first shot we are trying to create an initial response from your body so it can memorize the invader. Then, with the second shot, your body recognizes the invader and may launch a stronger response which is why some get more severe symptoms. Now with that said, if you don't get symptoms, it doesn't mean that your body is less protected; it simply means that your body wasn't as threatened by the invader as the next person.

Why do you need to take the vaccine if you have had COVID?

What we have seen is that natural immunity only lasts around 90 days; after that there is a decline in your response. There have been reports of reinfections so the vaccination is still recommended.

As Canadians, are we able to get vaccinated locally?

Yes, we all recognize this is a global pandemic, so we are not denying anyone vaccination due to citizenship.

If you are concerned about symptoms, can you take Advil or Tylenol?

Yes, taking Tylenol 30 minutes before the second vaccine is recommended to reduce the severity of symptoms. Then you can take it every 4 - 6 hours after.

If I get vaccinated, should I continue to get tested?

If you feel you have been exposed or are traveling, those are good reasons but don't get tested just to get tested.

For notification of future livestream events, follow us on Facebook @DesertHealth.

Reference: 1) Leonhardt, David, The vaccine news continues to be better than many people realize (*New York Times*, Feb. 1, 2021)

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Don't Ignore Your Health, Especially Now

By Patricia Ryan, RN, MSN, ANP-BC

Now is not the time to ignore your health for fear of COVID-19. If you have chronic health issues or develop something acute, do not delay having a check-up. Please do not ignore physical signs due to fear of the unknown. If your concern is going to the hospital, rest assured that they are taking extra precautions and no one will get in unless it is serious. When a person calls 911, the EMT will assess the situation at the scene, and if it can be handled at home, transport to the emergency room will not happen. These days, hospitals are only for sick people: no visitors, no family, only the patient, nurses and doctors. Hospitals now supply patients with special numeric codes to give their family and friends to obtain information and to protect their privacy.



Virtual appointments are better than delaying care.

Most doctors' offices are conducting 'virtual' visits for routine concerns. This may not be enough if one is developing new symptoms. Yes, medication can be discussed along with description of new concerns, but nothing is as good as listening to heart and lungs or feeling a body part that may be uncomfortable or causing pain. This "hands-on" approach is just not possible over

the computer. Currently, some doctors' offices have resumed in-person visits like before but with strict protocols. Patient drop-off sites, admittance only at scheduled appointment times, requiring masks, hand sanitizer and temperature screenings prior to entrance, along with posted signs about how to help prevent sickness, are now the norm at many offices and facilities. Expect family and friends to be asked to wait outside.



Some practitioners are also offering in-home services.

As the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine progresses, the worry of leaving our homes may soon be abated. However, shortage of the vaccine and limited administration sites is a reality. This prevention method is going to take some time to reach us all. In the meantime, do not neglect chronic health concerns or symptoms that "pop-up." While we still remain in a public health crisis, do not turn it into a personal crisis as well. Seek the medical attention you need quickly. Everyone's goal is to get on the road to recovery as soon as possible. Seeking medical help when needed to ensure your health is clearly a step in the right direction.

Patricia Ryan is a board-certified adult nurse practitioner and founder of Crossroads to Care in-home medical services. She can be reached at (760) 668.1654 or www.crossroadstocare.com.

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When You Can't Shoulder the Pain

By Eric Sickinger, DO and Thalie Timsit, BS

It's starting to get warmer again, and James and his wife have been active enjoying the outdoors. Over the past few weeks, they have been playing pickleball, swimming laps in their pool and taking walks. Life is great, but he has noticed increasing pain in his right shoulder and doesn't know what to do. James came to my office to see what could help so he could continue these activities he loves. He is a right-handed 56-year-old male from Palm Desert. With his permission, here's a summary of what we discussed that will serve as an example of a common sports injury diagnosis.



Subacromial bursitis is a common diagnosis which can be eased with non-invasive therapies.

Medical history. James' medical history, including medications, surgeries and allergies, is noncontributory. Overall, he's a pretty healthy guy - except that his right shoulder has been killing him for the past two months. Nothing specific, like a fall or traumatic injury, happened to trigger the pain. He points to the outer front side of his shoulder, where he tells me the pain is about 7 out of 10. The pain is localized and isn't radiating down his arm or up his neck. He is experiencing sharp pain whenever he lifts his arm up over his head and tells me that he sometimes notices some clicking or popping. Besides that, there are no other associated symptoms. The pain is worse when he is playing pickleball or swimming, and it is better with rest, ice and occasional Advil. He has not previously seen a doctor nor had any radiological imaging.

The diagnosis. Based on his presentation, confirmed by a physical exam, James has subacromial bursitis, also known as bursitis of the shoulder. This condition is typically determined by a clinical diagnosis and does not require imaging.

Body mechanics. I explain to James the condition and treatment. Throughout our body, we have many bursae, which are fluid-filled sacs that act as cushions. We have them in our knees, hips, and elbows, to name a few. These bursae are integral in preventing friction during movement and protecting our bones and surrounding tissues. Our shoulder has one of the largest bursae due to the size and frequent use of the joint. This specific bursa is located in the subacromial space, which refers to the area right below the bony part of our shoulder. When a subacromial bursa gets inflamed, it is known as subacromial bursitis and can be very painful. Subacromial bursitis is often a result of overuse, so it is likely the repetitive overhead movement of his recreational activities that is causing his pain.

Treatment and prevention recommendations. Initial treatment options include rest, activity modification, ice, anti-inflammatory medications (oral and topical) and physical therapy. I let James know that, for now, he should rest and can return to his sports once his range of motion increases and he starts feeling less pain during those movements. With his active lifestyle, I highly recommend that he take some time to warm up and stretch before any activity, especially those involving his shoulders.

Continued on page 5



No 'COVID Break' for Gum Disease

By Nick Baumann, DDS

We are about a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and our lives have changed in many ways. As a dentist, we, like many other professions, have had to change the way we operate to help keep our patients and employees safe.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a high level of concern about going to the dentist other than in extreme emergencies. People believed there would be a high risk of COVID transmission due to many dental procedures creating aerosols. However, as we look back, there have been almost no noted instances of transmission in dental offices nation-wide. Some of the measures that have helped tremendously are pre-appointment screening of patients, oral rinses before treatment, enhanced air filtration during procedures and increased time and disinfection procedures between patients.

Data shows when dental offices take correct precautions, it is a safe place to be. When you feel comfortable, it is important to be seen for regular cleanings and checkups as cavities and gum disease don't take a break because of COVID.

We know that gum disease affects many other general health conditions, and now we can add COVID to the list. A recent study published in the Journal of Clinical Periodontology reported a relationship between gum disease and the severity of COVID infection and the importance of maintaining regular dental check-ups. The study found that "periodontitis was associated with higher risk of ICU admission, need for assisted ventilation and death of COVID-19 patients, and with increased blood levels of biomarkers linked to worse disease outcomes." It is essential to keep our gums in good health during this time with diligent flossing.

Ultimately, many people have been hesitant about returning to their dentist for general care due to COVID. I recommend you wait until you feel comfortable returning, but want you to know that all the new precautions we are taking make it a safe place to be. The benefit is that some of these increased precautions will likely become new patient safety standards, even after COVID is a distant memory.

Dr. Nick is with Palm Desert Smiles and can be reached at (760) 568.3602.

Source: 1) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jcpe.13435>

When You Can't Shoulder the Pain

Continued from page 4

He can also perform exercises at home to build up strength in the surrounding muscles, or he can switch to alternative workouts that don't include repeated overhead movement. If he continues to feel pain, we can discuss other options, including imaging, injections or alternative care, to reestablish function.

James is not alone in this diagnosis, as bursitis is a very common condition. If you are experiencing similar symptoms, be sure to see your health care provider to discuss your individual case and treatment plan.

Founding physician Eric Sickinger, DO and medical assistant Thalie Timsit, BS are with Advanced Center for Sports & Musculoskeletal Medicine. For more information, contact their Palm Desert office at (760) 636.1067 or the San Clemente office at (949) 388.1060, or visit www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com.



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LQHS Medical Health Academy Prepares Students for Medical Careers

La Quinta High School's Medical Health Academy offers students a hands-on approach to exploration and preparation for a career in the health field. The academy is a three-year program that exposes students to a variety of health care careers. The courses include an introduction to medicine, medical terminology, proficiency in basic skills, career exploration and finally, a medical internship with the opportunity to receive national certification in a variety of entry-level positions.

Melissa Moore, the new coordinator and instructor, has years of experience working as a paramedic in addition to holding a teaching credential in science.

Stacy Bolanos, her co-teacher, also has much experience working as a licensed vocational nurse. Their passion for medicine and dedication to their students has provided a strong foundation for a successful academy.

Students apply and interview for the academy during their freshman year. Once accepted, students take an Introduction to Medical Health Course during their sophomore year. This introductory course provides an overview of medicine from a historical perspective to the newest inventions. Students study the meaning and correct pronunciation of medical terms and begin to explore various careers. They have the opportunity to learn through hands-on labs that require students to collaborate with their peers using authentic medical equipment to practice necessary skills. These college and career labs prepare them for medical and health science careers with programs ranging from biomedical engineering to veterinary medicine.

During the junior year, Medical Health Academy students are encouraged to select a personal career path based on their lab experiences from their sophomore year. They continue to master medical terminology and skills while getting certified in CPR/AED and First Aid. Additionally, students begin to explore the real world of medicine through job shadowing at Eisenhower Health and attend various field trips to medical facilities such as Loma Linda Embryonic Lab and Hillcrest Hospital.

Finally, a student's senior year in the academy culminates with a year-long internship at a local medical facility and the opportunity to take a test for national certification as a medical assistant or nurse's aide. Students prepare a senior portfolio with the help of the counseling department and map out their educational path toward a career of their dreams.

With the help of the community and the dedication of their teachers, students will be excited and prepared for their future in the medical field.

For more information on LQHS's Medical Health Academy or to support the program with an internship opportunity, contact Melissa Moore at melissa.moore@desertsands.us or OneFuture Coachella Valley at (760) 625-0422. www.onefuturecv.org.



LQHS student Crystal Gallardo-Madrigan practices suturing at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona during a field trip.

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Martin Massiello

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As our current Chief Operating Officer, Marty has been a valuable and influential member of our administration throughout his 13-year tenure. He and Aubrey have shepherded our organization through years of amazing growth and our evolution as an integrated system under Eisenhower Health. We know Marty's experience, expertise and excellent relationships internally and externally will ensure a seamless and strategic transition, and we are excited for what's to come.

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Avoid Heart Break with a Cardiac CTA

The heart is only as good as the arteries supplying it

By Steven R. Gunberg, DO

If you were to ask me, "What one imaging study should I have performed to check on my overall health?" I would, without hesitation, answer a computed tomographic angiogram (CTA) of your coronary arteries. To me, the reason why is glaringly obvious. Heart disease is the number one cause of health complications, expense and death worldwide (though currently usurped by COVID-19).

A cardiac CTA (or CT cardio angiogram) is an X-ray of the arteries that supply your heart with blood. Pretty important job our coronary arteries have, right? A CTA is one of the best, and in my opinion, most vital ways to assess your current and future chances of having a heart attack. A CTA gives you a look at both the inside and outside of your arteries. I can think of little else that can give you that level of insight into your heart health.

The CTA is actually nothing new; it's been around for years. It is the very same technology doctors use to check lungs for cancer or COVID-19. It is the same imaging used on brains and breasts to look for tumors and on bellies beleaguered by abdominal pain or suspected inflammatory bowel disease. As the world's leading cause of death with an average 40 percent mortality rate compared to the 22 percent of all cancers combined, one might wonder - why don't we screen for heart disease the same way we screen for cancer? Why would someone not get a CTA?

The risk of complications or side effects from having a CTA is extremely minimal (especially when compared to the far greater risk of cardiovascular disease or a sudden heart attack). To perform a CTA, doctors inject a small amount of iodine-based fluid into your arm to serve as a contrasting agent. It causes the arteries to become opaque when viewed with X-ray imaging. The contrast is not harmful and leaves the body a couple hours after it is injected. One thing to note - you should get an order with appropriate lab work from your physician prior to having any sort of contrast imaging.

So, who should get a CT cardio angiogram and when? Screening for most cancers is typically recommended to start at around age 50, though younger than 50 is recommended for those with an increased risk for disease, including a family history. There is currently no such recommendation in the U.S. regarding a CTA for heart disease risk assessment. Several health institutes in the UK, however, have proposed and are considering coronary CTA screening starting at 50. Currently in the UK, a cardiac CTA is recommended for almost everyone experiencing chest pain for the first time.

Ultimately, and as with all other health screenings, it is up to you and your doctor to decide if you should have a coronary CTA. If you feel like something is amiss with your ticker - do not wait until it is too late! Know that the technology is available - and it just might save your life.

Dr. Gunberg is a board-certified diagnostic radiologist, with a subspecialty certification in cardiovascular computed tomography, and the director of body and cardiac imaging at Halo Dx. He also is a member of Desert Doctors, currently serving on the Board. He can be reached at (760) 322-8883 or www.halodx.com.

New Developments in Eczema Treatment

By Timothy Jochen, MD

The itch of eczema is maddening. It's an old disease we are continually learning more about. Many consider it an autoimmune disease; others say it is caused by a defective skin barrier. Which came first? Or perhaps they are two different aspects of the disease process.

Since the 1950s, topical steroid creams have been the mainstay in treating eczema rashes. While corticosteroids remain the standard of care and still work well for the majority of patients, it's exciting to finally see development of new classes of medications for this group of skin conditions, the most common being atopic dermatitis (AD). The new developments are important because of skin atrophy concerns with long-term use and because some patients need something stronger than steroids to keep it under control.

JAK inhibitors for atopic dermatitis. Janus kinase inhibitors are the most promising development for eczema in years. This class of drugs has received FDA approval for rheumatoid and psoriasis arthritis, ulcerative colitis and other autoimmune conditions. JAK inhibitors work by blocking the Janus kinase group of enzymes from attaching to immune cell receptors, which would otherwise create a cascade of inflammatory cytokine proteins, leading to inflammation. Pfizer is expecting FDA approval this April of abrocitinib, an oral JAK1 inhibitor for moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis. Two other oral JAK inhibitors and one topical are in the end stages of clinical investigation.

Biologic immune-modulating therapy. Dupixent (dupilumab), a monoclonal antibody injection, is among the newer medications available to help patients with moderate-to-severe eczema not managed by topicals. Only in use since 2017, this immune-modulating biologic is not yet widely prescribed, mostly because of price, but also due to the side effect of itchy, watery eyes. Other biologics for atopic dermatitis are in development.

Non-steroidal cream avoids skin atrophy issues. A relatively new non-steroidal option for managing eczema is Eucrisa (crisaborole). This boron-based anti-inflammatory topical is great because it provides effective relief with a high safety profile without the side effects of steroidal creams. I was excited to serve as a principal investigator in the clinical study for FDA approval of this medication, but it is not yet widely prescribed because it is pricey. That will change in a few years. Eucrisa was eligible for patent challenges this past December, and a generic may be available by late 2026.

New studies show Elidel and Protopic risks are low. Topical immunosuppressant creams are the second line of defense for those whose condition is not managed well by topical steroids. In 2006, two of these medications - Elidel (tacrolimus) and Protopic (pimecrolimus) - received an updated FDA boxed warning regarding the potential for skin cancer. Because of this warning, their use waned. However, recent data shows these medications are safe to use long term with a low incidence rate and a "small excess risk for individual patients" and the medication's role to be "unlikely significant."²

Eczema is not only a disease I help my patients manage; I also deal with it. I am glad to have expanded options to treat this common condition and am encouraged that even more options are on the horizon.

Dr. Jochen is a board-certified dermatologist and the founder of Contour Dermatology & Cosmetic Surgery Center with offices in Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage and La Quinta. He also is a member of Desert Doctors and can be reached at (760) 423-4000 or www.contourderm.com.

References: 1) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5856050/>; 2) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190962215013560>

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1. AUA policy statement on the use of multiparametric magnetic resonance imaging in the diagnosis, staging and management of prostate cancer. J Urol 2017; 198: 832.



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The Beauty of Technology

What's new in plastic surgery

By Diya Tantawi, MD, FACS

Imagine bringing in a favorite photo of yourself from the past and being able to turn back the clock. If you think that's unreachable, just a few years ago, we never believed an entire face transplant could be possible. Now we know it's reality. Medical technology is advancing at a faster pace than ever before, including astonishing developments in robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and the use of artificial intelligence. If you're in doubt about regenerative aesthetics, I invite you to Google a time-elapsd photography video to watch how a salamander can fully regrow an amputated leg identically, over and over again.

These days, as more and more people are staring at themselves online and thinking of the possibilities of change, there is a heightened awareness of our "on-camera" presence and an accelerated desire for rejuvenation. As plastic surgeons, we have tried to match that desire with the growing demand for less invasive procedures by incorporating different technologies that offer patients a quick return on their investment with a faster recovery or no downtime at all.

Fotona4D® laser facelift

Lasers continue to be an evolving field with unlimited potential. They have come a long way from the CO2 laser in the 1990s with two weeks of downtime. One of the newer lasers is the Fotona4D for non-invasive laser facelifting. It's called 4D because it provides four dimensions of facial rejuvenation. What is unique about this laser is that it not only treats the facial exterior, one of the stages addresses the inside of the mouth cavity to treat nasolabial wrinkles from the inside out. The second stage addresses skin texture; the third level offers skin tightening, and the final stage is a light laser peel. Fotona has pioneered advanced pulse technologies such as adaptive structured pulse, which allows for optimal energy, providing superior results with little to no downtime. Now we can offer tightening and volumization without the need for fillers or toxins. The laser energy stimulates the body's own collagen production and provides immediate rejuvenation, tightening and a glow.

Fat transfer done right - a natural filler that lasts for years

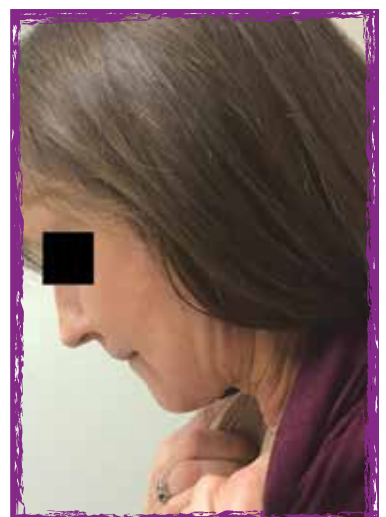
Dermal fillers are immensely popular for facial rejuvenation, but the more natural, autologous (self) fat transfer has had some drawbacks. You've no doubt heard of stem cells located in many tissues of our bodies, but did you know that the highest concentration of them is found in your adipose fatty tissue? Harvested fat, through means of liposuction can be concentrated, re-injected and activated to both restore and rejuvenate. The question was always predictability. Previously with fat transfer, we didn't know how many fat cells would survive transplantation. Now, we can use a cutting-edge technique called stromal vascular fraction (SVF) that extracts fractions of cells - the growth factors and stem cells - from non-fat adipose tissue obtained from liposuction. The SVF gel is then added to enhance the survival rate of the injected fat to give you a procedure with the predictability and effect you desire.

Breast augmentation

Also, among the latest technologies relating to beauty is EV-PURE+. It is an FDA-approved purified encapsulated growth factor for treating wounds and chronic illnesses. It can be used in conjunction with a purified fat transfer from your body to produce a more natural and predictable breast augmentation without implants.

Another development with breast augmentation is flexible implants. Where breast augmentation used to be just an implant of saline or silicone, we now have mixed and somewhat more "intelligent" implants. You can have an implant at a certain size and then decide to go bigger by simply "pumping up" your implant for an event or the time frame you like and deflate the implant again. Used in breast reconstructive surgery for years, permanent expandable implants have now been enhanced for use in aesthetic surgery.

Dr. Tantawi is a double board-certified cosmetic plastic surgeon with Beauty Refined Plastic Surgery Center in Rancho Mirage. He can be reached at (760) 666.6121 or www.beautyrrps.com.



Before (top) and after (bottom) 3 of 6 sessions of a Fotona 4D face and neck lift with PDO thread lift

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Reducing Food Cravings Naturally

Nutritional psychiatry can help

By Jessica Needle, ND

Which one of the following is your favorite food? 1) pizza, 2) chocolate desserts, 3) chips, 4) cookies, 5) fries or 6) ice cream. Did you have trouble picking just one? If so, it's no surprise. These are the most addictive foods, according to the Yale Food Addiction Survey. It's not uncommon to crave these foods and overeat, even when we know there are adverse consequences of over-consuming sugary, fatty, starchy foodstuffs. Suppose you find yourself eating for reasons other than biological hunger, such as being stressed, tired or wanting comfort; you can benefit from applying the findings of a newly recognized field called nutritional psychiatry.

The connection between the foods we eat, moods, behaviors and mental health has long been recognized. The practice of nutritional psychiatry uses specific nutrients, such as amino acids and minerals, to correct underlying deficiencies and effectively treat mood and eating disorders. The higher our supply of necessary nutrients, the better we feel. The more depleted we are, the greater our cravings.



A new field of psychiatry is helping reverse food cravings through lifestyle and supplementation.

As described in *The Craving Cure* by nutrient therapy pioneer Julia Ross, deficiencies in five different biochemical pathways can contribute to overeating: serotonin, GABA, endorphins, catecholamines and glucose. When you make enough of these neurotransmitters and keep your blood sugar stable, you'll feel satisfied, and your cravings will diminish, often quite rapidly. When you don't make enough, you'll be dependent on fast food, low-nutrient packaged goods, candy, soda and alcohol for continued mood lifts.

Serotonin deficits are the most common, affecting 80 percent of U.S. adults. When your serotonin is low, you feel negative, irritable, worried, obsessive and sleepless. If you feel like you have a black cloud hanging over you, you probably have low serotonin. To raise your level, take 500 mg of tryptophan or 50 mg of 5-HTP. Try taking a capsule at 3 p.m. and at 9 p.m., which are the times of day cravings frequently occur. Raising your serotonin level also prevents anxiety and depression. If you've tried a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) such as Prozac or Zoloft without success, using tryptophan or 5-HTP may give you the results you're looking for.

If you eat when you feel tired, stressed or overwhelmed, you may have a GABA deficit. GABA is a naturally soothing neurotransmitter, making you feel relaxed and worry-free. Take 125 mg of GABA or 100 mg of theanine. If you've felt the need to use Xanax or Valium, GABA or theanine can be a substitute. If you are using medication, talk to your prescriber about the wisdom of combining medication and supplements. They can also advise you regarding weaning off medication, which should only be done under the supervision of a qualified health care practitioner.

If you crave comfort foods or find yourself weepy and overly sensitive, you may have an endorphin deficit. Endorphins are known to cause "runner's high" and feelings of euphoria when they're produced in excess, but normal amounts allow you to experience pleasure and feel comfortable on a day-to-day basis. Increase your endorphins by taking 500 mg of phenylalanine in the morning.

When your blood sugar drops too far or too fast, a condition called hypoglycemia, you may crave sugar, starch or alcohol to give you quick energy. Consuming a lot of processed foods, as is common in the standard American diet, requires your body to produce extra insulin in an attempt to keep your blood glucose steady. Insulin signals a feeling of fullness, which causes us to stop eating. Unfortunately, insulin is depleted rapidly when you eat fast food, and its lack causes hypoglycemic cravings. To prevent this process, take 500 mg of glutamine whenever you crave junk food. You can also take 200 mcg of chromium with meals to keep your blood sugar on an even keel.

If you have a case of the "blahs," which only coffee or chocolate can cure, you may have a catecholamine deficit. Lack of catecholamines leads to fatigue and difficulty concentrating. When you have enough of these neurotransmitters, you feel energized, upbeat, and alert. To increase your catecholamines, take 500 mg of tyrosine in the morning.

If you skip meals due to lack of appetite, try 25 mg of zinc per day. In addition to stimulating your appetite, zinc restores your sense of taste so that sweets start to taste too sweet and "boring" foods become more palatable.

You may recognize yourself in several of these symptom pictures, as it's possible to have more than one deficiency at work. If you're unsure which type of eater you are, take the free assessment questionnaire at www.CravingCure.com or I highly recommend reading *The Craving Cure*.

Dr. Needle is a licensed naturopathic doctor with Optimal Health Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 568.2598.

Tending to BIG T and little t Trauma

Continued from page 1

Trauma can have lasting effects on your mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing. A large study in the 1990s found that the number of traumas or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was significantly related to various negative adult outcomes, including impaired mental and physical health, risky behaviors and substance abuse. The more traumas experienced, the higher the risk of developing these conditions.³

The need to heal

There is an increasing understanding that a significant proportion of trauma victims do not experience their highest stress immediately following the event. Instead, the intensity increases over time. According to Lagoy, "If a person doesn't work through their trauma experience, these symptoms can become debilitating."

Part of the difficulty in moving on healthfully from trauma is that traumatic information is not stored as usual in memory as it doesn't make it to the hippocampus, the main memory center of the brain. Instead, this information is stored in the amygdalae in the deeper brain, which many know as the driver of the "fight-and-flight" response and negative emotions. What does this mean? The memories of traumatic events remain in the primitive, sub-cortical brain, which does not have easy access to language and complex cognitive processes. As a result, there are drawbacks to therapies which rely on just talk or verbal exchanges because many of the traumatic memories cannot be accessed verbally. Three of the effective, evidence-based treatments for trauma are as follows:

Prolonged exposure involves revisiting the traumatic experience in a safe and supportive environment so that you can finally emotionally process the trauma. This revisiting happens in a manner designed to help you heal.

Continued on page 18



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The Velcro Power of Giving Thanks

By Roger Moore

Do you want to feel better physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually? Then give thanks in the morning.

When you give thanks for a great day as soon as you wake, your subconscious mind primes you to actually have a great day. When you thank your body for healing from disease or injury while sick, your mind/body connection assumes it's true and works to make it so. When you express gratitude for successfully achieving a goal you're aiming toward, all parts of you work together to accomplish the goal.

Giving thanks for a great day doesn't mean there won't be potholes throughout your day, but it does mean you can more easily and joyfully navigate around them.

What makes gratitude so powerful?

Think about this: When do you say, "thank you?" After you receive something, correct? You are already hardwired to believe you've received the gift that's inspired your gratitude. When you say, "thank you," your unconscious mind assumes you've already received the gift, compliment or other gesture someone gives you. The key is not to wait for something to appear in your life to express your gratitude. Giving thanks is the starting point.

I always encourage weight loss clients to give thanks every day for already being at their healthy ideal weight. When you do this, you start eating and acting as if you are slender because your body believes this future event has already happened or is happening to you in the present moment. In this state of gratitude, you receive.

Neuroscience reveals that the practice of gratitude rewires your brain and creates a cocktail for wellness. When you give thanks, you receive a shot of dopamine. This chemical reaction feels so good that you want more. You also receive a swig of serotonin, the happy molecule. Like an antidepressant, it enhances your mood, willpower and motivation. The more you activate these gratitude circuits, the stronger these neural pathways become. And you're also more likely to recognize and appreciate all that's right in your life instead of habitually looking at what's wrong.

Researchers at the University of Indiana found that the practice of giving thanks builds your brain's ability to feel gratitude spontaneously. Other studies show a routine gratitude practice creates a healthful and self-perpetuating cycle in your brain. The more you purposefully count your blessings, the easier it is to count them as they happen. Your brain adapts to this mindset. Think of it as your brain having a gratitude muscle that becomes stronger when exercised.

In these worry-infested times, it's never been more important to reduce your stress since stress weakens your immune system. The more you focus on the good in your life, the happier and healthier you are. Studies show that a practice of gratitude improves your overall physical, mental, and heart health, makes you more resilient to trauma, increases sleep quality and lowers levels of stress hormones. Being grateful reduces physical pain, anxiety and depression; it also increases your confidence and you realize a greater sense of self-worth.

Try it right now

One way of enhancing the experience of joy is to list things you're grateful for. Studies show that just asking yourself the question: What am I grateful for? is enough to change your brain chemistry. Before asking yourself that question, take a moment now and notice what you're feeling. Do you have a physical ache or pain? Are you feeling

sad or stressed? Where in your body do you feel it?

I invite you to list five things that inspire your gratitude right now. (If you're stuck, start with your breath.) By giving thanks, you can raise your happiness. Notice your aches, pains, sadness and stress; are they reduced or even eliminated?

Studies show the more gratitude someone feels, the more their sense of joy increases. This progression has been described as a virtuous upward spiral in which joy and gratitude mutually reinforce each other. The more gratitude you have, the greater your sense of joy, resulting in more gratitude. The more you give thanks, the more blessings you receive to be thankful for. What you feed really does grow!

A client once said, "Gratitude is the Velcro that holds it all together." Previously, I described gratitude as the bow that ties life all together, but Velcro is a stronger, more powerful metaphor. So, to all my clients, I again express my gratitude for being the brilliant teachers you are.

Roger Moore is a certified counselor and registered medical hypnotherapist with Palm Desert Hypnosis and can be reached at Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com or (760) 219.8079. For more information, visit www.hypnosishealthinfo.com/medical-hypnosis. All sessions are online telehealth.



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Biofeedback: A Novel Treatment for Chronic Pain

By Shari Jainuddin, NMD, BCB

It is likely that you are currently or have experienced chronic pain at some point in your life. Low back pain, advanced cancer pain, arthritis, headaches and pain that seemingly can't be linked to any specific cause are frequent complaints.

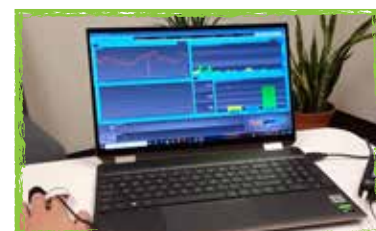
Pain is one of the most common reasons people seek medical care and one of the oldest challenges. In 2011, it was reported that chronic pain costs Americans nearly \$635 billion a year.¹ This is not just the drugs and treatment costs but considers the economic toll of lost income, compensation payments and legal expenses. One can conclude that number has significantly increased over the past 10 years. As recent as 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated 20 percent of the population suffered from chronic pain. And pain has more than a financial burden; the CDC also established its link to conditions such as anxiety and depression.² The reaches of pain are like tentacles that can grab ahold of every aspect of one's life: happiness, sleep quality and the ability to do normal daily activities. Relentless pain can be exhausting.

Unfortunately, it has taken huge growing pains and the tragedy of the most recent opioid crisis for the medical system to take serious notice of shortcomings of drug therapy and to look to non-pharmaceutical interventions and the results have been encouraging. The American Association of Family Physicians (AAFP) published a position paper with a call to action for physicians to deliver a multidisciplinary approach to caring for patients with chronic pain.³ The Institute of Medicine published an article stating that treatment approaches should emphasize self-management of pain.¹ It seems the medical system is becoming wiser, recognizing the necessity for inclusion of other treatment options besides the typical recommendations of over-the-counter anti-inflammatories, opioids, and antidepressants, all which come with potential risks.

Many self-management approaches have been available for decades, accumulating evidence to support their effectiveness for use in addressing chronic pain. Biofeedback is one of them. Large clinics, such as Johns Hopkins and the Cleveland Clinic now list biofeedback as a chronic pain treatment option.^{4,5} Specific mechanisms of how it alleviates pain continues to be researched, but it involves modulating the nervous system. Biofeedback incorporates the use of sensors that monitor muscle tension, heart rate, breath pace, sweat and temperature. This real-time data is amplified and visually displayed onto a monitor for the practitioner and patient to see. Through training geared toward mitigating unique response profiles, people learn how to control these normally involuntary functions and positively impact their both short and long-term health.

Biofeedback is not a quick fix. It takes on average eight weekly sessions. As with any new skill, patients must commit to practicing at home. However, once the skills are acquired, they are readily accessible as needed for a healthier, more symptom-free life.

Dr. Jainuddin is a naturopathic doctor at One Life Naturopathic and can be reached at (442) 256.5963. For more information on biofeedback, see "Biofeedback: A Non-Invasive Intervention" at www.DesertHealthNews.com or visit www.OneLifeNaturopathic.org. References available upon request.



Biofeedback monitors physical responses to help practitioner and client establish therapies to change patterns.



Moving Beyond PPIs

Integrative treatment options for indigestion

By Amy Patel, ND

Heartburn medication is the fifth most purchased over-the-counter medication. Dyspepsia or indigestion affects 21 percent of people, commonly women and smokers. The most common symptoms include abdominal discomfort, burning pain, bloating, nausea, or getting full as soon as you start to eat.

There are a variety of reasons one may have indigestion, including infection, ulcers, specific drug use, malignancy, or functional dyspepsia, which is indigestion with no known cause. It's important not to assume you have functional dyspepsia, as known causes can and should be treated. If all other causes are ruled out, and you are diagnosed with functional dyspepsia, you will likely be prescribed a proton pump inhibitor (PPI), which is a class of medications that block gastric acid production.

There is growing concern about the long-term use of PPIs for symptom relief and they should be used with caution. Fortunately, there are many integrative treatment options that not only reduce symptoms but have few side effects and may even be curative.

Lifestyle and dietary changes. The first and simplest treatment is to make diet and lifestyle changes to prevent symptoms. Delayed emptying of your stomach can cause the stomach contents to come back up, causing indigestion and heartburn. Two common reasons for delayed gastric emptying are eating large volume meals and high-fat meals, which take longer to digest. Avoiding aggravating foods are also important for prevention, including tomatoes, chocolates, cheese and coffee. Alcohol and tobacco use can also aggravate indigestion. Try to eat your last meal three to four hours before bedtime, as eating late at night and lying flat

after meals can also aggravate symptoms.

Herbal supplements. If dietary changes alone don't work, herbal medicines have long been used to treat a variety of gastrointestinal symptoms. Readily available herbs like ginger and fennel can be made into teas or added to foods to soothe indigestion. Licorice root, lemon balm, and caraway seeds have also been shown to improve symptoms.

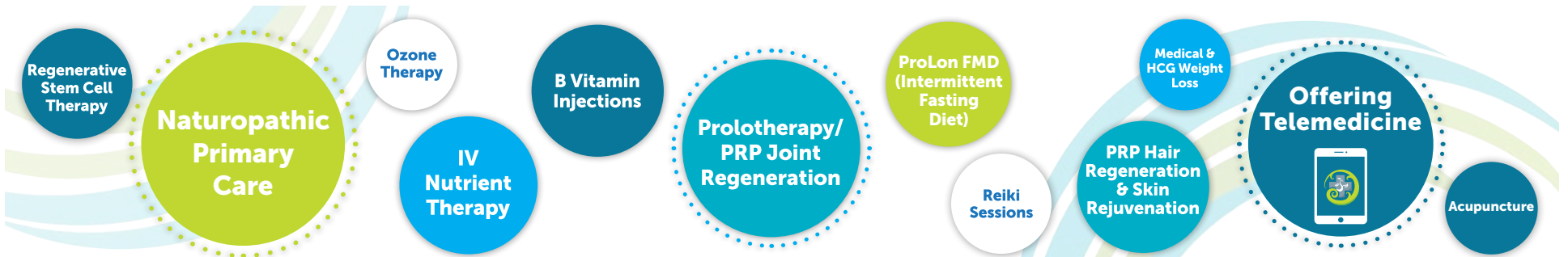
Homeopathy. If indigestion continues even while taking herbal medicine, homeopathy is another great option. Homeopathy, a system of medicine that utilizes diluted potencies of substances, is prescribed based on a patient's individual symptoms. For example, two hypothetical patients were diagnosed with dyspepsia by their primary care physician and present for heartburn treatment; one person has burning pain and early satiety, which started after a life-altering event. The other person has a burning pain in their stomach, but only at night when they get migraines. They both are experiencing heartburn, similar symptoms, but their individual symptoms and how they are experiencing it are varied, thus, therapies would differ. Classical homeopathy by a licensed professional can help treat symptoms from within to find a remedy that is best suited for each person's case.


Acupuncture. Acupuncture is another great alternative as it addresses the individual patient's disease process, rather than individual symptoms.

If you have longstanding functional dyspepsia, there are other options to PPIs which can soothe your symptoms safely with long-lasting results. Always talk to your doctor when you have new or worsening symptoms to find the best option for you.

Dr. Patel is a primary care naturopathic doctor and resident at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta. She can be reached at (760) 771.5970 or www.LiveWellClinic.org.


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Resident Naturopathic Doctor



Brigid Barrett
Holistic Health Coach



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Dr. Patel and Brigid join Dr. Fung, Christopher Burnett, L.Ac., Sheri Hein, and Leila McCauley, LMFT

Sharing My Story of PMDD

Living with premenstrual dysphoric disorder

By Dipika Patel

For most of my life, I thought becoming a woman involved suffering and that it was a normal process of a woman's development. As I watched my mother endure pain and distress, which made her unavailable to be a nurturing and loving mother, it left me wondering what was wrong with her - or what was wrong with me. I never connected the dots as a young child, nor when I stepped into her shoes of menstrual pain and distress at an early age of 9.

Finally, after a visit to the doctor's office at 13, I was put on the pill to regulate, ease and help with my monthly cycle, only to discover that it never helped the pain. Every month I had to take time off school affecting my education and self-esteem. As time went on, this painful cycle continued into my adult years affecting my professional life.

Most other women I met did not understand what I was going through. Colleagues, friends, influencing leaders and women with whom I shared my story made it out to be, 'well, maybe there is something wrong with you.' I felt alone, misunderstood and hopeless. Mentally, physically and emotionally, I was drained; every month was hard. I went through extensive gynecological tests and every test came back normal. I sincerely did not feel 'normal' and was totally baffled. I even had one specialist say to me, 'maybe you just need to live a simple life by managing your stress better,' implying it was all in my head as he continued to prescribe pain pills.

In my 30s, I decided to dive deep into holistic health, nutrition and hormonal health and to transform my life. I started with changing my outlook, which helped to change my eating habits and behaviors. These practices allowed me to see how a step-by-step program can be so transformative.

Seven years passed; I was living life like a 'normal person.' However, as I approached my 40s, I began experiencing another hormonal change. I had gone through a personal traumatic experience in my mid-30s that impacted my cycle, leaving me in the ER. Since then, I have experienced high anxiety, major irritability, sadness, appetite changes, feelings of overwhelm, lack of concentration, severe bloating, headaches, diminished interest in usual activities, self-critical thoughts and economic and social dysfunction due to the symptoms.

As I explored premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), things began to fall into place, and my health now makes more sense than ever before. I learned not to be afraid and to question the professionals.

This condition has not received much attention in Western medicine and I am sharing my story to let you know there is hope, and you are not alone. I want you to know that you are supported, and there are other women who can resonate with this condition. Through proactively building your body, using herbs for wellness, practicing self-love, eating healthy food and practicing Eastern health philosophies, healing is possible. I know this as I am a result of this practice. I believe with the proper support and taking responsibility for your wellness, there is a way to soothe the symptoms and make life easier to bear as we individually and collectively learn, grow and evolve.

Dipika Patel is a certified holistic health coach and lifestyle practitioner who empowers her professional clients to activate an overall balanced lifestyle of mind, body and soul. She can be reached at (760) 821.3119 or www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com.

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Harmony, Health, and Healing

By Jens Christian Springmann

As we discussed in the January/February issue of *Desert Health*, the approach of accepting ourselves as multi-parted beings (mind/soul, body, spirit and ego) brings up a more significant meaning to our lives, but also to the process of healing, our health and sense of harmony. We will only find happiness and wholesomeness in our achievement of evolving to true inner balance.

No doubt, we have the best doctors, medical technology, and most advanced medicine than ever before. But can this high standard of medical care alone truly reduce our inner distraction and increase our level of well-being? In our modern world, we focus mainly on treating a sick body or a depressed mind instead of investing more time and effort in holistic prevention; and we are not serious enough about finding a root cause inside of ourselves. We often claim the sickness itself to be the reason, as if disease has the power to arise accidentally. This is false, and our desire to totally control the condition through scientific explanation can leave us missing the deeper message if we do not also search for the cause within our mind and soul.

When faced with disease, it can be difficult to consider that to this point, we may have refused to fully accept the responsibility for our personal health, healing, and inner well-being on all levels. Yet any uncomfortable situation we experience has the purpose of forcing us to slow down, observe our mindset, and find its root cause; or to show that we have misused our power of imagination, thought, and belief.

With our mind, we have the opportunity and volition to either choose a positive pathway within us or to follow the negative voice of our ego. Unfortunately, we even take action to try and protect ourselves on the outside from our own inner anxieties. Wouldn't it make more sense to directly and continuously dissolve and let go of our anxieties within? We should also never forget that if we have the power to cause our distractions, we can at any time consciously use this same neutral force to dissolve and evolve greatness and well-being inside again.

To achieve advanced healing and steadfast health, we must consider all available to us: the use of modern medical technology and care, naturopathy, the quest for a deeper cause and message, along with our readiness and willingness to develop a more profound communion with our inner spirit.

How can we do this? By slowing down, reducing our absorption of exciting information, and detoxing digitally. Instead, we can focus on living in the moment by taking time in stillness, reflecting on our thoughts, emotions, and their source, and by finding things that draw our attention with a sense of childlike curiosity and enthusiasm.

Furthermore, we can let go of all the useless and adverse thought patterns that stem from past experience and spend more time enjoying the vastness and calming impressions of nature. It is in balance of body and mind, and the communion with our true identity within, that we find warmth, safety, and absolute comfort that lead to healing, health, and harmony.

Jens ("Yenz") Christian Springmann is the founder of Satisfied Being Meditation & Mindfulness studio in Rancho Mirage and can be reached at (760) 636.0557. For more information visit www.Satisfied-Being.com.

Living Wellness with Jennifer Di Francesco

Healing Ceremony with Nature

Many of us have developed a heightened appreciation of the great outdoors this past year. This reconnection with nature comes during a time when the environment faces an unparalleled climate crisis with the rapid escalation of fossil fuels, pollution growth, plastic waste and CO2 emissions. Activities that allow us to cultivate mindfulness with Mother Earth and encourage us to contemplate how we are inextricably connected to nature are essential.

There is an age-old practice called "smudging" used for thousands of years as a ceremonial experience to help clear energy. Many cultures create a smudging ritual to burn natural elements such as sage and Palo Santo wood as an invitation toward harmony and balance. This endeavor of nurturing mind, body and spirit compels me to participate in this ritual, which has become a captivating creative process, one that may support health and allow a greater connection with nature.

I thought I'd share the steps and benefits of making a smudging stick so you can try this ancient practice yourself:

What you'll need:

- Twine made from hemp
- Sustainably harvested Palo Santo wood (available online). Palo Santo wood comes from the dry forests of Ecuador and Peru. It belongs to the same family that gives us the essential oils of frankincense and myrrh. When burned, it emits sweet notes of pine and lemon and helps relieve stress, headaches and anxiety when inhaled.

- Selenite sticks (available online) are a pristinely-white mineral known as gypsum. Its silky white appearance cleanses the body of any negative energy. The mineral selenite is named after the ancient Greek Goddess of the Moon Selene. Holding this healing stone in an evening while smudging invites moon energy allowing us to connect with a deeper aspect of ourselves.

- Organic sage. In springtime, hiking trails in the desert abound with sage. One hike with a slightly higher elevation where you can find plentiful of sage is Horsethief Creek up Hwy 74. Cut small amounts from each bush so as not to over-harvest; refrigerate the sage until ready to create a stick.

How to craft your stick:

- Tie a bundle of sage with twine at the base with a secure knot. Continue wrapping the sage with twine from base to top and back down to the base. Use the remnants from the first knot to tie another knot.

- Take the Palo Santo wood, selenite and the sage bundle and tie all three together. You can make other accentuations and may even want to burn words of affirmation into the wood for an intention of positivity.

How to smudge with your stick:

- Hang the stick upside down in a cool, dry place for a week. Remove the selenite and feel its smoothness and radiant light. Light one end of the sage and the wood stick over a fire-proof bowl and let it burn for a few seconds before putting out the flame. Blow on the embers and set an intention as the stick cleanses your space. Mindfully banish negativity while welcoming peace and clarity!

Jennifer Di Francesco is a wellness explorer and desert adventurer and can be reached at zenjenzen@aol.com.



Smudge sticks can clear energy to start anew.

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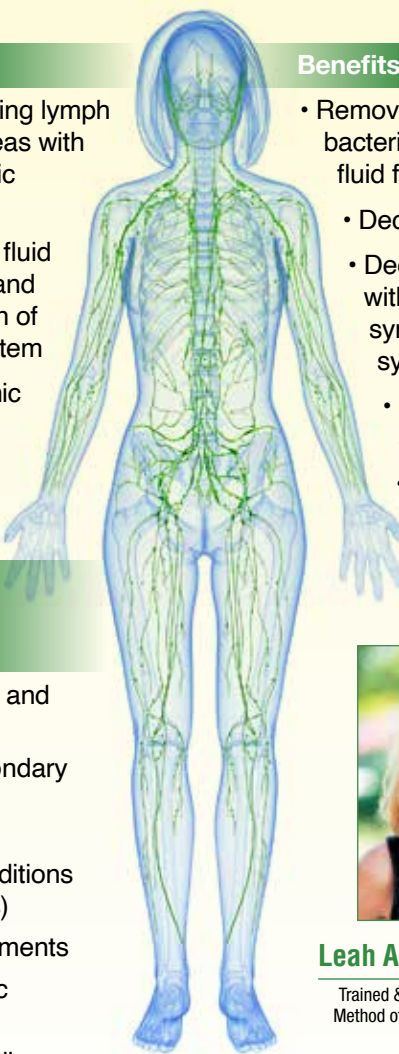
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THE Paradigm Shift in Medicine Today

By Jeralyn Brossfield, MD



Choosing Our New Normal

Do you have mixed feelings about going “back to normal?” The past year has required many changes to our routines and socialization. The pandemic precautions included the cessation of so many activities. We stopped going to school. We stopped eating out. We stopped exercising in gyms or studios. We stopped gathering at church. We stopped having large social gatherings like weddings and concerts and town halls. We stopped attending sporting events. We stopped so many things that are centered around being together and enjoying our days.

As the hopes for our communities to develop immunity and move beyond COVID now seem to be a foreseeable reality, I'm noticing I'm feeling nervous. There are many aspects of this time that have been simpler, less rushed, quieter, and calmer than the way life was before. I'm contemplating how to move forward, holding on to these ways of living.

During the past seven months, I went through treatment for breast cancer. I am beyond grateful to now be cancer-free. I am regaining strength (and hair on my head) and am structuring my days, keeping my health and rest as priorities. The treatment process provided me a lot of time to contemplate how to I want to live each day. One of the overwhelming changes for me is that I don't want to resume “the hustle.” I love the work I do in partnering with clients to build healthy lives, but on top of work, I had layered too many pressures. I'm clear that I don't want to do that now. I'm also clear that a healthy life for me includes planning and maintaining space for activities like making my favorite purple cabbage and cilantro salad, sitting in the sun, having a cup of tea and taking a walk.

As I resumed my work schedule, I have struggled with fear - fear of forgetting the lessons I've learned through my time with cancer. I've made a list of the things that are important for inclusion each day. Most are simple, but they are the things most easily crowded out of life when I get busy. I've realized that my concerns about what life will be like in my personal “new normal” are very similar to what I'm feeling and hearing from friends as we get closer to life beyond COVID.

One of the silver linings of COVID is our growing awareness of the benefits of simpler days and simpler joys. I had the same epiphany on a personal level because cancer made me stop and rest. The building of a post-cancer life that is sustainable and meaningful has made me realize that our opportunity as a society is similar. If you are wondering how to structure your life through the next round of changes, I invite you to take some time to notice what you want to carry forward, where you find joy and what sustains you. We are so blessed to have the choice of how to make our days matter, to ourselves and to others. Let's create the lives we want to live!

Jeralyn Brossfield, MD, is the founder and physician of XO Health and medical director of Brain Treatment Center both in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 573.2761 or www.BrainTreatmentCenter.com and on Facebook @XOHealth.



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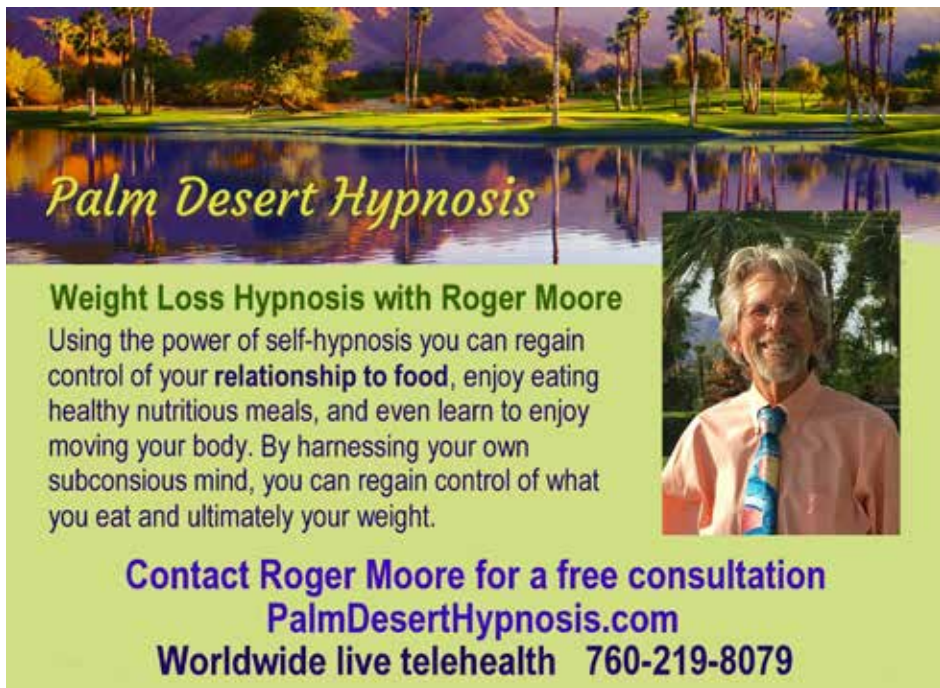
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Becoming Zen: Perspective and Positive Thinking

I'm not sure where this fable comes from, but I remember first hearing it in church as a young adult and discussing it with my mother afterward. It is one of my favorites to share with patients and my own children because it really simplifies the difficult concept of recognizing how much power we have over how we feel about a situation. I tried to look up the origin of the story, but it appears to be unknown. I like to call it "Who Knows?" and it goes something like this....

The story is about a poor farmer who had one horse he used to help around the farm with tasks such as plowing the fields and pulling carts.

One day, the horse ran away. When the farmer's neighbors heard, they offered their condolences as now he would have to work so much harder. But the man refused to be distraught over the bad news, and replied, "Good or bad? Who knows?"



The old fable of the farmer and the horse demonstrates the value of a zen mindframe.

The next week, the horse returned with another horse. This time the neighbors congratulated the farmer on this great turn of luck. He again replied, "Good or bad? Who knows?"

A few weeks later, the farmer's son was riding the new horse and fell off and broke his leg. His neighbors cried and exclaimed how horrible this was. The farmer again said only, "Good or bad? Who knows?"

The next week, a draft was announced, and the military took every healthy boy to war. The farmer's son was spared because of his broken leg. The neighbors couldn't believe what great news this was for the farmer. But the farmer once again did not let it take him away from his work and his life and simply stated, "Good or bad? Who knows?"

How do you perceive this story's message? I choose to see the translation as things happen in our lives, but it is perspective that makes them good or bad, stressful or not stressful.

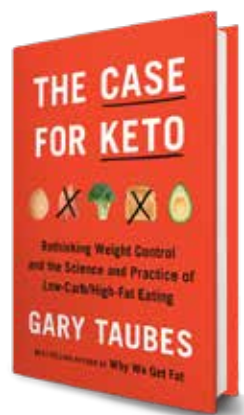
Stress has a huge impact on our health, both mentally and physically, and one of the easiest things we can strive to do is to embrace this Zen attitude toward the lows and highs of the past and future, and try to focus on the present and what it feels like to simply exist in the moment. Breathing, meditation, prayer, laughing out loud, yoga and hugs and snuggles with loved ones are a few of the things you can do to practice this skill of being present in the moment. Whether you recognize it or not, as you build these habits, you are also exercising your "Who knows?" muscle and will find yourself much more grounded as life ebbs and flows around you.

Dr. Fayssoux is an integrative primary care practitioner with Ohm & Oot Wellness Medicine in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 469.9900. For more information, visit www.KinderFayssouxMD.com.

The Case for a Low-Carb, Healthy-Fat Diet

Book Review by Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

To my knowledge, no one knows nutrition history better than Gary Taubes. As a science writer, he has been studying the subject matter full time for over 25 years. Taubes helped launch the modern low-carbohydrate healthy fat understanding with his 2002 cover article in the New York Times Magazine entitled "What If It's All Been a Big Fat Lie?" He exposed the shoddy science for the low-fat diet recommendations of over 40 years and how those recommendations resulted in the epidemic of overweight, obesity and type 2 diabetes.



Previous best-selling books by Taubes include *The Case Against Sugar* (2017), *Why We Get Fat* (2010) and *Good Calories, Bad Calories* (2007). In his latest book, *The Case for Keto*, Taubes updates the science and provides interviews with nutrition physicians and other health care providers that provide low-carbohydrate, healthy-fat (LCHF) nutrition services in the U.S. and Canada. He also provides his personal experience of being overweight and how he has maintained an LCHF lifestyle for many years.

I have chosen to substitute "healthy fat" in place of "high fat" in this book review. I acknowledge that in this ketogenic eating plan, fat becomes more than 50 percent of your calories. Thus, I emphasize healthy fat since unhealthy fats, as in processed foods, are to be avoided.

Taubes traces the origins of the published history of low-carbohydrate nutrition to two sources: the French physician Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in his 1825 book, *The Physiology of Taste*, in which he concludes that grains and starches are fattening and that sugar makes it worse, and to a London undertaker, William Banting, who reversed his obesity upon the advice of his doctor, and published the bestselling pamphlet, *Letter on Corpulence* (1863). Taubes states that all subsequent articles and books on low-carbohydrate nutrition, including the Adkins diet, are simply reiterations of these works.

David Ludwig has led the academic validation of low-carbohydrate nutrition at Harvard, Eric Westman at Duke, Jeff Volek at Ohio State and Steve Phinney at the University of California, Davis. They validate that obesity is an endocrine disorder caused by the fat storage effects of an excess of the hormone insulin induced by carbohydrates. The physics argument of energy in and energy out by calories is not valid, yet it persists.

Taubes describes how everyone has a different carbohydrate threshold as to what will cause fat storage. There is no universal dietary carb limit (such as 50 grams) that applies to everyone; genetics, a person's metabolism, and whether a person was previously overweight or obese are all important factors for how few carbohydrates a person can ingest without gaining weight. Since we do not need carbohydrates for our health, Taubes recommends abstinence for many people, especially in the weight loss phase of dietary management.

Continued on page 22



Pandemic Turned “Petdemic”

By Amy Austin, RN, PsyD, LMFT

The global pandemic is affecting people on many levels. Questions arise as to whether we'll get back to normal and when? And, what might that new normal look like? If ever we needed a daily affirming mantra, it would be, 'one day at a time.'

We are social beings by nature. Not only do we desire to connect, but we need to for optimal mental, emotional, relationship, physical, spiritual and social well-being. The pandemic has altered these crucial aspects of our functionality. I've often wondered if or how viewing masked faces might affect some aspects of development for babies since reading facial expressions is so crucial to learning about cues, reactions and responses.

During these most challenging times, we've discovered there are some positive outcomes including the fact that many animal shelters are near empty. People are 'shelter'-ing in place (boy, I love a pun) and what better time to adopt a furry fur-ever love (there I go again) than now? We've always known the benefits of owning a pet. We can instantly become more social because nothing stirs up a conversation faster than asking someone where they got their four-legged friend. People are socially distancing and gathering with their dogs at local parks so both animal and pet parents can breathe fresh air and enjoy a wonderful few moments of normalcy in this currently disjointed world.

There are physical benefits of pet ownership - getting out, getting fresh air and exercise - which can help decrease blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides. There are also emotional gains from owning a pet as they can help us manage anxiety and depression by giving us unconditional devotion 24/7. Who else goes berserk with celebratory glee when you've only been gone for three minutes after retrieving your mail? And, who needs a shrink when a dog is licking your face? They bring joy and laughter with their hilarious antics.

By now, you can probably discern I am team dog. Or cat. I don't want this article to end up in someone's litter box. Of course, just because we want or need to fill a void left by the pandemic, we also need to view taking on a pet through a very clear lens which includes factoring in the time, work, money, and a pet's longevity.

I lost my furry love Havi last June and recently adopted Nala, a fifteen-week-old half Frenchy, half unknown. Sadly, after two weeks and many very difficult heart-to-heart conversations with myself, I had to return Nala to the rescue. The shelter thought she would remain a small dog, but Nala quickly became one strong little girl and was growing daily. My heart was fully invested, but my body just couldn't match the enthusiasm. That part of reality was one hard pill to swallow. The good news is that Nala will be rehomed to a family with rambunctious children which will be a perfect fit. It's time to grieve her loss and know that I did the best thing for her.

I think we have one helluva petdemic on our hands which proves that out of struggle and misfortune wonderful insights, lessons, and blessings can materialize. If you rescue a furry love out of a million or two, you might end up surprised as to who rescued who.

Can anything good come out of a global pandemic? I'm pretty doggone sure it can. Dr. Amy is a licensed marriage and family therapist (MFC# 41252) and doctor of clinical psychology in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 774.0047.



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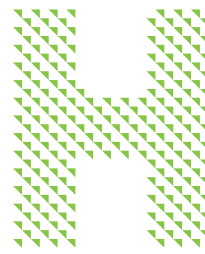
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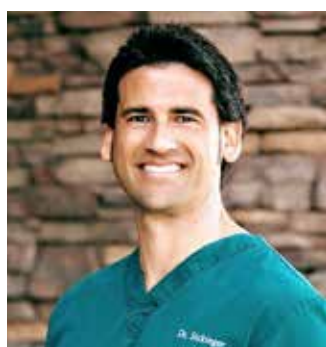
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Dreams and Nightmares During COVID-19

By Kathleen O’Keefe-Kanavos

Have you had strange dreams during the COVID lock-down? You are not alone. As a dream expert, many have reached out to me during this time with similar descriptions of recurrent nightmares such as this concerned dreamer:

“There is a dark shadow chasing me down a dark street, and I keep looking back over my shoulder to see if it will catch me. What is the dark shadow? Is it evil? And what does this dream mean?”

Shadows during the pandemic are sweeping our dream world. Are we caught in the spiderweb of the dreamcatcher? Why would we all be sharing signs and symbols in our dreams?

The answer is universal oneness. It connects us all to quantum entanglement. According to Science Daily¹, quantum entanglement is a phenomenon in which the quantum states of two or more objects have to be described with reference to each other, even though the individual objects may be spatially separated. In other words, people separated by time, space, and sleep may still share dream symbols.

Shared dreams are natural, and what began more than 6,000 years ago in ancient Egypt during the plagues is happening today during COVID. In ancient Greece, Asclepians - dream temples - were dedicated to Asclepius, the first dream-doctor-demigod in Greek mythology.² In part eight of the book *Dreams That Can Save Your Life*, based on modern cutting-edge dream research³, patients dreamed health-related information and shadows were often present. Although times change, dream symbols remain the same.



Shadows are a universal theme for all living things and shouldn't be viewed as negative or scary in dreams.

Everything dreams. The rapid eye movement of sleeping puppies, kittens, and even a fetus observed with ultrasound shows the power of dreams.⁴ But getting back to COVID dreams, let's explore why people experience the same dream symbols.

There are universal aspects to being human; having a shadow is one of them. We see our shadow during daylight, and we have a moon shadow. So, no matter where we go, there we are, “me and my shadow.”

Shadows in dreams can also be the universal shadow figure. Several religions, legends, and belief systems describe shadowy spiritual beings, and shadowy creatures have long been a staple of folklore.⁵ Dreamers often describe their shadow-people as silhouettes with human shapes and profiles that flicker in and out of peripheral vision in dreams. For dreamers who find shadow figures disconcerting and feel chased by them, I offer another explanation.

What if it is our shadow-self always there to protect us by having our back? And what if, rather than chasing us, it is trying to keep up with us.

During these times of COVID, dare to speak to your shadow. Reassure it that you are not trying to lose it but misunderstood its dream purpose. Embrace it as an essential protective aspect of yourself. Our shadow can help us feel less lonely and turn our nightmares into beautiful dreams of unity.

Kathleen O’Keefe-Kanavos of Rancho Mirage is a survivor, author, dream expert, speaker, TV/radio host/producer and has been featured on Dr. Oz and The Doctors. For more information, visit www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com.

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Tending to BIG T and little t Trauma

Continued from page 9

Cognitive processing therapy (CPT) focuses much more on your thinking about the trauma. Through CPT, you will explore the meanings of the traumatic experience from your perspective and patterns of thought, as well as learn skills to help you move beyond the trauma.



Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) is a technique with which I have had wonderful success in helping clients. The process involves thinking about the traumatic memory while receiving forms of bilateral stimulation (eyes, hands, ears), among other treatment components. Many clients like this method as less discussion about the details of the traumatic or disturbing event is required.

Whether big or small, the first step to addressing trauma is to acknowledge its existence.

While not an evidence-based trauma treatment, Brainspotting is a newer approach developed from EMDR. It can

be highly effective with trauma-based situations to identify and heal underlying trauma contributing to anxiety, depression and other behavioral conditions. Brainspotting is a tool that lets a therapist access both brain and body processes by noting a patient's strongest emotional responses to points along their visual field. Its goal is to bypass the conscious, neocortical thinking to access the deeper, subcortical emotional and body-based parts of the brain to process the trauma and be released from its harmful consequences.

The first step to addressing trauma and getting help for those who need it is acknowledging the existence of that trauma. The ongoing nature of the pandemic threat makes recovery more challenging. If you're experiencing trauma-related symptoms from the pandemic or previous unresolved trauma and they are disturbing to you or interfering with your functioning, it's important to seek professional assistance. If untreated, trauma can have long-term effects. Look for a therapist who specializes in trauma and is familiar with evidence-based forms of therapy that have proven effective for trauma treatment. You can also help yourself by being self-compassionate, patient and self-aware. Address your trauma now so you can start feeling better and be ready to move on peacefully and with joy when the pandemic is over.

Dr. Ravicz is a licensed clinical psychologist in Palm Springs and can be reached at (760) 904.7957. For more information, visit www.drsimonepsychologist.com.

References: 1) <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/the-world-is-experiencing-mass-trauma-from-covid-19-what-you-can-do>; 2) <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/traumaticincident/default.html>; 3) <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>.



Promising New Alzheimer's Drug

Contributed by *Alzheimers Coachella Valley*

In February, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) requested additional testing and data for aducanumab, a promising new drug for Alzheimer's disease. The FDA pushed the date to July 7, 2021, before making its decision to approve the new treatment.

"If approved, aducanumab would be the first available treatment to potentially change the progression of Alzheimer's, not just the symptoms, for millions of people facing the disease today," said Harry Johns, Alzheimer's Association CEO in a recent letter.

Aducanumab is an antibody being studied as a potential drug that eases symptoms of Alzheimer's. Antibodies are made by the immune system to fight viruses and bacteria that make us ill. Aducanumab is cloned from immune cells called "monoclonal antibodies" that may help fight dementia by targeting amyloid beta.

Its phase II and III trials served as a test of the "amyloid hypothesis" that Alzheimer's is intimately linked to the accumulation of amyloid in the brain. If amyloid accumulation can be prevented or reversed, the disease may be prevented or cured. Studies have suggested that aducanumab binds to amyloid beta tangles and reduces them.

The primary goal of the trials was a measurement that combined performance on mental tests of reasoning and memory with assessments of how well the participants performed in activities of daily living, like dressing themselves and preparing meals.

The drug's developer, Biogen, specifically claimed that test subjects saw an increased ability to manage finances, do chores around the house, go shopping and leave the home independently. These are instrumental acts of daily living (IADLs) that usually become too difficult for people with dementia somewhere around the middle stages of the disease.

The aducanumab biologic license application is the first filing for FDA approval of a treatment that addresses the clinical decline associated with Alzheimer's, as well as the pathology of the disease. While it does not reverse or cure the deterioration of the brain, the drug may slow the loss of memory and general cognition that are hallmark symptoms of the disease.

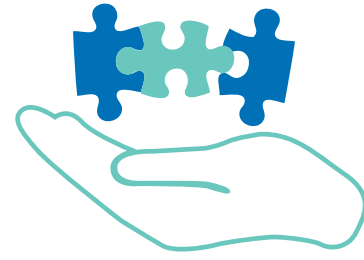
Critics, however, are skeptical. The amyloid hypothesis deduces that reducing the plaques will improve cognition, yet skeptics contend it has not been shown to work in any drugs that previously went for FDA approval. They say a closer look at the trial data shows thinking improvements might be overblown or unrelated to the drug itself. Thus, the debate over whether targeting amyloid beta plaques in the brain improves dementia symptoms.

In addition, aducanumab is expensive, with the annual costs projected to be around \$50,000 for the recommended dosage. PET brain scans to detect amyloid beta plaques would probably be necessary to determine the dosage, and those are expensive as well. Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services will have to determine the extent to which Medicaid and Medicare will cover aducanumab if the cost is high and the drug's effectiveness remains in doubt.

"Alzheimer's disease remains one of the greatest public health challenges of our time," said Michel Vounatsos, CEO at Biogen. "It robs memories, independence and eventually the ability to perform basic tasks from the people we love."

For more information, contact Alzheimers Coachella Valley at (760) 776.3100 or visit www.cvalzheimers.org.

Sources: 1) Harry Johns, CEO, Alzheimer's Association; 2) [https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/a-new-alzheimers-drug-from-advisory-panel-to-fda-whats-at-stake-here-202111221380#:~:text=it's%20been%20more%](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/a-new-alzheimers-drug-from-advisory-panel-to-fda-whats-at-stake-here-202111221380#:~:text=it's%20been%20more%3E); 3) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/11/health/alzheimers-amyloid-lilly.html>; 4) <https://www.dementiacarecentral.com/aboutdementia/treating/aducanumab>



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Fit at Any Age

Getting back on your feet

By Michele McCord, CPT, CMT, RYS-RYT

Legendary choreographer Merce Cunningham's advice was, "Begin anywhere!"

For baby boomers and seniors, staying limber, active and strong is the best medicine for maintaining health and living their best life. Anyone at any age can get started and improve their quality of life by safely improving their physical health. Studies show that people with chronic conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's benefit greatly from regular exercise, as do those with high blood pressure, balance problems and difficulty walking.

One of my clients is an 83-year-old retired orthopedic surgeon referred by his doctor. He spent a lifetime helping others while neglecting his own fitness because of his many 80-hour workweeks. Besides muscle weakness and balance issues, fortunately, he was relatively healthy. Near the beginning of our working relationship, he shared a story about a humiliating incident he experienced the weekend before. He and his wife had gone to visit a pet cemetery to put fresh flowers on their dog's grave. After he had knelt down and paid his respects, he was shocked to find he didn't have the strength to stand back up. Filled with panic, he waited while his wife rushed to search for help beckoning a stranger to assist get him back on his feet.



Exercise is key to maintaining vitality and you are never too old to get back on your feet.

In the weeks following, we began to focus on leg and core strength exercises for one hour twice a week, starting with a warm-up of 10 minutes on the treadmill. For quadriceps and glute strengthening, we incorporated wall squats with a stability ball, eventually adding lightweights.

For core strength, we did bridge poses, floor Pilates and stability ball crunches. I recommended additional yoga poses for back strengthening and balance, and we ended each session with passive physical therapy stretches for the hamstrings, hips, inner thighs and lower back.

Eight weeks into our program, we were ready to perform a strength test. I asked him to start in a kneeling position and get back up without assistance. All of his hard work paid off as he was able to stand up on his own, smiling with joy at the accomplishment. At that moment, I felt the gratitude of helping others to get back on their feet to live their best life.

The pandemic has shed light on the importance of exercise and a healthy diet to stay strong, improve immune function and maintain emotional well-being. Whether you have fallen off track or are beginning anew, know that you are never too old or unfit to get back on your feet.

Michele is a certified personal trainer and yoga instructor, nutritional consultant and founder of the Michele McCord Method. She can be reached at (310) 923-3237 or me@michelemccordmethod.com. For more information visit www.michelemccordmethod.com.

Virtual Technology: A New Form of Mental Training

By Michael K. Butler, BA;PTA;CSCS*D;RSCC*D NMT

For years, seeing youth athletes on their phones or playing video games for endless hours just drove me crazy. I knew it set the tone for their mood swings, depression and other health-related issues proven to stem from too much screen time and playing violent video games with their friends.



Virtual reality programs tap into the brain and can change an athlete's response to impeding factors.

Then, there was a market for movement-based video simulating bowling, tennis, baseball and dancing. I could accept this technology as it got kids off the couch and challenged their fitness levels. Now, there is a new virtual reality-based simulation used in sports and referred to as virtual technology.

This technology has picked up steam over the last couple of years, especially with high-performance athletes. Using a headset with auditory and visual feedback, athletes navigate programs created with realistic environments needed for specific sports, allowing them to improve performance without placing them at risk of injury. The technology can be used via a head-mounted display or on large screens in a specifically designed room.

Recently, Notre Dame Quarterback Ian Book was shown practicing with a virtual system in preparation for their big playoff game against Clemson. He said it was like being placed in a very realistic environment with crowd noise and many different obstacles coming at him, which helped increase his mental focus on delivering the ball to a specific target without increasing the risk of injury. We are discovering in the sports world, and certainly in the strength and conditioning world that athletes need to improve their mental focus and deliver results without having outside distractions disrupt them. These virtual reality systems deliver the distractions in a safe environment enabling the practitioner to heighten the athlete's mental focus to shut out those distractions and further help them achieve their goals. The nervous system adapts fairly quickly to outside stimuli, so as the athlete moves up the ranks, we change their programs, often weekly, to continually enhance focus and growth.

Virtual reality systems allow us to tap into the brain and change how an athlete might visualize and hear things that create havoc on their development. Other sports like NASCAR, soccer, basketball, baseball - even poker - from the amateur to the professional level have all used virtual reality to optimize performance; the more specific to their sport we can make it, the better they will do.

Virtual reality is also being used with seniors to help them relax, focus and enhance eye-hand coordination. It also helps people with diseases like Parkinson's, dementia and Alzheimer's increase memory recall and improve their interactions with others. Virtual reality is a growing and ever-changing field that seems to be making an impact on the mind and its unlimited potential.

Michael Butler is owner of Kinetix Health and Performance Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 200.1719 or michael@kinetixcenter.com



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Eat, Drink and Be Healthy

Substitutes you'll savor by Lauren Del Sarto

The Skinniest Margarita

Who doesn't love an ice-cold margarita? With desert weather warming up and Cinco de Mayo around the corner, a few more are sure to pour throughout our valley. Ironically, I am writing this on National Margarita Day (Feb. 22). Who knew this festive favorite had its own holiday?

But most margaritas are filled with sugar from sweet and sour or citrus juices added. Even skinny margaritas, usually offered with agave, contain sugar and can taste too sweet.

Introducing the sugar-free "Skinniest Margarita." Made with lime juice, soda and stevia, this crowd-pleaser offers a less guilty pleasure. Guests love this house specialty I concocted (even those who don't like stevia).

Now, I'm a firm believer that the type of tequila matters. It doesn't have to be the expensive stuff, but it's worth checking out the tasting notes of each brand, which can range from whiskey to butterscotch. I recommend Añejo, which is aged and offers a deeper flavor. My husband prefers a tart taste and his favorite is Gran Orendain Extra Añejo (whiskey, caramel, vanilla notes). I prefer a sweeter taste and recommend Kirkland's Tequila Añejo for its price point (\$19.99) and profile (coconut, banana cream pie, butterscotch, sandalwood and fig).

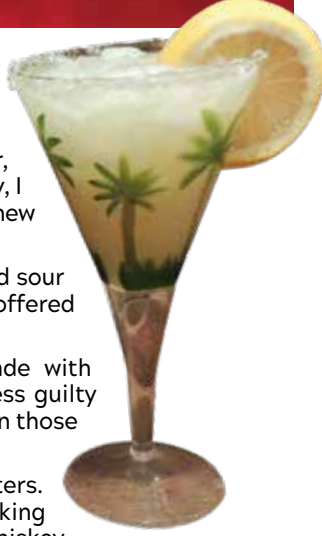
What you'll need:

- 8-ounce glass
- Shaker with crushed ice
- 1/3 cup lime juice (freshly squeezed or unsweetened)
- 1.5 ounces tequila
- 10 drops of liquid stevia (more or less to taste)
- Splash of club soda
- Fresh lime or lemon for garnish
- Salt for rim (optional)

- 🍋 Use the garnish to wet the rim and dip the glass in salt (optional)
- 🍋 Fill the shaker half full with crushed ice
- 🍋 Add the tequila, lime juice and stevia and shake
- 🍋 Pour in the glass and add the splash of club soda and the garnish. I prefer lemon to complement the lime juice.

Make each individually and add or subtract stevia to taste. Enjoy!

Our Eat, Drink and Be Healthy column offers satisfying alternatives to your favorite foods and beverages. Add your comments and suggestions online at www.DesertHealthNews.com.



Gotta Love Garlic

By Janet Zappala

Home sweet home. We've all gotten well acquainted with our digs over the last year, more so than ever before. How about your kitchen? Gotten to know every nook and cranny, I'm sure, as cooking is on a path to becoming the new normal post COVID.

In fact, according to a recent study by the food and beverage communications firm Hunter, many people say they'll continue with their cooking habits even after we get back to some semblance of normality. I would bet most of us could now give the capricious Gordon Ramsey a run for his money!

While I've missed eating out and supporting our local businesses, I do love to cook. I know the exact ingredients I'm putting into my meals, and I like that, too.

When it comes to cooking, the one staple I can't live without is the stinking rose. Yes, garlic - that ubiquitous, sticky, delicious, aromatic, awesome vegetable; not only because I'm Italian, but also because of its countless health benefits.

For one, garlic contains antioxidants that protect cells from free radicals, boosting our overall health and even potentially reducing the risk of Alzheimer's and dementia. It's believed that the aromatic bulb was used by Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, to treat many health issues, including poor digestion, fatigue and parasites. It's also a known mosquito repellent. Perhaps the reason for that is obvious!

Yes, garlic is a staple that has more than proven its dietary worth. It's even been noted to have been used as a weapon against the plague during the Middle Ages.

We've also heard it can help prevent cancer, maybe. It does contain phytochemicals, which are believed to protect against heart disease, and yes, cancer - specifically stomach and colorectal cancers.

People have used garlic to fend off the flu or a cold for centuries. If you understand that garlic contains 17 different amino acids, which aid in maintaining normal body functions, as well as vitamins A, C and B-1, calcium, iron and magnesium, then it stands to reason that garlic does a body good.

So, how can you maximize these benefits? When you cut or crush fresh garlic, healthful compounds are released, which kill more than 20 types of bacteria, including salmonella. Thus, eating it shortly after you cut or crush it will give you the most health benefits.

When you heat garlic, the bulb yields a different kind of magic during the cooking process and forms yet another new compound that can prevent clogged arteries. Heated garlic increases the herb's ability to reduce blood pressure and lower a person's cholesterol levels. Not so worried about garlic breath now, are you?

I could go on and on extolling the virtues of my favorite superfood, so I'll leave you with this...

There's a reason that every year since 1979, there's a grand festival in Gilroy, California, starring all things garlic. Perhaps it's no surprise that it was the brainchild of an Italian. Salute!

Janet Zappala is the author of My Italian Kitchen Homestyle Recipes Made Lighter & Healthier available on www.Amazon.com. She's also a certified nutritional consultant, an Emmy award-winning news anchor and reporter, and the creator and host of Your Health Matters. Find her on Facebook @JanetZappalaYourHealthMatters.

The Case for a Low-Carb, Healthy-Fat Diet

Continued from page 16

We live in a carbohydrate culture, and the food industry pushes carbs due to their profitability and addictive tendencies. One academic leader of an obesity clinic said he is in the business of treating carbohydrate addiction more than weight management.

I have read three of the four books by Gary Taubes and found each filled with science and practical recommendations. He does not treat patients but expresses how many leading clinicians do so in their centers. Many will find parts of his latest book tedious and repetitious, but overall it is well worth reading. Taubes summarizes the main points in the introduction for anyone not wanting to get into the details. The final three chapters: Lessons to Eat By, The Plan and Caution with Children, contain valuable information.

Despite the reluctance of many academic departments and weight loss centers (often funded by the food industry), the nutrition debate has been won by the advocates of low carbohydrates as the best and only truly successful long-term approach to weight loss.

Joseph Scherger, MD, MPH is founder of Restore Health in Indian Wells, a clinic dedicated to weight loss and reversing disease. For more information, visit www.restorehealth.me or call (760) 898.9663.

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Yia Mas! "To Our Good Health" Flavorful Goodness at Koutouki Greek

By Lauren Del Sarto

Greeks are known for their celebratory lifestyle with zorba dancing, plate smashing and big family celebrations. They also bring us some of the best - and healthiest - Mediterranean cuisine.

Fortunately, you can find all this fun and goodness in Palm Desert at *Koutouki Greek Estiatorio*. The family-owned restaurant is the heart and dedication of Chef/Manager Chris St. Denis and wife, Dina Psalios, daughter of Yianni Psalios of *Yianni's Taverna & Greek Marketplace* in Cathedral City. Yianni established multiple *Koutouki* restaurants in Canada before moving to the desert to be near Chris and Dina. The family is close. Chris started working for Yianni as a teen when he and Dina began dating. They are now raising two boys of their own while serving up captivating cultural cuisine for the rest of us to enjoy.



Appetizers include pikelia featuring homemade dips and grilled halloumi cheese.



The Koutouki Spritzer is one of many crafted cocktails.

Koutouki is a must for those seeking an array of healthy, clean and flavorful options. Starting with the freshest ingredients, all dishes are homemade daily, including traditional spanakopita, gyros, dolmades, moussaka and baklava for those who prefer an indulgent night out.

My husband and I primarily prefer seafood and vegetables and seek out restaurants with a variety of both, along with gluten-free options. In our several trips to *Koutouki*, we have yet to try it all. On this evening, we brought mom along to help us sample some of the traditional meat dishes as well.

Chef started with pikelia featuring four homemade dips: melizano (eggplant), homous, tzatziki (yogurt, garlic, cucumber) and kopanisti, a creamy spiced feta; carrots and cucumbers were substituted for pita bread. The halloumi, a mixture of goat and sheep's cheese served with tomatoes and cucumbers, is a personal favorite for its unique texture and taste. The dolmades, stuffed grape leaves filled with ground beef and rice, are lighter than anticipated and available with tzatziki as a gluten-free option.



Traditional dolmades and the arni kleftiko, slow-roasted lamb

For the main course, the ouzo shrimp shines with a sweet garlicky sauce and large tender prawns. The mussels are enticing as well, but this night we opted for a few house specialties, including the arni kleftiko, slow-roasted lamb shoulder. Simply seasoned with salt, pepper, lemon and oregano, the melt-in-your-mouth entrée is tenderly roasted for 10 hours. It is exceptional, as are the paidakia (grilled lamb chops) and Greek pork ribs lightly seasoned and braised for hours before sautéed to create a crisp savory covering and tender inside.



Ouzo shrimp and the Athenian mussels

The vegetarian options are abundant as cold or hot appetizers, including roasted and marinated red bell peppers, butter beans with fresh herbs, and traditional Greek cucumber and tomato salad (horiatiki) with or without feta.

In addition to the extensive menu, another great reason to return to *Koutouki* again and again is the family-style ambiance and friendly, spirited staff. The name roughly translates to a "familiar hole-in-the-wall," and

the restaurant is designed as an authentic tavern you would stumble upon as you toured the Greek isles. Blue and white décor is surrounded by green vines, hanging fruit and family photos adorning the wall. Servers Adrian and Miguel are accommodating and certain to make you smile. During non-pandemic times, you may even experience zobra or belly dancing along with the festive plate smashing tradition (a crowd favorite!).



Greek yogurt with honey drizzle

The thoughtfully prepared family recipes are accompanied by a nice selection of wines, a variety of beers including Greece's Mythos lager, and a colorful selection of crafted cocktails such as the Koutouki Spritzer with mint and prosecco over ice.

Whether you wish to indulge or enjoy a guiltlessly healthy meal, a trip to *Koutouki* offers a fun and memorable experience, so put it on your list of local restaurants to support. Chris and Dina currently welcome guests for dinner with patio dining and take-out (and don't be surprised to see the kids helping out). Catering is also available.

Koutouki Greek Estiatorio is located at 73675 Highway 111 in Palm Desert and serves dinner Tuesday through Sunday from 4 p.m. (760) 834.8221. For more information, visit www.KoutoukiGreek.com.

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— Palm Desert —

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Certified Farmers' Market

44710 San Pablo Ave, between Alessandro & San Gorgonio
A PSCC event, this mid-week market on the newly renovated San Pablo Corridor features small farm fruit and veggies and foods ranging from pasta and yogurt to salmon and salsa.

CertifiedFarmersMarkets.org • (844) 7FARMCV

March 28 & April 25 - 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Palm Desert Sunday Market

San Pablo Corridor 72-559 Hwy 111

This new market is a joint venture between the City of Palm Desert and the creators of CV Harvest Box, a home delivery service. Featuring non-organic produce from local farmers along with artisan products from baked goods, desserts and meats to soaps and crafts.

info@cvharvestbox.com • (760) 832.7343

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— Indian Wells —

Thursdays, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. through May

Certified Farmers Market of Indian Wells

The Village at Indian Wells 74-895 Hwy 111

Located in front of the former Ralph's, this new market features over 35 exhibitors offering organic produce, eggs, honey, cheeses, sauces, pet foods, along with ready-to-eat barbecues, biscotti, breads and more.

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— La Quinta —

Sundays, 8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. through April

Certified Farmers' Market

78100 Main St, Old Town La Quinta

A PSCC event, this popular weekend stop includes farm-direct produce and food, body products, flowers, plus a knife sharpening station alongside yoga on the lawn and all the Old Town shops and restaurants.

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