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# Health & Wellness<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

April 2025

Collier Edition - Monthly

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**TREATING  
PARKINSON'S  
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Established 2009

Long Huynh, DMD, AACD

**"I FINALLY  
HAVE THE  
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ALWAYS  
WANTED"**

Interview with Kim Nichols



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Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL in partnership with Charlotte County Medical Society proudly presents...

## 2025 SWFL Parkinson's Disease Spring Symposium

### "A Holistic Approach to Treatment"

**Friday, April 25th, 2025**  
**8:30 AM to 3:30 PM**  
**The Isles Yacht Club**  
 1780 W. Marion Ave, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

**Special Guest Speakers:**

Dr. Richard B. Dewey III, M.D.

Kelly Papesh, FNP-C, CHRP

Dr. Ramon Gil, M.D.

Mary Spremulli, MA, CCC-SLP

Debra Tarakofsky, MS, CCC-SLP

PD. Vibha Kumar

## Agenda

8:30 am - 9:30 am	On Site Registration, Light Breakfast and Exhibitors
9:30 am - 9:45 am	Opening Remarks..... R. Gil, M.D.
9:45 am - 10:30 am	"Being Loud" ..... M. Spremulli, SLP and D. Tarakofsky, SLP
10:30 am - 11:15 am	"Mindfulness and Yoga for Balance" ..... V. Kumar
11:15 am - 11:45 am	Break & Refreshments
11:45 pm - 12:30 pm	"Lifestyle in Parkinson's Disease"... K. Papesh, ARNP
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm - 2:15 pm	"Is there a Better Medical Treatment?" ... R. Gil, M.D.
2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	"Advanced Therapies for Parkinson's Disease" ..... R. Dewey III, M.D.
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Q's and A's..... Faculty
3:30 pm	Recognition, Raffle and Adjourn

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# Interview with Kim Nichols:

## “I finally have the SMILE I have always wanted”

In this exclusive interview, *H&W Magazine* speaks with Kim Nichols, a patient at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry in Naples, Florida, about her transformative experience under the care of Dr. Long Huynh. Kim’s journey, shaped by years of dental challenges and multiple treatments, highlights advancements in cosmetic dentistry and the importance of professional, compassionate care.

**H&W Magazine:** Kim, what led you to choose Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry for your treatment?

**Kim Nichols:** I’ve always described my dental health as “high maintenance” due to my long history with dental issues. Growing up in Ohio, I spent countless hours in dental chairs at various practices. An orthodontic mistake in my teens resulted in extractions, and in my 20s, I needed braces again to correct the errors.

A few years ago, I was having lunch when I suddenly felt something crunchy in my mouth. I checked the mirror and saw that the bonding on my front teeth had come off. It was overwhelming—I didn’t have a regular dentist in Naples at the time. I immediately searched online and found Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry. Fortunately, I was able to get an appointment with Dr. Long almost right away.

**H&W Magazine:** That must have been stressful. What stood out to you about Dr. Long and his team?

**Kim Nichols:** From the moment I arrived, I noticed a difference. Dr. Long was not only highly skilled but also incredibly compassionate. He explained that bonding issues with veneers are common, especially with age, and reassured me that modern adhesive systems have improved significantly. In fact, recent studies show that these systems now have a success rate exceeding 90% at the five-year mark. That gave me confidence.

Beyond his technical expertise, Dr. Long’s kindness and the warmth of his team made a lasting impact. The front desk staff, dental assistants, and hygienists all contributed to making my experience comfortable. I felt both emotionally and medically cared for, which made all the difference.

**H&W Magazine:** It sounds like your treatment was highly personalized. Could you walk us through the process?

**Kim Nichols:** Of course. The entire process took about a month. It started with detailed impressions of



my teeth to create temporary veneers. Even those temporary restorations looked fantastic, which reassured me that the final results would meet my expectations.

Dr. Long focused on my front six teeth, ensuring a complete cosmetic transformation. He explained each step carefully—from the initial consultation to the final placement. At one point, I needed a crown, which made me nervous. However, Dr. Long’s calm reassurance—“We’ll fix it”—helped me stay relaxed.

This approach aligns with CDC recommendations that regular dental visits and prompt treatment can reduce the risk of major dental issues by up to 50%. Knowing I was in good hands, I felt more at ease throughout the process.

**H&W Magazine:** How did the staff contribute to your overall experience?

**Kim Nichols:** One team member who stood out was Kim Plommer. She always made me feel at home in the dental chair, remembering details about my dental history and providing emotional support. Her warmth and attention to detail made every visit pleasant.

The entire team at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry works cohesively to ensure that each patient feels respected and comfortable. Research shows that empathetic care in dental practices improves patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment, which is exactly what I experienced.

**H&W Magazine:** Dr. Long’s background is quite inspiring. What can you share with our readers about his journey?

**Kim Nichols:** Dr. Long’s story is remarkable. Originally from Vietnam, he immigrated to the U.S. as a

refugee with his family. Overcoming language barriers and a stutter, he became the first in his family to graduate college.

In 2013, he earned accreditation from the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD), making him the only AACD-accredited cosmetic dentist in Naples. His journey from facing adversity to becoming a leader in his field is a testament to his dedication and passion for transforming patients’ lives.

**H&W Magazine:** How has your new smile impacted your life?

**Kim Nichols:** The change has been profound. My confidence has skyrocketed. I now receive compliments from friends and even strangers. This transformation has not only improved my self-esteem but has also motivated me to maintain excellent dental hygiene.

Beyond aesthetics, my improved dental condition encourages me to prioritize regular cleanings and check-ups. Research shows that regular dental visits can reduce the risk of oral diseases by nearly 40%. The combination of a healthier smile and increased confidence has given me a renewed sense of well-being.

**H&W Magazine:** What advice would you give to someone facing similar dental challenges or dissatisfaction with past treatments?

**Kim Nichols:** I would strongly advise seeking a second opinion from a reputable provider. It’s essential to find a dentist who not only excels in technical skills but also genuinely cares about your well-being.

My experience at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry has been life-changing. Early intervention and regular care are crucial in preventing minor issues from becoming major problems. I encourage anyone struggling with dental challenges to schedule a consultation with a professional like Dr. Long. His accredited expertise and compassionate care can make a significant difference in both oral health and quality of life.

**Change Your Smile... Change Your Life!**

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# MAGNOLIA BREAST CENTER:

## Excellence in Comprehensive Breast Care

**M**agnolia Breast Center stands as Southwest Florida's premier destination for advanced breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. With a team of board-certified, fellowship-trained specialists, the center offers personalized care through every step of the breast health journey.

### COMPREHENSIVE CARE APPROACH

At Magnolia Breast Center, patients benefit from a coordinated approach to breast health. The center provides extensive risk assessment and screening programs designed to detect cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages. Their multidisciplinary team communicates seamlessly with primary caregivers to ensure comprehensive treatment plans tailored to each patient's unique needs.

Professionally trained nurse practitioners guide patients through their care journey, while the center's full spectrum of support services includes education about risk factors, prevention strategies, early detection techniques, and stress management during treatment.

### MEET OUR DISTINGUISHED PHYSICIANS



**Dr. Sharla Gayle Patterson, MD, MBA** leads the center as a fellowship-trained breast surgeon certified by the American Board of Surgery. As the only surgeon in Southwest Florida certified by the American Society of Breast Surgeons in both ultrasound

and stereotactic guided breast biopsies, Dr. Patterson has dedicated over a decade to breast cancer education and prevention. Her certification in oncoplastic breast surgery demonstrates her commitment to excellent surgical outcomes. Beyond the operating room, Dr. Patterson established the area's first multidisciplinary breast cancer survivorship clinic.



**Dr. Steven J. Leibach, MD** brings over 35 years of medical oncology experience to Magnolia Breast Center. Twice recognized by Chicago Magazine as a Top Cancer Doctor and listed in the Castle Connolly guide of best doctors, Dr. Leibach specializes

in comprehensive, compassionate care with particular interest in survivorship programs for breast cancer patients.



**Dr. Tam T. Mai, MD, FACS, FSSO** completed her oncoplastic breast surgery training under world-renowned Dr. Melvin Silverstein. Previously serving as Medical Director of the Springfield Clinic Breast Health Center, Dr. Mai combines evidence-based

medicine with advanced surgical techniques to preserve both health and aesthetics for her patients.



**Dr. David T. Rock, MD, FACS** brings more than 25 years of experience in breast surgery. A pioneer in nipple-sparing mastectomy and certified in oncoplastic breast surgery, Dr. Rock focuses on effective cancer treatment while maintaining quality of life for his patients.



**Dr. Elizabeth Arguelles, MD, FACS** is the first breast surgeon in Collier County to receive Hidden Scar Certification. Her expertise in oncoplastic surgery allows her to combine cancer treatment with aesthetic preservation, offering patients truly personalized care.

### YOUR JOURNEY TO BREAST HEALTH

Magnolia Breast Center's commitment to excellence extends from early detection through treatment and into survivorship. Their comprehensive approach addresses both the physical and emotional aspects of breast cancer care, ensuring patients receive support at every stage.

What sets Magnolia Breast Center apart is their personalized treatment plans designed to achieve optimal results for each patient. The center utilizes advanced diagnostic technologies to determine the severity of conditions and develop targeted interventions. Their multidisciplinary team approach ensures that patients benefit from collaborative expertise across specialties. For women concerned about breast cancer risk, the center offers educational resources on risk reduction strategies and early detection methods.

The center's survivorship programs are particularly noteworthy, focusing on long-term wellness and quality of life after treatment. Patients benefit from ongoing support that addresses physical recovery, emotional well-being, and lifestyle adjustments. Magnolia Breast Center's dedication to breast health education extends beyond their patients to the broader community through outreach programs designed to increase awareness and promote early detection.

Call our dedicated breast care center today at 239-758-PINK (7465) or contact us online and schedule an appointment with one of our experienced breast surgeons.



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# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN EXERCISE AND BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

By Greer Burcky, MS, RDN/LDN, CPT - Registered Dietician/Performance Coach

Regular physical activity has long been recognized for its multitude of benefits, and recent research further underscores its role as a potential treatment option for depression. A study published in *The BMJ* revealed compelling evidence linking various forms of exercise to decreased symptoms of depression, both when practiced independently and in conjunction with therapy and medication.

The study identified several exercises that were effective in reducing depressive symptoms. These included walking, jogging, yoga, strength training, mixed aerobic exercises, tai chi, and qigong. Interestingly, the study found that the intensity of the activity correlated with its effectiveness, suggesting that more vigorous forms of exercise may offer greater benefits in managing depression.

Walking or jogging, yoga and strength training emerged as particularly effective exercises for alleviating depression. However, the study noted that the differences in effectiveness among various exercise regimens were marginal, indicating that individuals may benefit from choosing the type of exercise that best suits their preferences and physical capabilities.

Director of Health and Wellness at Naples' only exercise Medicine clinic explains, **"We emphasize strength training in our program at Inspire Exercise Medicine. Our classes are small, tailored, group classes with the added benefit of social connections. Our body of work focuses on the association between functional movement, disease prevention and mental health."**

Inspire Exercise Medicine was founded on the simple fact that exercise is a medical treatment. Its healthcare providers and performance coaches use evidence-based methods including the exercise prescription as part of their treatment plans. The prescriptions are individualized to each patient's needs to elicit healing processes within the muscles for the management and prevention of chronic conditions, including cancer.

Yoga also demonstrated significant promise as a means of reducing depression. Its emphasis on



mindfulness and the mind-body connection may contribute to its effectiveness in improving mental health outcomes. Additionally, both yoga and strength training were well-tolerated, making them accessible options for individuals seeking to incorporate exercise into their treatment regimen without experiencing discomfort or pain.

While the study provides valuable insights into the role of exercise in managing depression, further research is warranted to validate the effectiveness of different exercise modalities. Dr. Mimi Winsberg, a psychiatrist and co-founder of Brightside Health, underscores the importance of evidence-based interventions in addressing depression. With depression affecting millions of adults in the United States annually, exploring alternative treatment approaches such as exercise is crucial for improving patient outcomes.

Depression is a complex mental health condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in activities. It can manifest in various symptoms, including fatigue, changes in appetite, and thoughts of suicide. Given its pervasive impact, healthcare providers need to explore holistic approaches to treatment, including lifestyle interventions like exercise.

For individuals looking to incorporate exercise into their routine, the key is choosing activities they enjoy and find sustainable. Dr. Tarbell encourages patients to embrace variety in their exercise regimen, as different activities may offer distinct benefits. By experimenting with different forms of exercise, individuals can discover what works best for them and tailor their approach to meet their unique needs.

As medical professionals, it's our responsibility to empower patients to take an active role in managing their mental health. By emphasizing the potential benefits of exercise and providing personalized recommendations, we can support individuals in their journey toward improved well-being.

Dr. Paige Gurizzian, an internal medicine resident at the Cleveland Clinic and a member of the ABC News Medical Unit, contributed to the writing of this article and provided valuable medical insights.

## Greer Burcky, Registered Dietician/Performance Coach

*Greer is a registered dietitian with a Master of Science in Dietetics and Nutrition with over 1,200 hours of supervised practice in Naples and Miami. During her internship, she worked with registered dietitians in the food service and clinical sector at Physicians Regional Medical Center.*

*Additionally, she was able to work alongside registered dietitians at the Florida Department of Health and in private practice. With a specialty rotation focused on Integrative Functional Nutrition, Greer is passionate about the power nutrition can provide her patients. Greer aims to deliver quality care and healing through proper nutrition and exercise. She incorporates her dietetic and personal trainer licenses to offer both services seamlessly to her patients at Inspire Exercise Medicine.*

*You can find Greer cooking new recipes outside the gym, hiking the Great Smoky Mountains, and playing with all her dogs.*

Sources:  
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# BREAST AUGMENTATION: How Motiva Implants Are Changing the Game

In the world of cosmetic surgery, breast augmentation remains one of the most requested procedures worldwide. As technology and medical science advance, so too do the options available to patients seeking to enhance their silhouette. Among the most significant developments in recent years is the introduction of Motiva breast implants, a premium option that's revolutionizing patient experiences and outcomes.

## A New Era in Breast Augmentation

Breast augmentation has evolved dramatically since the first silicone implant surgery in 1962. Today's procedures offer unprecedented safety profiles, natural-looking results, and reduced recovery times. Leading this evolution are advanced implant technologies that prioritize both aesthetics and patient safety.

The contemporary approach to breast augmentation focuses on personalized treatment plans that consider the patient's anatomy, aesthetic goals, and lifestyle. This individualized approach has become increasingly possible with innovative implant options like those offered by Motiva.

## What Sets Motiva Implants Apart

Motiva implants represent the cutting edge of breast implant technology. Developed by Establishment Labs, these implants feature several key innovations that distinguish them from conventional options:

### Advanced Silicone Gel Technology

Motiva implants utilize a highly cohesive silicone gel, often referred to as "progressive gel," which maintains shape while feeling remarkably natural to the touch. This proprietary gel provides optimal softness and realistic movement, closely mimicking natural breast tissue.

### Revolutionary SmoothSilk® Surface

Unlike traditional textured implants, Motiva's SmoothSilk® surface technology creates a unique nanosurface designed to reduce friction and inflammation. This surface encourages better integration with surrounding tissues while minimizing complications like capsular contracture—a significant advancement for patient comfort and safety.

### Enhanced Safety Profile

Motiva's engineering incorporates a robust outer shell with an advanced barrier layer that reduces gel bleed and shell rupture risks. Additionally, the implants



feature BluSeal® technology—a light blue tint that allows surgeons to visually inspect the implant's integrity before placement.

### Dynamic Adaptability

These implants are designed to move naturally with the body, adapting to position changes while maintaining aesthetic integrity. This dynamic quality contributes to the natural appearance that patients increasingly demand.

### Customization Options

Motiva offers an extensive range of implant profiles, projections, and sizes, enabling highly personalized results. Options include:

- **Ergonomix®:** Designed to mimic natural breast movement and shape
- **Round:** Providing fuller upper pole fullness
- **Anatomical TrueFixation®:** Featuring a teardrop shape for specific enhancement needs

This variety allows surgeons like Dr. Kiran Gill to create customized aesthetic outcomes aligned with each patient's unique body proportions and goals.

### The Patient Experience

Patients choosing Motiva implants typically report high satisfaction rates, citing natural feel, improved comfort, and aesthetically pleasing results. Many also experience:

- Reduced downtime after surgery
- Lower incidence of post-surgical complications
- Increased confidence in implant longevity
- Natural movement and feel

## Comparing Premium Options

While Motiva leads innovation in this space, other premium options like Natrelle® Gummy Implants also offer advanced features. When considering breast augmentation, patients should discuss the full spectrum of implant options with their surgeon, weighing factors like desired results, anatomical considerations, and long-term goals.

## Looking Forward

As breast augmentation techniques continue to evolve, Motiva represents the direction in which the industry is heading—toward safer, more natural-looking results with improved longevity. The emphasis on biocompatibility, reduced complications, and personalized outcomes reflects the growing sophistication of cosmetic surgery.

For patients considering breast augmentation, consulting with a board-certified plastic surgeon experienced in the latest implant technologies is essential. These specialists can provide comprehensive guidance on selecting the optimal implant type, size, and placement technique based on individual anatomy and aesthetic goals.

With premium options like Motiva, today's breast augmentation patients enjoy unprecedented choices in creating natural, beautiful results that enhance both appearance and confidence.



## Your Breast Augmentation Consultation

The decision to undergo breast augmentation is a personal one, and Dr. Gill will ensure that you are fully informed before moving forward through a private, one-on-one consultation in Naples, FL.

She will use this session to answer all your questions in detail and create a customized plan of action for addressing your aesthetic concerns, tailored to your wishes and goals. Call us now at 239-596-8000 to schedule a convenient appointment with Dr. Gill.



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# LEARN HOW YOU CAN FIND RELIEF FROM THE DEBILITATING PAIN OF PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY WITHOUT ADDICTIVE DRUGS

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Over 116 million people suffer from various types of chronic pain disorders, and 20 million of those individuals have peripheral neuropathy; that number is speculated to be much higher due to patients not getting a proper diagnosis. Peripheral nerves run from the spinal cord to the arms, hands, legs and feet.

**UNDERSTANDING PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY**  
Peripheral Neuropathy is a complex condition, but nerve damage and signaling are the issue, finding the root cause is how a comprehensive plan is customized to regenerate a patients nerves, cells and tissues. Having high blood sugar levels, along with low blood oxygen supply, nutrient deficiency, high toxicity and inflammation damages the nerves throughout the body. This damage generally affects the long peripheral nerves that feed sensations to the legs, feet, and toes from the spinal cord, through communication with the brain. If your condition has progressed, you may feel nerve damage sensations in your upper extremities as well.

## PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY SYMPTOMS

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning sensations
- Painful aching
- Joint inflammation
- Joint damage
- Balance issues
- Skin discoloration & texture changes
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of stiffness
- Non-healing foot & ankle ulcers

## STOP MASKING SYMPTOMS AND PAIN

The most common treatment for nerve pain and numbness is to mask it with narcotic prescription pain medications. Narcotics like Opioids are highly addictive, and our state is currently leading the country in abusing the drug and overdose episodes.

**There are better alternatives to Peripheral Neuropathy that do not include addictive drugs.**



Physical medicine provides alternative therapeutic and rehabilitating procedures can significantly improve the condition, offer pain relief and limit drug dependency.

## FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT INSTITUTE'S ALTERNATIVE CARE

- Red LED and Low Level Infrared Light Therapy help to heal and regenerate the small nerve endings that are damaged in peripheral neuropathy
- Gentle electrical stimulation therapy improves nerve function, reduces pain, and improves movement.
- Stem Cell Allografts Biologics
- Platelet Rich Plasma
- Spinal Decompression Therapy
- Ozone Therapy
- Peptide Therapy
- Therapeutic Shockwave/Soundwave
- Natural supplementation to regenerate myelin sheath

## WHAT KINDS OF EFFECTS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE NEUROPATHY TREATMENT AT FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT INSTITUTE?

Clinical studies show that 88% of the people who undergo the treatment experience excellent results with one or more of the following: Reduced pain and cramps, reduced tingling and numbness, ability to experience normal touch without pain, reduced cold or burning sensations, improved balance and coordination, lowered dependency on medications, improved sleep, reduced sensation of restlessness in

the legs. Several people also experience reduced local swelling and inflammation, increased range of motion, increased blood flow to the extremities, decreased tension, and decreased muscle spasm.

An important side benefit to the treatment is that it reduces the risk of falls significantly by improving balance and position awareness of the feet.

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# PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

## TREATING PARKINSON'S DISEASE WITH A HOLISTIC APPROACH

By Ramon A. Gil, M.D., Medical Director, Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL

**T**he progress witnessed over the past 30 years in understanding, diagnosing, and treating Parkinson's Disease (PD) is simply phenomenal. Many of you may be wondering, "When is the cure coming?" Even that seems closer today than ever before. But remember that "cure" is a very strong word, and in the case of PD it will probably be arresting the progression of the illness, as it is impossible to completely reverse the damage caused by PD to the brain by the time the diagnosis is made.

It is hard to believe that as recently as in the late 1990s we were still looking at or questioning the value of physical exercise as part of the treatment for PD. Today, we are fully aware that exercise is the only way to increase the levels of GDNF (neurotrophic factor), which is the chemical compound capable of repairing the brain. As a matter of fact, we are currently participating in a gene therapy trial to enhance the production of GDNF. This is indeed a promising approach to finding the cure for PD.

New and better medications continue to become available to treat PD. In just the last 5 years, six new drugs have been approved for the treatment of PD including two subcutaneous infusions. Technological advances in Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) seem to be a never-ending story. Each of the three companies involved in this field are competing (all to your benefit as patients) in creating additional features in their systems which make programming easier, more effective, and with less side effects. They are also focused on energy efficiency, as newly designed leads allow us to use more efficient settings with the batteries lasting longer. New rechargeable batteries have also been improved.

At the PD Treatment Center of SWFL, we continue to bring you the latest information regarding all aspects of this disease. We hold firm to the conviction that empowering you with education will make you better patients with more confidence in your journey with PD, resulting in a better quality of life.

This year our Spring Symposium will center around "A Holistic Approach to Treatment." As we treat you, we look forward to helping you emotionally, spiritually, and physically. First, Mary Spremulli, CCC-SPL and Debra Tarakofsky, CCC-SPL will open the program with a "loud" talk emphasizing ways to improve and preserve speech and swallowing functions, often affected in PD. They will address significant problems around this topic in the moderate to advanced stages of the disease.

Vibha Kumar studied and received her certification in yoga and meditation from the highly reputed Bihar School of Yoga in India. We are honored to have her reviewing "Mindfulness and Yoga for Balance." There is no real benefit in improving motor symptoms of PD if you ignore anxiety, depression, anger, and frustration in your daily life. These feelings are often the cause of significant deterioration in the home environment and are capable at times of breaking a family apart.

Next, we will have a special guest from Las Vegas, NV. Ms. Kelly Papesh, DNP, ARNP is a most experienced and dynamic nurse, who for years practiced side by side with very well-known neurologists in the Movement Disorders community. She will review "Lifestyle in Parkinson's." No matter how many times we have previously discussed the importance of dietary intervention and physical exercise, for some of you in the audience this material will be new. Furthermore, I know that a refresher course is not a bad idea for those who are still not totally sold on the idea of joining a gym and eating better.

In the afternoon session, I will give a presentation titled: "Is there a Better Medical Treatment?" I hope to convey information that will help you understand why your current treatment may not be the best, and the advantages of newer drugs versus older versions. It may have taken me a while, but I eventually switched from manual cameras to digital ones.



Finally, Dr. Richard Dewey, III M.D., will talk to us about "Advanced Therapies in PD." This will be an amazing presentation by a young, well-trained Movement Disorders Specialist, bringing us the latest advances in DBS technology, and the exciting new infusion therapies, some of them approved just a few weeks ago.

Get ready, this is going to be a *great* program. We are *winning* the battle.

*Welcome to our 2025 PD Spring Symposium.*

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# Sleep and Stress: Understanding the Critical Connection During Stress Awareness Month

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

**A**pril marks Stress Awareness Month, a time when health professionals and communities focus on the causes and management of stress. For individuals living with sleep apnea, the relationship between stress and sleep creates a particularly challenging cycle that demands attention. At SAIF, we recognize that quality sleep is fundamental to managing stress, especially for those with sleep disorders.

Sleep apnea affects millions of Americans, causing breathing interruptions that fragment sleep and prevent the deep, restorative rest needed for optimal health. These disruptions not only affect your energy levels but also significantly impact your body's ability to manage stress hormones.

## The Stress-Sleep Apnea Connection

When you suffer from sleep apnea, each breathing pause triggers a stress response in your body. Your brain registers these moments as mini-emergencies, releasing stress hormones including cortisol and adrenaline. Over time, these repeated stress responses during what should be restful sleep create a physiological burden that extends into your waking hours.

Research shows that individuals with untreated sleep apnea often have chronically elevated cortisol levels, which can lead to increased anxiety, irritability, and difficulty managing daily stressors. This creates a troubling cycle: stress worsens sleep quality, and poor sleep heightens stress sensitivity.

## How Sleep Apnea Affects Your Stress Response

Without adequate deep sleep, your brain's emotional processing centers become overactive while the logical, problem-solving regions show decreased function. This neurological imbalance makes you more reactive to stressful situations and less equipped to handle them rationally.

The fragmented sleep pattern typical in sleep apnea prevents your body from moving properly through the sleep cycles necessary for stress recovery. The result is a stress response system that remains constantly activated, never fully resetting to a calm baseline.

## Breaking the Cycle Through Proper Treatment

At SAIF, we understand that addressing sleep apnea is essential for stress management. When sleep apnea is effectively treated, patients typically report significant improvements in their ability to handle stress, along with enhanced mood and emotional regulation.

CPAP therapy, oral appliances, and other treatments not only improve breathing during sleep but also help restore normal sleep architecture. This allows for longer periods of deep sleep and REM sleep, which are crucial for emotional processing and stress recovery.

## Beyond Medical Treatment: Comprehensive Sleep Hygiene

While medical intervention is often necessary for sleep apnea, complementary stress-reduction practices can enhance treatment effectiveness. During Stress Awareness Month, we encourage our patients to adopt comprehensive sleep hygiene practices:

-  Maintain consistent sleep and wake times, even on weekends, to support your body's natural rhythms.
-  Create a calming bedtime routine that signals to your brain that it's time to wind down.
-  Make your bedroom a stress-free sanctuary by removing work materials, electronic devices, and other stress triggers.
-  Limit caffeine and alcohol, both of which can worsen sleep apnea symptoms and disrupt sleep quality.
-  Incorporate gentle movement like yoga or walking earlier in the day to reduce stress without stimulating your system before bedtime.

## The Broader Health Benefits

The importance of addressing sleep apnea extends far beyond stress management. Quality sleep supports immune function, cardiovascular health,

cognitive performance, and metabolic balance. By treating sleep apnea, you're investing in your overall health resilience.

During Stress Awareness Month, we invite you to consider how your sleep quality might be affecting your ability to manage life's challenges. If you experience symptoms such as chronic fatigue, morning headaches, irritability, or have been told you snore heavily or stop breathing during sleep, we encourage you to reach out for a comprehensive sleep evaluation.

At SAIF, we're dedicated to diagnosing and treating sleep disorders with personalized approaches that consider your unique circumstances and needs. Our team understands that quality sleep isn't a luxury—it's a necessity for managing stress and maintaining overall wellness.

This Stress Awareness Month, make sleep a priority in your stress management strategy. With proper diagnosis and treatment of sleep apnea, you can break the cycle of stress and sleep disruption, opening the door to improved health, greater resilience, and a more balanced life.

## Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

Dr. Eusebio is a renowned sleep specialist, board certified, fellowship trained, and the founder of The Sleep & Apnea Institute of Florida. With over 20 years of experience in the field, he has dedicated his career to helping patients achieve their best sleep.

Dr. Eusebio is known for his compassionate approach to patient care. His expertise in diagnosing and treating multiple sleep disorders has transformed the lives of countless individuals, making him a trusted name in the field.

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# Regenerative Frontier:

## MSC Exosomes Show Promise for Parkinson's and Beyond

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

**R**ecent scientific breakthroughs have positioned Mesenchymal Stem Cell (MSC) exosomes as potential game-changers in the treatment of neurodegenerative conditions, with Parkinson's disease showing particularly encouraging results. While Parkinson's represents a critical but relatively limited market, emerging research suggests these powerful cellular messengers may have broader applications across neurodegenerative disorders and even general health optimization.

### Parkinson's Breakthrough: What Studies Reveal

Parkinson's disease affects approximately 10 million people worldwide, characterized by progressive loss of dopamine-producing neurons. Traditional treatments primarily manage symptoms rather than addressing the underlying neurodegeneration.

Recent studies demonstrate that MSC exosomes—tiny vesicles released by stem cells that transport proteins, lipids, and genetic material—can cross the blood-brain barrier and deliver regenerative cargo directly to damaged neural tissues. In pre-clinical models, these exosomes have shown remarkable abilities to:

- Reduce neuroinflammation associated with Parkinson's progression
- Promote survival of dopaminergic neurons
- Enhance mitochondrial function in affected brain regions
- Stimulate neurogenesis and improve neural circuit connectivity

A 2023 study published in *Stem Cell Research & Therapy* reported significant motor function improvement in Parkinson's models after MSC exosome administration, with effects lasting considerably longer than conventional therapies.

### Expanding Horizons: Applications Beyond Parkinson's

The therapeutic potential of MSC exosomes extends well beyond Parkinson's disease, potentially transforming treatment approaches for multiple neurodegenerative conditions:

**Alzheimer's Disease:** Affecting over 50 million people globally, Alzheimer's represents a substantially larger market. Preliminary research indicates

MSC exosomes may reduce amyloid-beta and tau aggregation while supporting neural regeneration and cognitive function. A Phase I clinical trial showed promising safety profiles and cognitive stabilization in early-stage patients.

**Multiple Sclerosis:** Studies suggest MSC exosomes can modulate the immune response that drives MS pathology, potentially reducing demyelination and promoting remyelination of damaged nerve fibers. This dual neuroprotective and regenerative approach addresses both inflammatory and degenerative aspects of MS.

**Vascular Dementia:** By improving cerebral blood flow, reducing oxidative stress, and enhancing neural repair mechanisms, MSC exosomes show promise for vascular cognitive impairment, the second most common form of dementia.

### Holistic Health Applications

Beyond neurodegenerative conditions, MSC exosomes demonstrate potential for overall health optimization:

**Cognitive Enhancement:** Early research suggests these biological messengers may support healthy brain aging by improving neural plasticity, reducing age-related inflammation, and enhancing cognitive reserve even in non-pathological states.

**Immune Modulation:** MSC exosomes contain powerful immunomodulatory factors that may help balance immune function, potentially benefiting conditions ranging from autoimmune disorders to chronic inflammation.

**Cellular Rejuvenation:** The regenerative signals carried by these vesicles appear to activate tissue repair pathways throughout the body, supporting cellular health from the molecular level upward.

### Market Outlook and Challenges

While the Parkinson's market alone might present limitations (estimated at \$5.7 billion globally by 2028), the combined neurodegenerative disease space represents over \$45 billion in market potential. Adding applications for healthy aging and immune optimization expands possibilities significantly.

Challenges remain in standardization, scalable production, and regulatory pathways. However, recent technological advances in exosome isolation, characterization, and loading techniques are addressing many of these hurdles.

### Conclusion

The therapeutic versatility of MSC exosomes positions them as a promising platform technology rather than a single-disease treatment. Their ability to deliver multiple regenerative signals simultaneously, cross the blood-brain barrier effectively, and promote tissue repair represents a paradigm shift in how we approach neurodegenerative conditions and health optimization.

As research continues to validate their efficacy across broader applications, MSC exosomes may soon transition from experimental treatments to standard therapeutic options—offering new hope for conditions that have long challenged conventional medicine.

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# Plantar Fasciitis Embolization: A Breakthrough Treatment for Chronic Heel Pain

By Russell Becker, DO

**F**or millions of people worldwide, the first steps out of bed each morning are accompanied by excruciating heel pain. This hallmark symptom of plantar fasciitis—a condition characterized by inflammation of the thick band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the toes—can significantly impact quality of life and daily activities. While conventional treatments like physical therapy, orthotics, and corticosteroid injections provide relief for many, a subset of patients continues to suffer from persistent symptoms despite exhausting traditional options. Enter plantar fasciitis embolization, a minimally invasive procedure that is changing the landscape of treatment for chronic heel pain.

## Understanding the Innovation

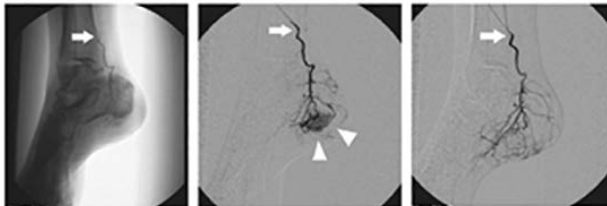
Plantar fasciitis embolization represents a paradigm shift in addressing the root cause of chronic heel pain. The procedure targets the abnormal blood vessels that develop around the plantar fascia during chronic inflammation. These vessels, which can be visualized using specialized imaging techniques, contribute to ongoing pain by releasing inflammatory mediators and creating a cycle of persistent irritation.

During the procedure, vascular interventionalists use angiography to map the blood vessel network in the affected area. They then strategically inject tiny gel particles into specific arteries that supply the inflamed tissue. These biocompatible particles temporarily block blood flow to the abnormal vessels, effectively "starving" the inflammatory process while preserving blood supply to normal surrounding tissues.

## The Procedure Experience

Patients undergoing plantar fasciitis embolization typically receive local anesthesia and conscious sedation, making it an outpatient procedure. The vascular interventionalist makes a small puncture in the groin or ankle to access the arterial system. Using fluoroscopic guidance, a catheter is navigated through the arterial network down to the foot vessels that feed the plantar fascia.

Once the target vessels are identified, embolic agents—usually microspheres ranging from 100-300 microns in size—are carefully injected.



The entire procedure generally takes between 60-90 minutes, and patients can return home the same day with minimal recovery time. Most can resume normal activities within 24-48 hours, though strenuous exercise is typically restricted for one week.

## Clinical Outcomes and Evidence

The evidence supporting embolization for plantar fasciitis continues to grow. Early clinical studies have reported promising results, with success rates between 70-90%. A 2021 prospective study published in the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology* followed 42 patients with chronic plantar fasciitis who underwent embolization after failing conservative treatment for at least six months. The results showed that 83% of participants experienced significant pain reduction at three months post-procedure, with improvements maintained at one-year follow-up.

Patients typically report gradual improvement in symptoms over several weeks following the procedure. Maximum benefit is often observed between 4-12 weeks post-embolization, coinciding with the time needed for inflammatory processes to subside and tissue healing to occur.

## Candidates for the Procedure

Not everyone with plantar fasciitis is an ideal candidate for embolization. The procedure is primarily indicated for patients with chronic symptoms (lasting more than six months) who have not responded adequately to conservative treatments. Before undergoing embolization, patients typically complete a trial of:

- Physical therapy and stretching protocols
- Orthotics and supportive footwear
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Corticosteroid injections
- Extracorporeal shock wave therapy

Proper patient selection also involves confirming the diagnosis through clinical examination and imaging studies. Ultrasound or MRI is often used to verify plantar fascia thickening and rule out alternative causes of heel pain such as stress fractures or nerve entrapment.

## Looking Ahead: The Future of Plantar Fasciitis Treatment

While plantar fasciitis embolization has shown promising results, it remains a relatively new treatment option. The procedure is currently available at specialized centers with vascular interventional expertise, though availability is expanding as evidence of its efficacy grows.

As with any medical innovation, long-term outcomes data continue to accumulate. Research is ongoing to refine patient selection criteria, optimize embolic agents, and establish standardized protocols. Questions regarding the potential need for repeat procedures and comparative effectiveness versus other treatments are active areas of investigation.

For patients who have exhausted traditional approaches without finding relief, plantar fasciitis embolization offers new hope. As one patient succinctly stated after undergoing the procedure: "After years of dreading those first morning steps, I can finally start my day without pain dictating my movements."

*It's no stretch to say that Russell Becker, DO, a fellow-trained vascular surgeon practicing at Vascular Center of Naples in Naples, Florida, gets into things for the long run. Dr. Becker, who runs marathons in his free time, has experience and interest in all areas of vascular and endovascular surgery, including treatment of conditions like carotid artery disease, hemodialysis access creation and maintenance, and diseases of the veins.*



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# THE ART OF AGING GRACEFULLY: WHY SKIN CHECKS MATTER AT ART OF DERMATOLOGY

**O**ur skin tells the story of our lives—every laugh line, sun-kissed moment, and year of experience. As we age, maintaining skin health becomes increasingly important, not just for aesthetics but for overall wellbeing. At Art of Dermatology, we believe that healthy aging skin begins with proactive care and regular professional assessment.

## Understanding Skin's Aging Process

Skin ages through two distinct processes: intrinsic aging (determined by genetics) and extrinsic aging (influenced by environmental factors). While we cannot control our genetic timeline, we can significantly impact how external factors affect our skin.

With age, our skin naturally produces less collagen and elastin, leading to thinner, less resilient skin. Cell turnover slows, and moisture retention diminishes. Meanwhile, years of sun exposure, pollution, and lifestyle choices accelerate these changes, potentially leading to premature aging and increased risk of skin conditions, including cancer.

## The Crucial Role of Regular Skin Checks

Regular dermatological examinations serve as the cornerstone of proactive skin health management. These checks provide much more than peace of mind—they can be lifesaving. Consider these compelling reasons to schedule regular visits to Art of Dermatology:

- **Early Detection of Skin Cancer:** With over one million Americans diagnosed with skin cancer annually, early detection dramatically improves treatment outcomes. Professional dermatologists can identify suspicious changes that might go unnoticed during self-examinations.
- **Personalized Aging Management:** Everyone's skin ages differently. Regular assessments allow dermatologists to craft personalized treatment plans that address your skin's unique needs, from addressing sun damage to managing age-related conditions like rosacea or seborrheic keratosis.
- **Tracking Changing Moles and Spots:** What appears as a harmless freckle today could develop concerning characteristics over time. Consistent monitoring creates a valuable baseline for detecting meaningful changes.



- **Expert Guidance on Products and Treatments:** The skincare industry overwhelms consumers with countless anti-aging products. Your dermatologist can recommend evidence-based solutions truly appropriate for your skin type and concerns.

## Healthy Habits for Aging Skin

Between professional visits to Art of Dermatology, maintaining these daily habits supports optimal skin health:

- **Sun Protection:** Apply broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen daily, regardless of weather conditions. Wear protective clothing and seek shade when possible.
- **Hydration:** Both internal hydration (drinking water) and external moisturizing help maintain skin's barrier function and elasticity.
- **Gentle Cleansing:** As skin becomes more delicate with age, harsh products can cause irritation. Opt for gentle, pH-balanced cleansers.
- **Antioxidant-Rich Diet:** Consuming foods high in vitamins C, E, and omega-3 fatty acids supports skin's natural repair processes.
- **Quality Sleep:** During deep sleep, skin undergoes essential regeneration and repair processes critical for healthy aging.

## The Art of Dermatology Difference

At Art of Dermatology, we combine medical expertise with aesthetic sensibility. Our comprehensive skin examinations include advanced technologies

for detecting subtle changes invisible to the naked eye. Our dermatologists take time to understand your concerns, family history, and lifestyle factors affecting your skin health.

Rather than simply treating visible problems, we partner with you in preventative care—identifying risk factors and potential issues before they manifest. This approach not only supports graceful aging but potentially prevents serious health complications.

Don't wait for visible problems to appear. Schedule your comprehensive skin check at Art of Dermatology today and take the first step toward lifetime skin health. Remember, healthy aging isn't about fighting time—it's about supporting your skin's natural processes with expert care and attention.

Your skin's journey deserves the art of professional dermatology.

Art of Dermatology is the premier choice for comprehensive Dermatology, Surgical, and Aesthetic services. We are dedicated to offering exceptional care for the diagnosis, treatment, and enhancement of your overall skin health.



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# UNDERSTANDING FATIGUE: A Holistic Approach to Restoring Energy

By Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

**A**s a functional medicine doctor, I've always been intrigued by how different forms of energy influence our well-being. One of the most common concerns people bring to their doctors is fatigue—a persistent lack of energy that can significantly impact daily life. While occasional tiredness is normal, chronic fatigue can be frustrating and debilitating. In this article, we'll explore fatigue from a functional medicine perspective and uncover ways to restore energy naturally.

## What Causes Fatigue?

Fatigue can stem from many sources, and finding the root cause is essential to feeling better. Some people experience temporary fatigue due to stress, poor sleep, or a hectic lifestyle. However, for others, fatigue is long-lasting and unexplained, even after extensive medical testing.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is one such condition that baffles both patients and doctors. To receive a diagnosis of CFS, fatigue must persist for at least six months and be accompanied by at least four of the following symptoms:

- Persistent sore throat
- Tender lymph nodes in the neck
- Muscle or joint pain
- Headaches
- Poor concentration or memory
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Extreme exhaustion after physical or mental exertion

Before diagnosing CFS, doctors rule out other medical conditions that could be responsible, such as thyroid disorders, anemia, sleep apnea, depression, and many others. Unfortunately, many individuals with chronic fatigue have already undergone multiple tests and treatments without success.

## A Functional Medicine Approach to Fatigue

Unlike conventional medicine, which often treats symptoms, functional medicine looks at the body as a whole. Instead of simply prescribing medication, functional doctors dig deeper to uncover potential triggers for fatigue. These can include:

- **Genetic factors:** Some people have a genetic predisposition to low energy levels or poor detoxification.
- **Prenatal Influences:** A mother's stress levels during pregnancy can impact a child's energy balance later in life.

- **Past infections or illnesses:** Viral infections, mold exposure, or autoimmune conditions can contribute to chronic fatigue.
- **Nutritional deficiencies:** Lack of essential vitamins and minerals, such as B12, magnesium, or iron, can drain energy levels.
- **Emotional stress:** Anxiety, grief, or isolation can take a significant toll on the body's energy reserves.
- **Environmental toxins:** Exposure to pollutants, chemicals, or allergens can lead to chronic inflammation and fatigue.

## The Power of Lifestyle Changes

One of the cornerstones of functional medicine is the belief that lifestyle plays a crucial role in overall health. Small, consistent changes in daily habits can make a big difference in combating fatigue.

### 1. Sleep Optimization

Quality sleep is one of the most powerful tools for restoring energy. Many people with fatigue struggle with sleep disturbances, waking up feeling unrefreshed. Simple strategies like establishing a bedtime routine, limiting screen time before bed, and using relaxation techniques can help improve sleep quality.

### 2. Nutrition for Energy

Food is fuel, and what we eat directly affects our energy levels. Functional medicine emphasizes a whole-food, nutrient-dense diet tailored to each individual's needs. Key recommendations include:

- Eating balanced meals with protein, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates.
- Avoiding processed foods, refined sugars, and artificial additives.
- Staying hydrated with clean, filtered water to support cellular energy production.

### 3. Movement and Exercise

Although it may seem counterintuitive, movement is essential for increasing energy. Gentle exercises like yoga, stretching, or walking can improve circulation, oxygenate the body, and enhance overall vitality. However, for those with CFS, excessive exercise can cause more exhaustion. A functional medicine approach tailors activity levels to each person's energy capacity.

### 4. Stress Management and Emotional Well-Being

Chronic stress depletes energy reserves and contributes to fatigue. Mindfulness practices, meditation,

deep breathing exercises, and spending time in nature can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity. Additionally, building strong social connections and addressing emotional health play an important role in restoring energy.

## The Role of Supplements

While food should always be the primary source of nutrients, targeted supplementation can help support energy production in the body. Functional medicine doctors customize supplement recommendations based on individual needs rather than promoting a one-size-fits-all approach. I recommend that people do not fall for the beautiful advertisements of supplements on TV and radio because people metabolize things differently, their present medications can interact with the ingredients in the supplements, and many supplements are also contaminated with environmental pollutants, which may have rendered a patient fatigued in first place. A functional doctor will assess your capacity to process supplements, will review your existing medication list, look for interactions, and take your sex, age, weight, body built, and lifestyle into consideration, before decide exactly what kind of supplement you need and the specific dose.

## Healing the Whole Person

Fatigue is rarely a simple issue with a single cause. It often results from imbalances in multiple body systems. That's why functional medicine takes a comprehensive approach, addressing diet, lifestyle, emotional well-being, and environmental factors.

By working closely with patients, functional doctors help them identify and remove obstacles to optimal health. More than just treating symptoms, the goal is to restore balance and empower individuals with the knowledge and tools they need to thrive.

If you or someone you love struggles with persistent fatigue, know that there is hope. By exploring a holistic approach and making meaningful lifestyle changes, it is possible to regain energy and live life to the fullest.



**Svetlana Kogan, M.D.**

*The author of 'Diet Slave No More!', Svetlana Kogan, MD is a Board-Certified Internal Medicine, Holistic & Functional Medical Doctor with 25 years of experience. She has appeared as a health expert on prime-time TV and radio stations and has authored hundreds of holistic health articles for internet and print. She moved her Concierge Practice from Manhattan NYC to Naples in 2019. Her Functional Medicine Primary Care Practice is focused on prevention and holistic approach to illness, and longevity.*

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# WOMEN'S EYE HEALTH AND SAFETY MONTH: PROTECTING YOUR VISION FOR A LIFETIME

**A**pril marks Women's Eye Health and Safety Month, a crucial time to focus on an often overlooked aspect of women's health. Women face unique eye health challenges throughout their lives, from hormonal fluctuations to higher rates of certain eye conditions. Taking proactive steps today can preserve your vision for decades to come.

Women are disproportionately affected by several eye conditions. According to recent studies, women account for nearly two-thirds of all cases of visual impairment and blindness worldwide. This disparity stems from both biological factors and lifestyle considerations that uniquely impact women's eye health.

Hormonal changes throughout a woman's life can significantly affect vision. Pregnancy often brings temporary vision changes, while menopause may increase dry eye symptoms. Birth control and hormone replacement therapy can also influence eye health, sometimes increasing the risk of conditions like cataracts.

Autoimmune disorders, which affect women at higher rates than men, frequently impact eye health. Conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and Sjögren's syndrome can cause inflammation and damage to delicate eye tissues. Regular screenings become even more vital for women managing these conditions.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of vision loss in older adults, affects women more severely than men. Women also experience higher rates of dry eye syndrome, with post-menopausal women particularly vulnerable due to hormonal changes that reduce tear production.

Cosmetic use presents another unique consideration for women's eye health. Mascara, eyeliner, and other eye makeup can introduce bacteria if used improperly or kept beyond their shelf life. Proper makeup hygiene and regular replacement of products are simple yet effective preventive measures.

Protecting your eye health doesn't require dramatic lifestyle changes. Small, consistent habits can make a significant difference:

**Schedule comprehensive eye exams annually**, even if your vision seems unchanged. Many serious eye conditions develop without noticeable symptoms until significant damage has occurred.

**Wear UV-protective sunglasses year-round.** Sun exposure contributes to cataracts and macular degeneration, making proper protection essential regardless of season.

**Maintain a nutrient-rich diet** with plenty of dark leafy greens, colorful fruits, and omega-3 fatty acids. These foods support eye health by providing essential vitamins and antioxidants that protect against cellular damage.

**Manage screen time** mindfully by following the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This reduces eye strain from prolonged digital device use.

**Stay hydrated** and consider using preservative-free artificial tears if you experience dry eye symptoms, particularly in air-conditioned environments or during extended screen use.

**If you smoke, seek support to quit.** Smoking dramatically increases the risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, and optic nerve damage.

This April, during Women's Eye Health and Safety Month, make vision care a priority. Your future self will thank you for the gift of clear, healthy vision throughout your lifetime. Remember that many eye conditions are preventable or manageable with early intervention—the key is taking action before symptoms appear.

Your vision connects you to the world around you. Protect it today for a brighter tomorrow.



**JON R. BERLIE, M.D.**  
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Dr. Berlie is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in LASIK and premium lens cataract surgery. He has been serving the Naples community for over 20 years. Dr. Berlie achieves superior visual outcomes for his cataract patients by utilizing the latest lens technology combined with state of the art equipment. His expertise in this area has led the Center For Sight Naples office to be recognized as the "Best Eye Center" in Naples, FL for the past 15 years. In addition to laser cataract surgery, Dr. Berlie performs vision correction procedures including Epi-LASEK and Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE). He is also skilled in reconstructive and cosmetic eyelid surgery. He has been honored as one of America's "Top Doctors" by the prestigious Top Doctors list, published annually by Castle Connolly Medical, Ltd.

Dr. Berlie completed his undergraduate training at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada and the California State University of San Bernardino where he received the California State University of San Bernardino Research Scholarship Award. He then attended Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska where he graduated Cum Laude, was elected as Class President, and received the Senior of the Year Award. He completed his internship in internal medicine also at Creighton University Medical Center.

Dr. Berlie continued his education at the University of Nebraska Medical Center where he completed his ophthalmology residency and received the awards of Chief Resident and the Resident of the Year Award. Dr. Berlie then went on to Saint Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City to complete his fellowship training in Oculoplastic and Aesthetic Laser Surgery.

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# THE POWER OF SONG: HOW SINGING AND FRIENDSHIP ENHANCE WELL-BEING

By Jenny Bradley

**M**usic can bring people together, uplift spirits and even improve health. For older adults, engaging in social activities like singing—whether in a choir, at home, or in a community setting—offers a wealth of benefits. Research suggests that singing can enhance cognitive function, improve lung capacity and reduce stress. Just as importantly, it fosters friendships and strengthens a sense of belonging.

Frank Soffey and Andrew Murphy, both residents of The Carlisle Naples, have found joy and connection through their shared love of music. While Soffey never considered himself a singer before, Murphy's encouragement led him to join the choir at Saint William Catholic Church in Naples. Now, they sing together every Sunday, discovering not just the harmonies of music but also the harmony of friendship at their active retirement community.

Soffey's journey into singing started with a simple suggestion from Murphy, a longtime choir member. "I had never sung before, and I didn't know the precision needed singing in a choir," Soffey admits. "But I've been taking music lessons and learning to read music. This has been a commitment to my long-time aptitude and love of singing."

Murphy, who has been part of church choirs for over 40 years, sees singing as a wonderful way to stay socially engaged. "One of the benefits of being in a choir is that you get to know such amazing people," he says. "It keeps you active, both mentally and socially."

For Soffey, joining the choir was about more than just music. It was about embracing new experiences and staying engaged. His curiosity about music has now inspired him to take piano lessons this summer. "I want to be able to practice on my own and improve," he says. "Learning something new keeps my mind sharp."

Beyond the joy of making music, studies have shown that singing and continuous learning offer significant health benefits. Regular singing and skill-building:

- **Strengthens the respiratory system** – Engaging in deep breathing exercises while singing improves lung function.
- **Boosts cognitive function** – Learning new music, memorizing lyrics, and following melodies stimulate the brain.
- **Enhances emotional well-being** – Singing and learning something new release endorphins, the brain's 'feel-good' chemicals, which help reduce stress and anxiety.
- **Encourages social interaction** – Singing in a group fosters connection, helping combat loneliness and isolation.
- **Keeps the mind active** – Challenging the brain with new skills like reading music or playing an instrument supports lifelong learning and mental agility.

Murphy, who still drives and remains active in the greater Naples community, believes that staying socially and mentally engaged is key to aging well. "I still play bridge, visit my old condo in Pelican Bay and meet up with friends. But singing has brought a new kind of joy into my life," he says.

You don't have to live in a retirement community to experience the benefits of singing, learning and friendship. Here are a few ways to incorporate them into your life:

1. **Join a local choir or singing group** – Many churches and community centers offer choirs or music groups that welcome beginners.
2. **Host sing-alongs with friends** – Gather with neighbors or loved ones and sing along to favorite tunes.
3. **Take music or language lessons** – Online resources and local classes make it easy to pick up a new skill at any age.
4. **Sing along to your favorite music at home** – Even casual singing can provide cognitive and emotional benefits.
5. **Challenge yourself to learn something new** – Whether it's music, painting, or technology, lifelong learning enhances quality of life.



Singing and learning are more than just pastimes for Soffey and Murphy; they are sources of joy, friendship and personal and spiritual growth. Whether in a choir, at a piano or singing along to the radio, music and new experiences can enrich life at any age.

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# APRIL IS PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

By Kathy V. Verdes, APRN, A-GNP-C

**A**pril marks a pivotal moment in the fight against Parkinson's disease, as it's globally recognized as Parkinson's Awareness Month. This month serves as a beacon of hope, shedding light on the realities faced by millions worldwide grappling with this neurodegenerative disorder. Through education, advocacy, and support, Parkinson's Awareness Month aims to dispel myths, raise awareness, and inspire action. Here are key facts and insights to deepen our understanding of Parkinson's disease and the significance of April as its dedicated awareness month.

## The Origins of Parkinson's Awareness Month

Established in April 1997 by the Parkinson's Disease Foundation (PDF), now merged with the Parkinson's Foundation, Parkinson's Awareness Month aims to honor the birth month of Dr. James Parkinson. Dr. Parkinson's seminal work, "An Essay on the Shaking Palsy," published in 1817, was the first detailed description of the disease, laying the foundation for future research and understanding.

## Understanding Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that affects movement, primarily due to the loss of dopamine-producing brain cells. Common symptoms include tremors, bradykinesia (slowed movements), rigidity, and impaired balance. However, Parkinson's can also manifest with non-motor symptoms such as cognitive impairment, depression, and sleep disturbances.

## Global Impact and Prevalence

Parkinson's disease affects people of all races and ethnicities, with over 10 million individuals worldwide living with the condition. As the global population ages, the prevalence of Parkinson's is expected to rise significantly, making awareness and early intervention crucial.

## Advancements in Research and Treatment

Over the years, significant progress has been made in understanding Parkinson's disease, leading to advancements in treatment and management strategies. From medication and deep brain stimulation to promising research in neuroprotection and disease-modifying therapies, ongoing efforts offer hope for improved quality of life and ultimately, a cure.



## Challenges and Stigma

Despite progress, Parkinson's disease continues to pose significant challenges, both for those living with the condition and their caregivers. Stigma and misconceptions surrounding Parkinson's can lead to social isolation and barriers to accessing support and resources. Parkinson's Awareness Month aims to challenge these stereotypes and foster greater understanding and empathy.

## Empowering Advocacy and Support

Parkinson's organizations and advocacy groups play a crucial role in providing support, resources, and a unified voice for the Parkinson's community. From fundraising events and awareness campaigns to educational initiatives and support groups, these organizations empower individuals to navigate their Parkinson's journey with dignity and resilience.

## The Power of Community

Parkinson's Awareness Month serves as a rallying point for the global Parkinson's community, bringing together individuals, families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, researchers, and advocates. Through shared experiences and collective action, this community drives positive change, raises funds for research, and amplifies the voices of those affected by Parkinson's.

## The Importance of Early Detection and Intervention

Early diagnosis and intervention are key to managing Parkinson's disease effectively. Recognizing the early signs and symptoms, seeking medical evaluation, and accessing specialized care can help individuals optimize their treatment plan and maintain independence for as long as possible.

## Inspiring Stories of Hope and Resilience

Amidst the challenges posed by Parkinson's disease, stories of hope, resilience, and triumph abound. From individuals courageously navigating their Parkinson's journey to researchers tirelessly working towards a cure, Parkinson's Awareness Month celebrates the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

## Joining the Movement

As April unfolds, let us join hands in solidarity with the Parkinson's community. Whether through raising awareness, participating in fundraising events, or advocating for policy change, each of us has the power to make a difference in the fight against Parkinson's disease.

In conclusion, Parkinson's Awareness Month in April serves as a poignant reminder of the impact of Parkinson's disease on individuals, families, and communities worldwide. By raising awareness, dispelling myths, fostering empathy, and promoting advocacy, we can collectively strive towards a future free from the burden of Parkinson's. Let us stand together, united in our pursuit of a world where Parkinson's disease is no longer a source of fear or uncertainty, but rather a chapter in the history of medical triumphs.

## Are you ready for a consultation?

Your treatment will be performed by a Certified Nurse Practitioner. Schedule your appointment now!

## KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP-C

Kathy earned her Master's in Nursing Degree from Kaplan University in 2017. Kathy is certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) as an Adult- Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (A-GNP-C). Prior to her Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Degree (APRN), Kathy managed a weight loss clinic for over 6 years right here in Naples. Kathy has since then managed acute and chronic care illnesses in different settings, and she genuinely enjoys spending time with her patients.



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## The Importance of Vascularization in Diabetic Wound Healing

**Michael J. Petrocelli, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S., C.W.S.P.**  
Board Certified Ankle and Foot Surgeon and Board Certified Wound Care Specialist

**D**iabetes is a complicated condition to gain control of, but one of the most painful parts of this disease is the development of diabetic wounds. Often these wounds become “non-healing” due to the adverse effects of the systemic disorder.

Millions of people with diabetes will suffer from diabetic foot ulcers more than once in their lifetimes. Diabetes is a progressive disease that is many times, not taken seriously enough by people predisposed to the disorder.

High blood sugar damages various organs within the body, but also has a severely adverse effect on nerves. This nerve damage happens when the blood supply is limited. The small blood vessels, which supply blood and nutrients to the nerves becomes impaired. When the nerves are no longer fed nutrients, they either die, or their signals to the brain are ineffective. The lack of brain signaling from the nerve endings makes it difficult for a person to feel pain in their foot, so often injuries and these disorders are overlooked. This syndrome is called peripheral diabetic neuropathy.

Because of this nerve damage, people with diabetes are at a higher risk of developing foot ulcers. A foot wound may not sound overly alarming to most people, but foot ulcers can be life-threatening. These small sores go undetected due to the lack of feeling. If a patient delays treatment, foot ulcers can lead to amputation, strokes, heart attacks and severe infections that can spread throughout the entire body.

At Collier Podiatry, they make it a priority to provide advanced diabetic wound services. Collier Podiatry, is the practice of Dr. Petrocelli, a board-certified podiatrist who has been practicing since 1994. With over 20 years of experience, Dr. Petrocelli provides next-level care for diabetic patients with wounds and ulcers. He is board certified in wound healing and can treat any wound below the knee.



### Diabetic Wounds & Vascularization

If you have ulcers and lacerations that never fully heal, you might have a chronic wound. These are most often caused by diabetes mellitus, which causes blood vessels in the feet and hands to grow smaller. The restriction of blood flow damages nerve areas and reduces sensation.

Chronic wounds can also be caused by venous stasis, a condition of the veins in the lower legs, which also deprives your feet of adequate blood flow. With both conditions, when you bump or cut your foot or when you develop an ulcer, the lack of blood flow makes it difficult for the wound to heal.

In the endothelial layer of the dermis, vascularization must take place in order to heal the wound. The neovascularization or also known as angiogenesis is when new microvessels, fibroblast, and collagen begin to proliferate and form along with an increase in oxygen uptake and micronutrients to help grow new tissue, and to build a strong vascular blood flow to supply the proper nutrients to the dermal layers.

Along with Collier Podiatry’s advanced wound healing protocols, Dr. Petrocelli often works directly with vascular surgeons to find ways to restore blood flow to the affected area so that the wound can finally heal.

Collier Podiatry maps out your treatment plan by taking a meticulous culture of your chronic wound, which assists them in deciphering and implementing the best strategy for your diabetic wound care and prescribing the correct medications for your particular case. Collier Podiatry does all of this with the goal of ridding you of your painful chronic wounds once and for all.

### Wound Care Treatment:

- Antibiotics
- Grafts
- Hyperbaric oxygen treatments
- Saline debridement
- Surgery
- Therapeutic footwear
- Wound care
- Vascular Treatment

People with diabetes are encouraged to do self-checks on their feet daily. As soon as you notice any redness or wounds, it is imperative to see your podiatrist.

The caring supportive staff at Collier Podiatry is available to answer your questions and make your appointment. Please visit their website at [www.collierpodiatry.com](http://www.collierpodiatry.com), or call them direct at (239) 775-0019.



**COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.**  
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# IN OFFICE HYSTEROSCOPY

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

## What is a hysteroscopy?

Hysteroscopy is a procedure that can be used to both diagnose and treat causes of abnormal bleeding. The procedure allows your doctor to look inside your uterus with a tool called a hysteroscope. This is a thin, lighted tube that is inserted into the vagina to examine the cervix and inside of the uterus. Hysteroscopy can be a part of the diagnosis process or an operative procedure.

## What is diagnostic hysteroscopy?

Dr. Gauta normally performs a diagnostic hysteroscopy in the office. The patient receives analgesia so they will be comfortable during the test. It is used to diagnose conditions such as abnormal uterine bleeding, adhesions, fibroids, polyps or to locate displaced intrauterine devices IUDs.

One of the newest technologies he uses in the office and in conjunction with the hysteroscope is RESECTR™. RESECTR allows Dr. Gauta to gently remove and eliminate intrauterine fibroids without the need to remove or even cut the uterus and without harming your uterine lining. This is especially important if you want to have children in the future. The procedure is performed under local analgesia and most patients experience only mild to moderate cramping. Patients go home the same day and on average, a 3 cm fibroid (about the size of a grape) can be removed in approximately 10 minutes.

## What is operative hysteroscopy?

Operative hysteroscopy is used to correct an abnormal condition that has been detected during a diagnostic hysteroscopy. If an abnormal condition was detected during the diagnostic hysteroscopy, an operative hysteroscopy can often be performed. Many conditions can be treated in the office using advanced technologies such as RESECTR which eliminates the need for a second visit and is a cost savings to the patient.

The time it takes to perform a hysteroscopy can range from less than five minutes to more than an hour depending on your specific condition. If an operative hysteroscopy is required Dr. Gauta will determine if it should be done in the office or surgery center. The choice is yours however where you would like your procedure done.



## When is operative hysteroscopy used?

Your doctor may perform a hysteroscopy to correct the following uterine conditions:

- **Polyps and fibroids:** Hysteroscopy is used to remove these non-cancerous growths found in the uterus.
- **Adhesions:** Also known as Asherman's Syndrome, uterine adhesions are bands of scar tissue that can form in the uterus and may lead to changes in menstrual flow as well as infertility. Hysteroscopy can help your doctor locate and remove the adhesions.
- **Septums:** Hysteroscopy can help determine whether you have a uterine septum, a malformation (defect) of the uterus that is present from birth.
- **Abnormal bleeding:** Hysteroscopy can help identify the cause of heavy or lengthy menstrual flow, as well as bleeding between periods or after menopause. Endometrial ablation is one procedure in which the hysteroscope, along with other instruments, is used to destroy the uterine lining in order to treat some causes of heavy bleeding.

## When should hysteroscopy be performed?

Your doctor may recommend scheduling the hysteroscopy for the first week after your menstrual period. This timing will provide the doctor with the best view of the inside of your uterus. Hysteroscopy is also performed to determine the cause of unexplained bleeding or spotting in postmenopausal women.

## How is hysteroscopy performed?

Prior to the procedure, your doctor may prescribe a sedative to help you relax. You will then be given analgesia appropriate for where you are having the procedure done. The procedure itself takes place in the following order:

- The doctor will dilate (widen) your cervix to allow the hysteroscope to be inserted.
- The hysteroscope is inserted through your vagina and cervix into the uterus.
- Carbon dioxide gas or a liquid solution is then inserted into the uterus, through the hysteroscope, to expand it and to clear away any blood or mucus.
- Next, a light shone through the hysteroscope allows your doctor to see your uterus and the openings of the fallopian tubes into the uterine cavity.
- Finally, if surgery needs to be performed, small instruments are inserted into the uterus through the hysteroscope.

## What can I expect after a hysteroscopy?

Most patients require nothing more than tylenol or ibuprofen to help with mild cramping.



Joseph Gauta, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C



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# High-Dose Vitamin C, Alpha Lipoic Acid, and Ozone Therapy: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN CANCER CARE

In recent years, interest has grown in complementary approaches to cancer treatment that may work alongside conventional therapies. Among these, high-dose intravenous (IV) vitamin C, alpha lipoic acid, and ozone therapy have garnered attention from both patients and researchers. While these treatments remain controversial in mainstream oncology, ongoing research continues to explore their potential benefits and limitations.

## High-Dose Intravenous Vitamin C

High-dose IV vitamin C therapy involves administering vitamin C directly into the bloodstream at concentrations much higher than could be achieved through oral supplementation. When given intravenously, vitamin C can reach blood levels 100-500 times higher than oral intake, potentially creating different biological effects.

The theoretical basis for using vitamin C in cancer care stems from several mechanisms. At high concentrations, vitamin C may generate hydrogen peroxide, which could selectively damage cancer cells while sparing healthy cells. Cancer cells often have lower levels of catalase, an enzyme that neutralizes hydrogen peroxide, potentially making them more vulnerable to this effect.

Several studies have investigated high-dose vitamin C's potential to enhance quality of life, reduce treatment side effects, and possibly improve outcomes when combined with standard treatments. Some research suggests it may sensitize certain cancer cells to chemotherapy and radiation, potentially enhancing their effectiveness.

However, the evidence remains mixed. While some clinical trials have shown promising results, others have found limited benefits. Most oncologists consider the evidence insufficient to recommend IV vitamin C as a standard treatment, though research continues.

## Alpha Lipoic Acid

Alpha lipoic acid (ALA) is a powerful antioxidant that the body produces naturally and is found in foods like spinach, broccoli, and organ meats. When used as a complementary therapy, it's typically administered intravenously at doses much higher than dietary intake.



ALA's potential in cancer care stems from its unique properties. It functions as both a water-soluble and fat-soluble antioxidant, allowing it to work throughout the body. Additionally, ALA can regenerate other antioxidants like vitamins C and E, potentially enhancing their effects.

Some research suggests ALA may help reduce oxidative stress, support cellular energy production, and potentially inhibit certain cancer cell growth pathways. When combined with other approaches like high-dose vitamin C, proponents suggest it may create synergistic effects.

## Ozone Therapy

Ozone therapy involves introducing ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), a gas composed of three oxygen atoms, into the body through various methods. In cancer care, this typically involves removing blood, exposing it to ozone, and reinfusing it (autohemotherapy).

The proposed mechanisms of ozone therapy include increasing oxygen delivery to tissues, stimulating the immune system, and creating a mild oxidative stress that may trigger adaptive responses. Some proponents suggest these effects could potentially create an environment less favorable to cancer cell growth.

Research on ozone therapy for cancer remains limited. While laboratory studies have shown some interesting effects, clinical evidence of efficacy specifically for cancer treatment is sparse. Most mainstream medical institutions do not currently recognize ozone therapy as a standard cancer treatment.

## Integration and Considerations

Proponents of these approaches often suggest using them as part of an integrative strategy alongside conventional treatments rather than as replacements. Some integrative medicine practitioners combine these therapies, suggesting potential synergistic effects when used together.

It's crucial to note that these treatments should be administered by qualified healthcare professionals in appropriate settings. IV therapies carry risks including infection, vein irritation, and potential interactions with certain medications and treatments.

Patients considering these approaches should discuss them with their oncology team. While some oncologists remain skeptical, others may be open to working with integrative practitioners to ensure safe coordination of care.

## Looking Forward

Research into these alternative approaches continues to evolve. Several clinical trials are examining high-dose vitamin C in combination with standard treatments, while the scientific understanding of ALA and ozone therapy in cancer care is still developing.

For patients navigating cancer treatment decisions, maintaining open communication with healthcare providers and critically evaluating available evidence remains essential in making informed choices about complementary approaches.

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# The Hidden Stress of Hearing Loss

By Sarah Sessler, Au.D. Doctor of Audiology/Ear Nerd

**S**tress is a part of everyday life. Work, relationships, and health concerns can all contribute to rising stress levels. But one often-overlooked cause of stress is hearing loss.

Hearing is essential for communication, and when it declines, everyday interactions become more difficult. Struggling to understand speech, missing important details, and feeling isolated can all lead to increased anxiety, frustration, and even physical health problems.

April is Stress Awareness Month, a time to recognize the impact stress has on our well-being. Understanding the link between hearing loss and stress is an important step toward improving overall health and quality of life.

## How Hearing Loss Contributes to Stress

Hearing loss develops gradually, and many people don't realize how much effort they're putting into listening until fatigue sets in. This phenomenon, known as listening fatigue, occurs because the brain works harder to fill in the gaps when hearing isn't clear.

The result? Mental exhaustion, frustration, and heightened stress levels—all of which can take a serious toll on overall well-being.

## Social Anxiety and Isolation

One of the most common effects of hearing loss is social anxiety. When people struggle to hear conversations, they often feel embarrassed asking others to repeat themselves. Instead of participating in discussions, they may choose to withdraw from social situations altogether.

This avoidance can lead to loneliness and isolation, both of which have been linked to increased stress and depression. A study from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) found that older adults with hearing loss are more likely to experience depression than those with normal hearing (NIDCD, 2021).

## Workplace Stress and Cognitive Overload

Hearing loss doesn't just affect social life—it can also impact job performance. Employees who struggle to hear clearly may experience chronic stress due to misunderstandings, difficulty following conversations, and decreased productivity.

According to a study by the Better Hearing Institute, people with untreated hearing loss can earn up to \$30,000 less per year than those who treat their hearing loss due to reduced workplace effectiveness (Better Hearing Institute, 2011). The fear of missing important details or appearing less competent can create ongoing anxiety.

Additionally, untreated hearing loss increases cognitive load, meaning the brain has to work harder to process sound. This extra strain can lead to memory issues, difficulty concentrating, and mental fatigue, making daily tasks even more stressful.

## The Physical Toll of Stress and Hearing Loss

Stress doesn't just affect emotions—it also has a direct impact on physical health. When the brain is constantly under pressure to interpret unclear sounds, the body responds by releasing cortisol, the primary stress hormone.

Over time, elevated cortisol levels can contribute to:

- High blood pressure
- Increased risk of heart disease
- Weakened immune function
- Poor sleep quality

A study published in *JAMA Otolaryngology* found that untreated hearing loss is associated with a 21% increased risk of developing chronic stress-related conditions, including high blood pressure and heart disease (Contrera et al., 2017).

## Hearing Loss, Stress, and Cognitive Decline

One of the most concerning links between hearing loss and stress is its effect on brain health. Research from Johns Hopkins University found that even mild hearing loss doubles the risk of dementia, while moderate to severe hearing loss increases the risk up to five times (Lin et al., 2011).

When hearing loss goes untreated, the brain receives less auditory stimulation, which can lead to cognitive decline. Combined with stress and social withdrawal, this creates a dangerous cycle that accelerates memory loss and mental decline.

## Reducing Stress Through Better Hearing

The good news is that treating hearing loss can significantly reduce stress and improve quality of life. Modern hearing aids enhance clarity, reduce background noise, and help people engage more comfortably in conversations.

Here's how improving hearing health leads to less stress:

1. **Effortless Communication** – Conversations become easier, reducing frustration and fatigue.
2. **Increased Social Confidence** – People feel more comfortable engaging in social settings and reconnecting with loved ones.
3. **Lower Cognitive Load** – The brain no longer has to work overtime to interpret sounds, improving mental clarity.
4. **Better Sleep and Relaxation** – Less daily stress leads to improved sleep quality and overall well-being.
5. **Improved Workplace Performance** – Clearer hearing means better communication, leading to less anxiety at work.

## Take Action for a Stress-Free Life

If you've noticed increased stress, frustration, or fatigue due to hearing difficulties, now is the time to take action. A comprehensive hearing evaluation can determine the best solution to help you hear clearly, feel less stressed, and improve your overall health.

At Decibels Audiology & Hearing Center, we specialize in helping people reconnect with the world through expert audiology care. Our team of Doctors of Audiology provides personalized solutions using the latest hearing technology.

This Stress Awareness Month, take a step toward a healthier, more stress-free life. A simple hearing test could be the key to reducing stress, improving brain health, and bringing joy back to everyday interactions.

**Schedule a free hearing test today and take control of your stress and hearing health.**

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# Struggling to Walk?

## Understanding Spinal Stenosis and New Treatments

By Amanda N. Sacino, MD-PhD • Neurosurgeon and Managing Partner

**S**pinal stenosis is a condition characterized by the narrowing of the spinal canal, which can compress the spinal cord and nerves, leading to pain, weakness, and mobility issues. This condition primarily affects older adults, as it is often caused by degenerative changes in the spine, though it can also result from congenital factors, trauma, or other spinal disorders. As the spinal canal narrows, pressure on the nerve roots and spinal cord increases, leading to symptoms that can range from mild discomfort to severe impairment.

### Symptoms, Causes, and Diagnosis

Spinal stenosis symptoms vary depending on the location of the narrowing. When it occurs in the cervical spine (neck), individuals may experience neck pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness in the arms and hands. In more severe cases, spinal cord compression can cause balance difficulties and problems with fine motor skills. Lumbar spinal stenosis, which affects the lower back, is more common and typically leads to lower back pain, leg pain, and difficulty walking. Many patients find relief when bending forward or sitting, as these positions reduce nerve pressure.

The primary cause of spinal stenosis is age-related degeneration. Over time, spinal discs lose water content and become less flexible, leading to bulging or herniation. The facet joints can develop arthritis, forming bone spurs that encroach upon the spinal canal. Ligaments may also thicken and contribute to the narrowing. Less commonly, congenital factors, tumors, traumatic injuries, or conditions such as Paget's disease can cause spinal stenosis.

Diagnosis typically involves a medical history review, physical examination, and imaging studies. X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans help confirm the diagnosis by providing detailed views of the spine and revealing nerve compression. MRI is especially useful for visualizing soft tissue changes, while CT scans may be used when MRI is not an option.

### Conservative Treatment Options

Treatment depends on symptom severity. For mild to moderate cases, conservative management is the first approach. Physical therapy strengthens spinal-supporting muscles, improves flexibility, and enhances



posture. Core stability exercises help reduce nerve pressure. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen or naproxen can relieve pain, while muscle relaxants or neuropathic pain medications like gabapentin may address nerve discomfort.

### Interventional Pain Management

When conservative measures are insufficient, interventional treatments may be considered. Epidural steroid injections reduce inflammation and pain by delivering corticosteroids into the epidural space. While they do not cure spinal stenosis, they provide temporary relief and improve function. Radiofrequency ablation is another option that uses heat to target and disable pain-transmitting nerves.

### Surgical Treatment Options

Severe symptoms that significantly impact daily life may require surgery. The most common procedure is laminectomy, which removes part of the vertebra to create space for the spinal cord and nerves. This procedure is highly effective in relieving symptoms and improving mobility. In cases of spinal instability, spinal fusion may be performed alongside laminectomy, connecting vertebrae with bone grafts or implants for stability. Though fusion limits flexibility, it prevents further degeneration and movement-related pain.

### Minimally Invasive Surgical Options

Minimally invasive spine surgery techniques offer faster recovery and reduced post-operative discomfort. These procedures use small incisions and specialized instruments to remove bone spurs or thickened ligaments, relieving nerve pressure while minimizing tissue disruption. This results in less blood loss, shorter hospital stays, and quicker rehabilitation.

Robotic-guided surgery has further advanced minimally invasive spine procedures by increasing precision and reducing risks. Using advanced imaging and real-time navigation, robotic systems assist surgeons in placing implants and performing decompression procedures with extreme accuracy. This technology minimizes tissue damage, improves surgical outcomes, and accelerates recovery. Many patients undergoing robotic-assisted spine surgery experience less post-operative pain and a quicker return to daily activities compared to traditional methods.

### Recovery and Lifestyle Modifications

Recovery varies based on the procedure performed and the patient's overall health. Physical therapy is often recommended post-surgery to restore strength and mobility. Patients are encouraged to engage in low-impact activities such as walking or swimming to promote healing and prevent stiffness. Maintaining a healthy weight, practicing good posture, and staying active can help prevent symptom recurrence.

### Conclusion

Spinal stenosis can significantly impact quality of life, but various treatment options are available to alleviate symptoms and restore mobility. Conservative approaches such as physical therapy, medications, and lifestyle modifications help many patients manage symptoms effectively. For severe cases, interventional treatments and surgery provide long-term relief. If you are experiencing persistent back pain, leg pain, or difficulty walking, seeking expert evaluation is essential. The neurosurgeons at Apex Brain & Spine specialize in advanced treatment options tailored to each patient's needs. Contact Apex Brain & Spine today to schedule a consultation and explore the best solutions for your spinal health.



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# Oral Cancer: A Silent Threat You Need to Know About

By Lana Uhrig, Ph.D. - Executive Director, Naples Cancer Advisors

Imagine sitting across from a doctor who tells you something you never saw coming: You have oral cancer. For many, this diagnosis comes as a shock. Unlike some other cancers that make themselves known early, oral cancer can hide in plain sight, often mistaken for a stubborn sore or mild discomfort. But make no mistake—oral cancer is serious, and catching it early can mean the difference between life and death.

## The Reality of Oral Cancer

Oral cancer affects the mouth, tongue, lips, and throat, and while it's not as widely discussed as breast or lung cancer, it is more common than you might think. In the U.S., nearly 58,500 people are diagnosed each year, with over 12,000 deaths annually. That means roughly one person dies every hour from this disease. In Southwest Florida, where we enjoy a vibrant outdoor lifestyle, risk factors like tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and excessive sun exposure (which can cause lip cancer) contribute to the local impact.

One of the most alarming trends in oral cancer is the increasing number of cases linked to human papillomavirus (HPV)—a virus better known for its connection to cervical cancer. In fact, HPV-related oral cancers now account for more than 70% of throat cancers in the U.S., affecting men at a much higher rate than women. The good news? The HPV vaccine can significantly lower your risk.

## The Importance of Early Detection

Unlike other cancers with widespread screening programs, oral cancer doesn't have a routine test like a mammogram or colonoscopy. That's why regular dental visits are essential—dentists are often the first line of defense, spotting suspicious changes before they become life-threatening. If you notice sores that don't heal, red or white patches, difficulty swallowing, or a persistent sore throat, don't ignore them. Early detection improves survival rates dramatically—up to 90% when caught in stage 1.

At Naples Cancer Advisors, we work with patients every day who are navigating the complex world of cancer treatment. We provide second opinions, genetic testing, clinical trial navigation, and precision oncology services—all at no cost. Our goal is to empower people with knowledge and access to the best possible care.

## Treatment Options & Advances in Research

The standard treatments for oral cancer include surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, but exciting new therapies are emerging. Immunotherapy, which boosts

the body's own immune system to fight cancer, has shown promise in treating HPV-related oral cancers. Targeted therapies, which attack specific cancer cells while leaving healthy ones unharmed, are also advancing rapidly.

Research into precision medicine—tailoring treatments to a person's unique genetic makeup—is changing the game. Genetic testing helps doctors determine which therapies will work best for an individual patient, reducing unnecessary treatments and improving outcomes.

## Prevention: What You Can Do Now

While we can't change some risk factors like genetics, we have control over many lifestyle choices that impact oral cancer risk. As someone who spent years researching the role of food in cancer prevention, I can tell you that diet plays a significant role.

Studies have shown that certain foods—especially berries, cruciferous vegetables (like broccoli and cauliflower), and green tea—contain compounds that help protect against oral cancer. Berries, in particular, are rich in ellagic acid and anthocyanins, which have been found to slow the growth of cancer cells.

Here are some simple steps you can take to lower your risk:

- Get screened—see your dentist regularly and check your mouth for changes.
- Quit smoking—tobacco use is the leading cause of oral cancer.
- Limit alcohol—heavy drinking increases risk, especially when combined with smoking.
- Eat a cancer-fighting diet—load up on berries, leafy greens, and antioxidant-rich foods.
- Consider the HPV vaccine—this can significantly reduce the risk of HPV-related oral cancers.
- Protect your lips—use SPF lip balm to shield against sun damage.

## Final Thoughts

Oral cancer doesn't always get the attention it deserves, but it's a disease that affects real people, right here in Southwest Florida. The good news is that we have more tools than ever to prevent, detect, and treat it. By staying informed, making smart lifestyle choices, and getting regular check-ups, we can save lives—maybe even your own.

If you or a loved one need guidance on cancer care, Naples Cancer Advisors is here to help. Early detection and knowledge are powerful weapons—let's use them.

## Lana Uhrig Bio

Lana Uhrig is the Executive Director of the Cincinnati Cancer Foundation which powers Naples Cancer Advisors and Cincinnati Cancer Advisors. Lana is an accomplished healthcare executive with extensive experience in healthcare operations, strategic planning and community engagement. She received her Ph.D. in Public Health from The Ohio State University where her research was focused on oral cancer prevention with the OSU College of Public Health, the James Cancer Hospital, and the department of Oral Carcinogenesis and Chemoprevention. She also holds an MBA and Doctorate of Community Leadership from Franklin University, and a Bachelor's in nursing from Ohio University

Previously, Lana served as the Vice President & Chief Nursing Officer for Emory Healthcare-Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University and the Executive Director for Administration at the University of Cincinnati Cancer Institute. With over 30 years of experience in the healthcare field, she has been recognized as a subject matter expert in the development, implementation, and growth of cancer programs and non-profit start-ups and administration.

Arriving in South Florida in early 2023, Lana has been instrumental in opening Naples Cancer Advisors (NCA), a second location for the Cincinnati Cancer Foundation. Naples Cancer Advisors mission is to provide platinum-level consultation services including second opinions, referrals, clinical trial navigation, financial navigation, and precision oncology services such as genetic testing and counseling to Southwest Florida residents diagnosed with cancer. As a 501c3 non-profit organization powered by the generosity of private donors, we are proud to offer these services at no cost to the patient.



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# ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

## Understanding the Importance of Responsible Drinking

**A**lcohol Awareness Month is an annual observance dedicated to increasing public awareness and understanding of the consequences of excessive alcohol consumption. Held every April, this month-long campaign aims to educate individuals and communities about the risks associated with alcohol abuse while promoting responsible drinking habits.

### Understanding the Importance

Alcohol consumption is deeply ingrained in many cultures worldwide, often associated with social gatherings, celebrations, and relaxation. While moderate drinking can be a part of a healthy lifestyle for some, excessive alcohol consumption can lead to a myriad of health, social, and economic problems. Alcohol Awareness Month serves as a platform to address these issues and empower individuals to make informed choices regarding alcohol consumption.

### Raising Awareness

One of the primary goals of Alcohol Awareness Month is to educate the public about the potential dangers of excessive drinking. This includes raising awareness of the physical health risks such as liver disease, cardiovascular problems, and an increased risk of certain cancers. Additionally, excessive alcohol consumption can impair cognitive function, leading to accidents, injuries, and even fatalities.

### Promoting Responsible Drinking

Promoting responsible drinking is a key focus of Alcohol Awareness Month. This involves encouraging individuals to be mindful of their alcohol intake, know their limits, and avoid engaging in risky behaviors such as driving under the influence. Education on the importance of moderation and strategies for harm reduction, such as spacing drinks with water and eating before drinking, are essential components of responsible drinking campaigns.

### Supporting Those Affected

Alcohol misuse not only affects the individual but also their families, friends, and communities. Alcohol Awareness Month seeks to provide support and resources for those struggling with alcohol addiction or affected by the consequences of someone else's drinking. This includes promoting access to treatment and support services, as well as reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for alcohol-related issues.



### Empowering Change

By promoting awareness and encouraging responsible drinking habits, Alcohol Awareness Month aims to empower individuals to make positive changes in their lives and communities. This may involve challenging social norms surrounding alcohol consumption, advocating for policy changes to reduce alcohol-related harm, and supporting initiatives that promote healthier lifestyles.

### Community Engagement

Alcohol Awareness Month encourages community involvement through a variety of events and activities. These may include educational workshops, health fairs, public forums, and outreach programs aimed at reaching diverse populations. By engaging with local organizations, schools, and businesses, communities can work together to address alcohol-related issues and promote a culture of responsibility.

Alcohol Awareness Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of responsible drinking and the impact of alcohol misuse on individuals and society as a whole. By raising awareness, promoting education, and providing support, this annual observance plays a crucial role in empowering individuals to make informed choices about alcohol consumption and fostering healthier communities. As we observe Alcohol Awareness Month this April, let us join together in the effort to promote responsible drinking habits and reduce the harm caused by excessive alcohol consumption.



### Dr. Ricardo Martinez

Dr. Ricardo Martinez is an internist in Naples, FL and is affiliated with NCH Baker Hospital. He received his medical degree from Superior Institute of Medical Sciences of Santiago de Cuba and has been in practice 20 years. He also speaks multiple languages, including Spanish. He specializes in hospital medicine, ambulatory care and is experienced in hospice and palliative medicine, bariatric medicine, diabetes mellitus, food allergy, and infectious disease. As of March 16th, 2020, Dr. Martinez has founded Well-Being Medical center in Naples Florida. He is looking forward to providing Medical care within primary care settings and urgent care service throughout the Naples Florida area.



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# NAVIGATING SOBRIETY:

## April's Alcohol Awareness Month Brings Focus to Health and Support

By Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

**A**pril marks National Alcohol Awareness Month, a time dedicated to increasing public understanding about alcohol-related issues and reducing the stigma that often surrounds alcohol use disorder. Established in 1987 by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), this observance has evolved into a crucial annual campaign that encourages communities to reflect on drinking habits and promotes resources for those seeking recovery.

The impact of alcohol misuse extends far beyond individual health concerns. According to recent data, excessive alcohol consumption contributes to approximately 95,000 deaths annually in the United States alone. These statistics represent not just numbers, but families disrupted, careers derailed, and potential unfulfilled.

"Alcohol awareness isn't just about identifying problematic drinking," explains Dr. Sarah Martinez, addiction specialist at Harbor Recovery Center. "It's about understanding how alcohol affects our bodies, recognizing warning signs, and knowing that effective treatment options exist for those who need support."

The pandemic years brought significant changes to drinking patterns nationwide. Many people reported increased alcohol consumption during isolation periods, with studies showing a 41% rise in heavy drinking among women. As communities continue recovering from these disruptions, Alcohol Awareness Month offers a timely opportunity to reassess relationships with alcohol.

This year's campaign emphasizes several key messages. First, understanding what constitutes moderate drinking—defined by health authorities as up to one drink daily for women and up to two for men—helps individuals make informed choices. Second, recognizing risk factors for alcohol use disorder, including family history, early-onset drinking, and mental health conditions, enables proactive prevention. Finally, knowing that recovery is possible through various treatment approaches offers hope to those struggling.



Community involvement remains central to the month's success. Many organizations host alcohol-free activities throughout April, demonstrating that social connection doesn't require drinking. Schools implement educational programs addressing underage drinking prevention, while healthcare providers often offer free screenings and resources during this period.

"We see Alcohol Awareness Month as a catalyst for year-round conversation," says Michael Chen, coordinator for the Sober Living Coalition. "The discussions started in April frequently lead to sustained support networks that continue long after the month ends."

For individuals concerned about their own drinking patterns, April presents an ideal time to explore options. Many choose to participate in challenges like "Dry April," temporarily abstaining from alcohol to evaluate its role in their lives. Others may seek professional assessment through their healthcare providers or connect with support groups offering peer understanding.

"What makes recovery possible for many people is knowing they're not alone," notes recovery advocate Jamal Washington. "When communities openly discuss alcohol issues during awareness campaigns, it reduces isolation and shows pathways forward."

The healthcare community emphasizes that seeking help represents strength, not weakness. Treatment approaches have diversified significantly in recent

years, ranging from traditional 12-step programs to medication-assisted treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, and holistic approaches addressing underlying factors.

Digital resources have expanded access to support, with numerous apps and online communities providing assistance for those unable to attend in-person meetings or seeking anonymous help. These technological innovations complement traditional recovery methods, creating more entry points for healing.

As April unfolds, workplaces, religious organizations, and community centers nationwide will host workshops and information sessions highlighting available resources. Public health campaigns will appear across media platforms, sharing stories of recovery and challenging perceptions about alcohol dependency.

Ultimately, Alcohol Awareness Month serves as a reminder that conversations about drinking habits shouldn't be confined to those already experiencing problems. By fostering open dialogue about alcohol's effects on individuals and communities, April's observance helps create healthier relationships with alcohol year-round.



### Meet Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

Bilingual in Spanish and English, Jo is one of the visionary leaders at Phoenix Behavioral Group. As a board-certified Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Jo brings a wealth of expertise and a compassionate touch to the forefront of patient care. With unwavering dedication, she strives to empower individuals to reclaim their mental health and lead more fulfilling lives.

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# A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

By Michael C. Shaffer, D.C., P.A.

**D**an, a lifelong resident of Naples, Florida, has always embraced an active lifestyle. As a seasoned sailboat captain with a passion for extreme sports, he once reveled in the thrill of life on the water and on land. However, two serious neck injuries over the years and a lumbar disc herniation dramatically altered his quality of life. His inspiring journey of care with Dr. Michael Shaffer illustrates how advanced treatment modalities like M7 Laser Therapy and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression can offer significant relief for patients suffering from chronic pain—while also integrating complementary therapies to address other spinal issues.

## A History of Injury and Chronic Pain

Dan's troubles began during his college years when a severe neck injury ruptured two discs. The necessary surgery involved fusing and bolting the affected vertebrae together—a procedure that resulted in reduced movement and diminished sensation in his arms and fingers. Despite the stabilization provided by the surgery, Dan could no longer participate fully in the activities he loved.

Years later, while engaged in his regular workout routine, Dan experienced another traumatic event. An acute injury caused two additional discs, or “shock absorbers” in his neck to herniate. This led to a second surgical procedure, where the two cervical discs were replaced above the level of the previous fusion. For over 20 years, Dan endured constant neck pain, with daily discomfort fluctuating on the pain scale between a 6 out of 10 on a good day and a debilitating 9 out of 10 on bad days. He also endured frequent migraines and constant headaches. The limited range of motion—especially the inability to move his head from side to side—further compounded his challenges, making even routine activities a struggle.

## Addressing Lower Back Pain with Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

In addition to his chronic neck issues, Dan also faced lower back pain stemming from a herniated disc in his lumbar spine. This condition had caused severe leg pain, radiating all the way down to his toes—a discomfort that worsened after demands of employment. “On top of my neck problems I also had issues occasionally in my lower back. I had a herniated disc that caused leg pain that radiated all



the way down to my toes. It was especially worse after a long day on the water. I did a total of 24” (Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression) “sessions over 8 weeks and it completely resolved my pain. 100% better. I can work a fourteen hour day and have no back pain or radiating leg pain at all,” Dan explains.

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression is a non-invasive treatment designed to relieve pressure on the affected discs and nerve roots. Using a specialized table and harness system, this therapy gently stretches the spine, increasing the space between vertebrae. The resulting negative pressure within the disc encourages the retraction of disc material that may be impinging on nearby nerves. As a result, patients experience reduced inflammation, alleviation of pain, and an improvement in mobility.

Research indicates that Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression can be highly effective in treating herniated discs, with many patients reporting significant reductions in pain and improved function after completing a course of treatment. For Dan, the 24 sessions with the Hill DT state-of-the-art table, over an 8-week period were transformative. The treatment not only eradicated his lower back and leg pain but also restored his ability to work long hours without discomfort, allowing him to maintain his active lifestyle on and off the water.

## The Turning Point: M7 Laser Thera

Continuing to seek a solution to his unrelenting neck pain, Dan again consulted with Dr. Michael Shaffer and the innovative M7 Laser Therapy was recommended. This innovative treatment, and the only laser of its kind in Collier County, uses advanced low-level laser therapy (LLLT) to reduce both muscle and nerve pain. The M7 system emits near-infrared wavelengths—typically within the 800 to 1,000 nanometer range—that penetrate deep into tissues. By stimulating mitochondrial activity within the cell and enhancing the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the therapy accelerates cellular repair, reduces inflammation, and alleviates pain.

Clinical studies on LLLT have shown that, in patients with chronic musculoskeletal conditions, such treatments can reduce pain intensity by 40–50% and improve range of motion. For Dan, after just 12 sessions administered three times a week, the deep, stabbing, and burning pain in his neck began to subside. He recalls waking one morning without his typical headache, a revelation that demonstrated the remarkable effectiveness of the treatment and provided him with newfound hope, and a new lease on life.

## The Science Behind the Advanced Therapies

Both M7 Laser Therapy and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression are backed by robust clinical evidence. The M7 system's use of near-infrared wavelengths leverages photobiomodulation—a process that increases ATP production at the cellular level. Enhanced ATP production accelerates tissue repair and reduces inflammatory markers, thereby alleviating pain and improving range of motion. Meanwhile, Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression directly addresses disc herniation by reducing intradiscal pressure, facilitating natural healing, and preventing further degeneration of spinal structures.



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Integrating these advanced therapies provides a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to managing chronic pain. By targeting both neck and lumbar issues, patients like Dan experience multifaceted relief that allows them to return to their daily activities with renewed energy and minimal discomfort.

**Encouraging a Comprehensive Approach to Pain Management**

Dan’s journey is a powerful example of how combining advanced, non-invasive therapies can transform the lives of patients struggling with chronic pain. At the office of Dr. Michael Shaffer, the focus is not only on symptom relief but also on restoring overall function and improving quality of life. Dr. Shaffer and his team work closely with each patient to develop a personalized treatment plan that addresses both the immediate symptoms and the underlying causes of pain.

**Don’t WAIT to Reduce Your Pain**

Dan’s transformation—from enduring decades of severe neck and lower back pain to reclaiming his active, fulfilling lifestyle—is a testament to new the innovative approaches that are

**Non-surgical**

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and offered exclusively at Dr. Shaffers facility. The combination of M7 Laser Therapy for his chronic neck pain and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression for his lumbar disc herniation has not only alleviated his pain but also enabled him to engage in the activities he loves, such as long days on the beautiful waters of Naples.

**Taking the Next Step Toward a Pain-Free Life**

If you are experiencing any chronic pain such as back or neck pain, sciatica, arthritis, neuropathy, or other musculoskeletal conditions, we encourage you to seek a professional evaluation from our expert team. Our integrated approach using the M7 MLS Medical Therapy Laser and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression is designed to provide rapid, lasting relief while minimizing risks and recovery time. Call Dr. Shaffer today at 239-793-3200 to start your journey to pain relief and healing.

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# The Connection Between Anxiety and Eye Health: Understanding the Impact on Vision

*Dr. Katia Taba, Board-Certified Ophthalmologist and Retinal Specialist*

In the fast-paced world we live in, stress and anxiety have become almost commonplace. From work deadlines to personal responsibilities, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the demands of daily life. While the effects of stress and anxiety on mental health are well-documented, their impact on physical health, particularly eye health, is often overlooked.

Anxiety, a feeling of worry or nervousness, can manifest in various physical symptoms, including changes in blood flow to the eyes. This alteration in blood flow can lead to a range of eye-related issues, such as blurred vision, eye strain, and dry eyes. For individuals already prone to eye problems, such as glaucoma or dry eye syndrome, prolonged stress and anxiety can exacerbate these conditions, worsening their symptoms and potentially leading to further complications.

One of the most common symptoms of stress and anxiety-related eye issues is blurred vision. This occurs when the muscles in the eyes become tense due to heightened stress levels, affecting their ability to focus properly. As a result, objects may appear blurry or out of focus, making tasks such as reading or driving challenging and uncomfortable.

Eye strain is another prevalent issue associated with stress and anxiety. When we feel anxious or stressed, we tend to tense our muscles, including those in the eyes, leading to fatigue and strain. Staring at screens for extended periods, a common occurrence in today's digital age, can exacerbate this strain, causing discomfort, headaches, and difficulty concentrating.

Dry eyes are also a common complaint among individuals experiencing heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Stress can disrupt the natural balance of tear production and drainage in the eyes, resulting in inadequate lubrication and discomfort. Without sufficient moisture, the eyes may feel gritty, irritated, or excessively watery, impacting both comfort and vision quality.

Moreover, for individuals already dealing with underlying eye conditions such as glaucoma or dry eye syndrome, stress and anxiety can pose additional challenges. Glaucoma, a group of eye diseases characterized by damage to the optic nerve, can be exacerbated by elevated intraocular pressure, which may occur during periods of stress. Similarly, stress-related changes in tear production can worsen the symptoms of dry eye syndrome, leading to increased discomfort and potential damage to the cornea.

Given the significant impact of stress and anxiety on eye health, it is essential to prioritize self-care and stress management strategies. Incorporating relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga into your daily routine can help alleviate stress and promote overall well-being. Additionally, taking regular breaks from screen time, practicing good eye hygiene, and staying hydrated can support optimal eye health and minimize the impact of stress-related symptoms.

Furthermore, seeking professional help and support is crucial for managing anxiety and its associated effects on both mental and physical health. Whether through therapy, medication, or holistic approaches, there are various resources available to help individuals cope with stress and anxiety effectively.

In conclusion, the relationship between stress, anxiety, and eye health is undeniable. From blurred vision and eye strain to dry eyes and exacerbation of existing conditions, prolonged stress can take a toll on our eyesight and overall well-being. By prioritizing stress management techniques and seeking appropriate support, we can protect our vision and cultivate a healthier, more balanced lifestyle. Let's raise awareness about the importance of mental health in preserving our precious sense of sight.



Katia E. Taba, MD, is the board-certified ophthalmologist and retina specialist at Personalized Retina Care of Naples in Naples, Florida. Dr. Taba treats macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, macular holes, eye floaters and flashes, and other serious eye problems that can interfere with sight or steal vision without treatment. Patients know Dr. Taba as an extremely friendly and welcoming care provider who maintains great professionalism at all times.

Dr. Taba is a board-certified ophthalmologist in both her home country of Brazil and in the United States. She earned her medical degree at a leading medical school in Brazil and continued specialized vitreoretinal surgery training in Florida, New York, California, Louisiana, and many other locations in the U.S. Dr. Taba trained under the leading experts in the field of ocular disease.

Dr. Taba's extensive training and experience include many years as both a clinician and academician. She entered solo practice as a way to deliver consistently great care in a world where the environment and health care policies are always changing.

Dr. Taba wants to make sure that patients always get the most accurate diagnosis and most effective treatment, so she uses only the latest, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment. Dr. Taba is the first retina specialist on the southwest coast of Florida to have wide-angle viewing imaging. Dr. Taba also makes sure that injections and treatments are pain-free so patients can always expect a comfortable experience.

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# UNDERSTANDING PAY ON DEATH BENEFICIARIES AND OTHER BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS

By *Dominico R. Palma, Associate Attorney*

**W**hen planning for the future, ensuring your assets are distributed according to your wishes is crucial. Beneficiary designations are essential tools in estate planning. They offer a straightforward way to pass assets directly to your loved ones without the need for probate. In this post, we'll explore the benefits, process, and types of beneficiary designations you can use to secure your legacy.

## WHAT ARE PAY ON DEATH BENEFICIARIES?

Pay on Death (POD) beneficiaries are individuals or entities designated to receive assets directly upon the account holder's death. These designations can be added to various accounts, including bank accounts, certificates of deposit, and investment accounts. The primary advantage of POD designations is the avoidance of probate, allowing for a quicker and more efficient transfer of assets.

## BENEFITS OF POD DESIGNATIONS

- **Avoidance of Probate:** Assets pass directly to the designated beneficiaries, bypassing the lengthy and costly probate process.
- **Simplicity:** Setting up POD designations is relatively straightforward and can be done through your financial institution.
- **Control:** You retain full control of your assets during your lifetime and can change beneficiaries as needed.

## OTHER TYPES OF BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS

### Transfer on Death (TOD)

Transfer on Death (TOD) designations function similarly to POD designations but are typically used for securities and investment accounts. Upon the account holder's death, the assets are transferred directly to the named beneficiaries without probate.

### Retirement Accounts and Life Insurance

Beneficiary designations are also crucial for retirement accounts (such as IRAs and 401(k)s) and life insurance policies. Naming beneficiaries ensures that the funds are distributed according to your wishes and can provide tax advantages for the recipients.

## Trusts

Trusts can serve as beneficiaries for various accounts and policies. By designating a trust as a beneficiary, you can provide more detailed instructions on how the assets should be managed and distributed, which can be particularly useful for minor children or individuals with special needs.

## HOW TO DESIGNATE BENEFICIARIES

### Steps to Designate Beneficiaries

- **Identify Accounts:** Determine which accounts and policies allow for beneficiary designations.
- **Choose Beneficiaries:** Select the individuals or entities you wish to name as beneficiaries.
- **Complete Forms:** Fill out the necessary forms provided by your financial institution or policy provider.
- **Review and Update:** Regularly review and update your beneficiary designations to reflect changes in your life circumstances.

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

### Not Updating Beneficiaries

Failing to update beneficiary designations after major life events (such as marriage, divorce, or the birth of a child) can lead to unintended consequences, such as subjecting assets to probate or a party whom you no longer have a relationship with. Regularly review and update your designations to ensure they align with your current wishes.

### Not Designating Contingent Beneficiaries

Always name contingent beneficiaries who will receive the assets if the primary beneficiary predeceases you. This ensures your assets are distributed according to your wishes.

## START PLANNING TODAY TO SECURE YOUR LEGACY AND PROTECT YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE

Pay on Death beneficiaries and other beneficiary designations are powerful tools for ensuring your assets are distributed according to your wishes without the need for probate. By understanding the types of designations available and regularly reviewing your choices, you can provide peace of

mind for yourself and your loved ones. Start planning today to secure your legacy and protect your family's future. Reach out to Dominico R. Palma to learn more and take the first step.



### About the Author

Dominico "Nico" R. Palma is an associate attorney with Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. in the Marco Island location. Nico's legal practice focuses on:

- Florida estate planning, including preparation of revocable and irrevocable trusts, family limited liability companies, special needs trusts, wills, powers of attorneys and advanced medical directives
- Probate and trust administration
- Probate and trust litigation
- Business planning including formation and dissolution of limited liability companies, corporations and related filings.
- Business transactions including stock and asset sales/purchase
- Real estate transactions to include deed preparation and residential real estate closings

Nico's passion for helping clients and the community led him to serve as a First Lieutenant in the Florida Army National Guard as well as in multiple roles for organizations such as a Graduate of Leadership Marco, the National Italian American Bar Association, the Florida Italian-American Bar Association, and the Estate Planning and Probate Committee of the Elder Law Section of The Florida Bar. Additionally, Nico is an active member of the Naples Italian-American Society and Young Professionals of Naples.



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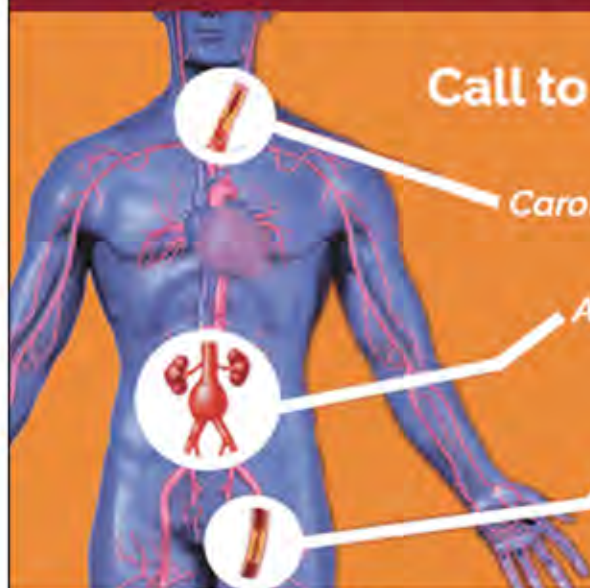
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# PEAK ALLERGY SEASON IN FLORIDA:

## Surviving the Spring Pollen Storm

**A**s spring unfolds across the Sunshine State, millions of Floridians brace themselves for the annual allergy season that reaches its crescendo in April and May. With its warm climate and diverse vegetation, Florida creates the perfect environment for pollen production, leaving residents battling itchy eyes, runny noses, and persistent sneezing fits.

### Why April and May Is Florida's Allergy Peak

The two months mark the height of Florida's spring allergy season primarily due to tree pollen, which blankets the state in a fine yellow dust. Oak trees, which are abundant throughout Florida, are particularly prolific pollen producers. Joining them are pine, cypress, and bayberry trees, creating a potent airborne cocktail that triggers allergic reactions.

The state's unique climate compounds the problem. While northern states may still be thawing from winter, Florida's warm temperatures and early spring conditions prompt plants to release pollen earlier and for longer periods. Add in Florida's high humidity, which allows pollen to cling to surfaces and remain suspended in the air, and you have the perfect storm for allergy sufferers.

### Signs You're Experiencing Seasonal Allergies

- Persistent sneezing and nasal congestion
- Itchy, watery, or red eyes
- Scratchy throat and coughing
- Fatigue and headaches
- Skin rashes or hives in severe cases

Unlike cold symptoms, allergies don't typically cause fever and tend to persist for weeks rather than days.

### Effective Strategies to Combat April Allergies

#### AT HOME

Create a pollen-free sanctuary: Keep windows closed during peak pollen times and use air conditioning with HEPA filters. Remove shoes at the door and change clothes after being outdoors to prevent bringing pollen inside.

**Maintain clean surfaces:** Regularly wash bedding in hot water, vacuum carpets with a HEPA-filtered vacuum, and use damp cloths for dusting to trap pollen rather than dispersing it.

**Consider air purifiers:** High-quality air purifiers with HEPA filters can significantly reduce airborne allergens in your home.

#### PERSONAL HABITS

**Track pollen counts:** Florida's Department of Health provides daily pollen forecasts. Plan outdoor activities for low-pollen days, typically after rainfall when pollen has been temporarily washed away.

**Time your outdoor activities:** Pollen counts are highest between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., so schedule outdoor exercise for late afternoon or evening when possible.

**Shield your eyes and airways:** Wear wraparound sunglasses to reduce eye exposure and consider using a mask when gardening or doing yard work.

#### MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS

**Over-the-counter remedies:** Antihistamines, decongestants, and nasal corticosteroids can provide relief for many allergy sufferers. Start medications before symptoms appear for best results.

**Consult an allergist:** For severe allergies, an allergist can provide targeted treatments, including prescription medications and immunotherapy options like allergy shots.

**Consider saline rinses:** Nasal irrigation with saline solution can flush pollen from nasal passages, providing natural relief.

#### Long-term Solutions

For those with severe reactions, immunotherapy might be the answer. This treatment gradually introduces small amounts of allergens to your system, helping build tolerance over time. While it requires commitment, many Floridians find it transforms their spring from a season of suffering to one they can finally enjoy.

Though April and May allergies in Florida can be challenging, with proper preparation and management strategies, you can minimize symptoms and reclaim the beautiful spring season. By creating safe indoor spaces, modifying outdoor behaviors, and seeking appropriate medical treatment, even the most sensitive allergy sufferers can navigate Florida's peak pollen season with greater comfort.



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Dr. Sonkarley grew up in the Midwest and received his Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine. He completed his Otolaryngology Residency at the University of Oklahoma. He served in the US Marine Corps for 5 years and was awarded the Joint Services Achievement Medal after his tour in Iraq.



Kathleen Rocuant, Au.D FAAA received her Doctorate from the Arizona School of Health Sciences and is Board Certified by the American Board of Audiology. She specializes in Hearing Evaluations, Hearing Aids and Hearing Solutions. She is a Fellow American Academy of Audiology and a member of the American Academy of Audiology and the Florida Academy of Audiology.



Carly Treibits, PA-C is a graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University and is a Board Certified Physician Assistant. She is a member of the Florida Academy of Physician Assistants and the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

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# FGCU Addressing Shortage of Mental Health Professionals

Expanded enrollment, enhanced training and community outreach aim to stem crisis

**N**early 1 in 4 American adults lives with a mental illness, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Demand for mental health services is outpacing the supply of providers, while more than half the U.S. population lives in an area with a shortage of mental health professionals.

As a result of these healthcare deserts with scant resources, many individuals seeking help are not getting assistance or at best face long delays due to long waits. In fact, the percentage of need for mental health professionals that is being met in Florida is only 21%, according to Kaiser Family Foundation research.

Marieb College of Health & Human Services at Florida Gulf Coast University is helping address this crisis through several initiatives. These efforts include: expanding enrollment and faculty to train more students to become licensed clinical mental health counselors, licensed clinical social workers and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners; providing more supervised experience earlier in students' education through FGCU's Community Counseling & Education Center; and taking students to underserved communities in Southwest Florida that lack sufficient access to mental health services.

Southwest Florida is a "mental health desert," according to Sherdene Brown-Simpson, Ph.D., LMHC, director of Marieb College's clinical mental health counseling program. The community has a critical need due to a high percentage of people struggling with mental health issues, she says.

"When you look at the number of people versus the services, there is a need to increase providers in this area," says Brown-Simpson. "That is something we are really working to address in our program. How can we increase the number of licensed mental health counselors? This is an opportune time to really look at how can we impact the community."

## Comprehensive training

Marieb College's accredited, standards-based graduate programs prepare students to take on society's big issues and improve quality of life for individuals and communities. With strong demand for clinical mental health counselors, clinical social workers and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners in every community, FGCU students have the opportunity to make a widespread impact.

Their coursework includes human development, legal and ethical issues, career development, appraisal methods, counseling theories, group and individual counseling, practicum and research, counseling special populations and clinical practice.

Marieb College prepares graduate students with a high degree of counseling competence, technological skills and hundreds of hours of supervised field experience addressing issues like college and career readiness, social-emotional learning, academic achievement, depression, cyberbullying and substance abuse. Practical learning and internships take place in local schools and agencies throughout Southwest Florida and in FGCU's on-campus Community Counseling & Education Center. This intense preparation creates a bridge between classroom learning and real world application.

Because FGCU students are so comprehensively prepared, 100% are employed within three months of earning their counseling degree.

## Soaring demand for services

These committed, compassionate professionals join a workforce straining under heavy caseloads. Demand for licensed mental health professionals has skyrocketed in recent years, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. More people are reporting feelings of anxiety and depression and experiencing substance use problems. Opioid-related deaths sharply accelerated during the pandemic and with increases in illicit fentanyl. In Florida, the number of drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people more than doubled from 2011 to 2021, with 76% of those deaths due to opioids.

"There's an increased need for students to understand how to provide counseling for substance use disorder, which is increasing across the country," Brown-Simpson says. "We're also seeing that there is a need to address issues of trauma and trauma-informed care. If you have mental health disorders that go untreated, that could be very difficult for people to truly embrace a positive quality of life."

Such emergent mental health issues underscore the importance of Marieb College's holistic approach to teaching counseling and providing internship opportunities that ensure graduates become well-rounded practitioners in, social services, government agencies, hospitals, community organizations and private practice.

Some of FGCU's mental health counseling interns are currently bringing their counseling skills to children in several underserved Southwest Florida communities where Marieb College is partnering with local organizations to fill gaps in mental health services. Meanwhile, on campus, the Community Counseling & Education Center also provides students with experience while helping improve the lives of individuals, couples and families affected by depression, anxiety, trauma, relationship and family functioning, and parenting challenges. The center offers low-cost mental and behavioral health services for all ages regardless of socioeconomic status. Call 239-745-4777 for more information.

In these ways and more, FGCU's Marieb College is a growing oasis for solutions amid a mental health desert.

*Learn more about FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services at [fgcu.edu/marieb](http://fgcu.edu/marieb).*



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# PICKLEBALL

By Robert Swift, D.O.

Board Certified Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine



**P**ickleball is a recreational sport that is gaining in popularity and has become one of the fastest growing sports in America. The sport is easy to learn, promotes competitiveness and socialization, and is a great form of low impact exercise.

The game was developed in 1965 by a former Washington state congressman, Joel Pritchard. He and a friend were looking to play badminton, but unable to find a full set of rackets they improvised, playing with wooden ping-pong paddles and a perforated plastic ball. With this collection of equipment, they played on an asphalt surface using a badminton net adjusted to a height like that of tennis. The friends eventually developed a permanent set of rules. Their intention was to develop a sport the entire family could enjoy together. Within two years, the first permanent court was constructed next door to Joel Pritchard's home. Within a few more years, a corporation was developed to protect the sport. Since its inception, the game has continued to grow, and is now played in all 50 states.

The game was named after the Pritchards' dog, Pickles. In the early development of the game, there no official name assigned to it. As the game progressed, an official name was needed, and "Pickleball" was it.

Pickleball is currently the fastest growing sport in the US. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) estimated that in 2017 there were over 2.8 million Pickleball players in the U.S., which was an increase of 12.3% from the previous year. Further details from the 2016 SFIA report included that over 1.5 million people were 'casual' participants (play one to seven times per year), and that 930,000 were 'core' participants (play eight or more times per year). Further breakdown of participation rates by age showed that 'core' participants tend to be older, with 75% of core participants being age 55 or older, and 42% of all players over 65 considered to be core participants. Along with fitness benefits of the sport, many older adults enjoy playing Pickleball because it promotes competitiveness and socialization.

## Associated Injuries

A recent literature search did not reveal any published research describing specific injuries related to Pickleball. However, there is published research on injuries associated with other racket sports. In tennis, a similar style racket sport played on a similar surface, the most common injuries are sprains/strains of the lower extremity, followed by sprains/strains of the upper extremity and injuries of the trunk and low back. Given the underhand nature of the game play of Pickleball, one would expect a lower occurrence of shoulder

injuries than in tennis where overhand serving is a major component of the sport. However, there is still a risk for a variety of other upper extremity injuries in Pickleball.

## Acute Injuries

Acute traumatic injuries in Pickleball can result from falls, secondary to a sudden turning or pivoting movement. Sprains of the ankle joint, particularly with inversion, are very common in tennis and the mechanism for this injury would be similar for Pickleball. Depending on the severity of the sprain, this injury could result in significantly impaired movement or inability to bear weight. If weight bearing is painful, initial treatment may initially include crutches (if needed), or immobilization with an ankle brace. Further treatment consisting of relative rest, icing, compression, and elevation (RICE) are generally useful in the treatment of sprains of the ankle and other joints. Depending on severity, ankle sprains can take several weeks to resolve, but patients can generally resume their previous level of play if proper steps are taken during the healing process. Return to sport participation for this and other injuries is often expedited by physical therapy.

Other injuries that can arise near the ankle can involve the Achilles tendon. These can include an Achilles strain, which can present as pain anywhere along the tendon, from the musculotendinous component at the lower calf muscle, to the body of the tendon, to its insertion at the calcaneus. Treatment of Achilles tendon strains typically consists of relative rest, focused stretching of the tendon, and eccentric loading exercises. This injury can take weeks to fully heal. A much less common but more severe injury, Achilles tendon rupture, can occur with forceful movement of the ankle, usually an abrupt plantarflexion. This injury usually results in severe pain in the posterior ankle and an inability to bear weight or actively plantarflex the foot. This type of injury will often require surgical repair and should be evaluated promptly for optimal long term outcome.

Knee injuries are also common in racket sports such as tennis, and likely to affect Pickleball players as well. These can range from acute sprains of the knee to meniscal and ligamentous injuries. A sprain of the knee can affect the collateral ligaments, caused by rapid starting/stopping and sudden turning or pivoting movements. A sprain will often result in pain with weight bearing, usually worse with lateral movement. Acute injuries of the meniscus can include tears, which can present with the same mechanism as a ligament sprain, but often will result in the inability to

bear weight, decreased range of motion, and significant swelling. Treatment of these injuries can range from initial non-weight bearing, to bracing, to physical therapy, or even potential surgical repair. Any knee injury that results in pain with weight bearing, decreased range of motion, or significant swelling should prompt immediate evaluation by a physician.

Muscle groups in the lower extremity that can be acutely strained include the hamstring muscles, quadriceps, hip flexors and adductors, and calf. Many strains can involve partial tearing of the muscle body or tendon. These injuries can present as pain in the muscle with stretching or muscle contraction. Mild sprains usually respond to RICE treatment, and participants can usually return to their activity in a matter of a few weeks. More severe muscle strains or tears may have more severe pain, associated swelling or bruising of the muscle, and tend to take longer to recover. As stated above, many of these injuries will respond well to physical therapy, and this can often help to assist players to return to their previous level of competing and can often address other potential biomechanical inefficiencies that can be future injury risks.

For the upper extremity, the wrist is a common site of tennis injury, and Pickleball players are at risk as well. Falls onto an outstretched hand are a common mechanism for wrist sprains and can also result in a fracture. The elbow and shoulder can also be injured by falls. Minor bruising to the upper extremity may be initially treated with RICE, but an injury to the upper extremity that causes significant swelling, bruising, or limited range of motion should prompt a player to be evaluated.

Pickle ball can be a great way to enjoy the beautiful weather and there are many courts in the SWFL area. The benefits of exercise, and socialization out way the risks of injury. Even when we are at our most competitive, it is important to remember to play it safe, give up the point. That way you can always come back to the court to play again.

Always stretch and warm up gently before competitive play. Make sure you are getting your physical once a year to understand and appreciate your health. Drink plenty of water and the occasional sports drink. Wear appropriate gear, and footwear.

In the event of any related Pickleball injury we are available to take care of you and get you back on the court.

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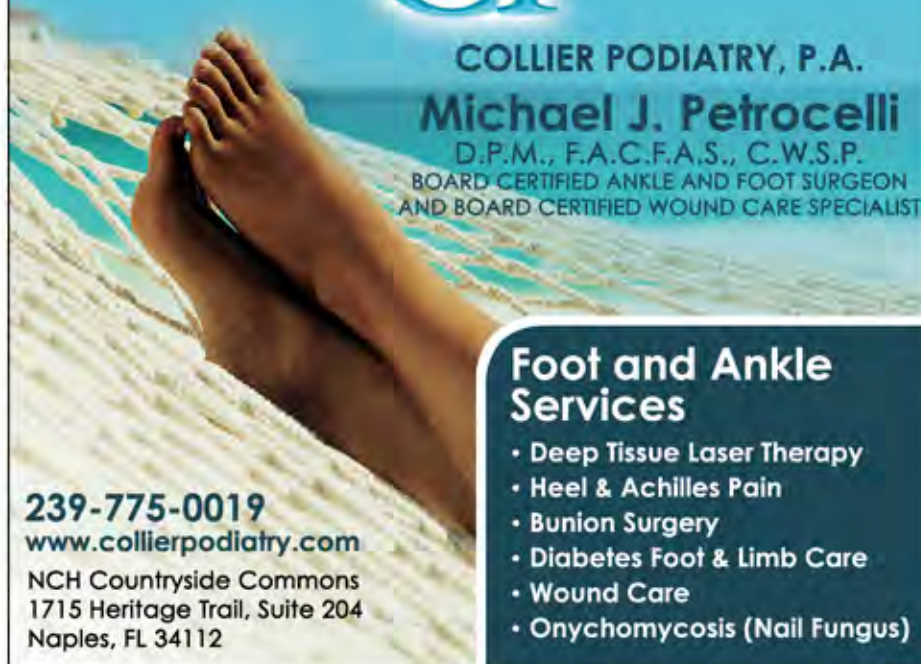
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# The Relationship Between Hormones and Mental Health

By Dr. Melissa (Mel) Irvine, DNP - Clinical Sexologist  
Specializes in Sexual Medicine and Beauty

**M**ental health is crucial for a good quality of life, and declining mental health can cause individuals to withdraw from the activities they once enjoyed. In other cases, someone may feel too tired or anxious to care for themselves and nurture their needs, impacting their emotional well-being.

Many factors can affect mental health, but hormones remain a driving force. Despite this, hormone dysregulation is often overlooked when it comes to identifying and treating mental health conditions. This is because many traditional doctors only consider the physical implications of hormone dysfunction and not the emotional toll that can occur.

The relationship between hormone levels and mental health is complex, which is why we have broken it down into the many different components, such as the different hormones influencing mental health and the direct and indirect ways they can do this.

## HORMONES AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH

Listed below are some of the different hormones that can affect mental health and their roles in the body.

### Cortisol

Also known as the stress hormone, cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands and causes someone to feel stressed due to its role in the body's fight-or-flight response.

#### Actions controlled by cortisol include:

- sugar levels in the bloodstream
- metabolism regulation
- blood pressure regulation
- the body's sleep-wake cycle

### Estrogen

While estrogen is most commonly known as a female sex hormone, responsible for producing female secondary sex characteristics and regulating a woman's menstrual cycle, it can also impact mental health by increasing anxiousness and irritability when it declines.

The role of estrogen in mental health lies in its role in regulating neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, and epinephrine, which all play a role in mood regulation. In particular, estrogen



increases the production of serotonin, which is the "feel good" chemical, while also increasing the activity of serotonin receptors in the brain.

Estrogen also plays a role in regulating endorphins, another type of hormone that brings a rush of happiness when released.

### Progesterone

Yet another female sex hormone is progesterone, which is predominantly found at higher levels during the second part of a woman's menstrual cycle following ovulation. However, this rise in progesterone may also lead to increases in depressive thoughts or an overall lowered mood.

The general role of progesterone is to prepare the endometrium for a potential pregnancy after ovulation. It does this by thickening the lining of the uterus and preventing muscle contractions in the uterus that can cause the body to reject the egg.

If the body conceives, progesterone levels remain high, stimulating the blood vessels in the endometrium to feed the growing fetus and prepare the breasts for milk production.

### DHEA

Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is a precursor to other hormones in the body, including testosterone and estrogen. It is a hormone produced in the adrenal gland, and its levels typically peak in early adulthood and then gradually decline with age.

### T3 and T4

Two hormones released by the thyroid, T3 and T4, affect metabolic rate, impacting our emotions and energy levels.

### Melatonin

Produced in time with your circadian rhythm and light/dark cycles, melatonin increases sleepiness, helping your body prepare for bed.

## How Hormones Affect Mental Health

Responsible for regulating actions within the body, hormones also significantly affect mood and mental health. When too much or too little of these hormones are produced, mental health symptoms can worsen.

## HORMONES CAN AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

### Increases Mood Disorders

Specific hormone-related conditions have a higher rate of anxiety and depression. For example, those with PCOS are 3 times more likely to be affected by anxiety or depression. Additionally, a study on endometriosis patients found that 87.5% of the patients presented with anxiety symptoms and 86.5% with depressive symptoms.

Hormone imbalances unrelated to specific conditions can also increase the risk of mood disorders. For example, those with significantly high levels of cortisol can often develop anxiety disorders.

Additionally, while high estrogen levels are typically associated with a better mood, if estrogen levels are overly high while progesterone levels are low, a condition called estrogen dominance can occur, with symptoms of depression and irritability. In some cases, estrogen dominance may also cause anxiety.

Mental health problems can also occur when progesterone is too high, as this is associated with increased amygdala sensitivity. The amygdala is a part of the brain responsible for the body's fight or flight response, so amygdala sensitivity can lead to a greater likelihood of anxiety, depression, or just feeling off.

Depression has also been reported in those with low levels of DHEA. A study even found that treating older patients with depression through DHEA supplements helped address their depressive symptoms.

### Impacts Sleep

Many hormones, such as estrogen, melatonin, and cortisol, can make it hard to fall or stay asleep, depending on their levels. When the body does not get enough sleep, your mental health can suffer; this has been proven by research showing that brain activity during sleep significantly affects someone's emotional and mental health.

In particular, REM sleep aids the brain in processing emotional information, and a lack of sleep can impact how much positive emotional content is consolidated. This has been shown to increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

Sleep and mental health share a connection in both directions, meaning lack of sleep can increase the risk of mental health disorders, but sleep may also suffer from existing mental health problems, further worsening symptoms.

Based on this evidence, it is clear that hormonal imbalances affecting the body's ability to fall or stay asleep can then have detrimental effects on mental health.

#### **Causes Mood Swings**

One complication of too little estrogen is mood swings, which is why they are a common symptom of women going through menopause. With this stage of life, the amount of estrogen a woman's body produces significantly declines, sometimes resulting in mood swings. This symptom is especially common at the beginning of menopause, when estrogen levels fluctuate.

#### **Lowers Self Esteem**

Besides the direct effect of hormones on our mental health, they can also indirectly influence mental health through the way that they change the body. For example, hormonal imbalances can cause physical transformations such as hair thinning, weight gain, acne, and unwanted hair growth. These factors can contribute to your body image and may diminish your self-esteem.

Many doctors overlook how much the physical changes from hormonal imbalance can influence your self-esteem and emotional well-being, which is why seeing a doctor who specializes in hormones, and understands how drastically they affect the body, is essential.

#### **Increases Stress**

Besides cortisol, other hormonal imbalances can cause stress to the body in other, less direct ways.

When there is a hormonal imbalance, the body senses it through the insular cortex, a part of the brain that can sense the body's internal state. When hormone levels are incorrect, the insular cortex perceives it, resulting in physiological stress.

Essentially, when your hormones are out of balance, your body "feels off," which can influence your mental well-being.

#### **Affects Fertility**

Specific hormones such as estrogen, DHEA, and progesterone can also affect fertility when they are imbalanced. For couples looking to start or grow their family, an inability to do so can significantly affect their emotional well-being.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

There are many actions you can take to help improve your mental health, such as:

#### **Exercise Regularly**

Exercising regularly can be good for more than just your physical health; it can also improve your mental health by helping to regulate hormones.

Cortisol, in particular, can become high and build up in the body without regular exercise. By exercising, your body is able to use up some of the cortisol, leaving less behind.

Endorphins such as dopamine also increase when exercising, further improving your mood.

#### **Improve Sleep Hygiene**

While hormones can affect your sleep, you can also take action to improve your sleep hygiene and increase your chances of falling and staying asleep.

#### **Some ways to improve sleep hygiene include:**

- doing calming activities before bed
- limiting screen time in the hour before bed
- going to sleep and waking up around the same time
- sleeping in a cool, dark, and quiet room

Improving your sleep hygiene helps to regulate your circadian rhythm, which then influences hormone levels.

#### **Correct Imbalanced Hormones**

While the above actions can help bolster your mental health, if your mental health decline is due to hormone dysfunction, the most crucial step will be to correct these imbalances.

Hormonal supplements can significantly improve your mental health. For example, a study on depression and thyroid function found that supplementing T3 significantly reduced depressive symptoms in the participants, even relieving some participants of depression entirely.

Many hormones are available in a supplement form and can be found in a pill, tablet, or cream, depending on the hormone being supplemented. Meeting with a physician specializing in hormones is an important step in identifying hormonal imbalances and receiving the correct treatment to correct them.

### **Receive Help for Your Mental Health Struggle**

Mental health issues are not uncommon, and it is estimated that 1 in 4 adults struggle with a mental health condition at some point in their life. When it comes to correcting mental health conditions, it is often most helpful to correct the underlying cause, which is often hormonal.

If you are struggling with symptoms of anxiety, depression, or insomnia or are experiencing irritability, difficulty concentrating, or problems with weight or appetite, you may be experiencing a hormonal imbalance.

Hormonal imbalances can dramatically affect many parts of your health and well-being. However, that also means that identifying and remedying the imbalance can return peace to your life.

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# HORMONE THERAPY:

## A Potential Shield Against Alzheimer's Disease

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

**A**s the world's population ages, the prevalence of neurodegenerative disorders like Alzheimer's disease continues to rise. This devastating condition robs individuals of their memories, cognitive abilities, and ultimately, their independence. However, recent research has shed light on a promising avenue for prevention: the use of bioidentical hormone therapy, specifically estrogen and testosterone replacement.

Bioidentical hormones are molecules that are structurally identical to those produced naturally by the human body. Unlike synthetic hormones, which can have undesired side effects, bioidentical hormones are designed to mimic the body's natural processes, making them a potentially safer and more effective treatment option.

### The Link Between Hormones and Brain Health

Estrogen and testosterone play crucial roles in brain function and cognitive health. Both hormones have been shown to exert neuroprotective effects, promoting neuronal survival, enhancing synaptic plasticity, and modulating neurotransmitter systems. As we age, our hormone levels naturally decline, which may contribute to an increased risk of cognitive decline and neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.

### The Estrogen Connection

Estrogen, in particular, has garnered significant attention for its potential role in preventing Alzheimer's disease. This hormone has been found to regulate various processes in the brain, including neuronal growth, synaptic function, and the metabolism of amyloid-beta, a protein that accumulates in the brains of individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

Several studies have suggested that women who undergo hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with estrogen during and after menopause may have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease compared to those who do not receive HRT. However, it is important to note that the timing and duration of estrogen therapy may play a crucial role in determining its effectiveness.

### The Testosterone Link

While estrogen has been the primary focus of research in this area, emerging evidence suggests that testosterone may also play a protective role against Alzheimer's disease. Testosterone has been

shown to enhance cognitive function, promote neuronal survival, and modulate the clearance of amyloid-beta from the brain.

In men, age-related declines in testosterone levels have been associated with an increased risk of cognitive impairment and dementia. Conversely, testosterone replacement therapy has been linked to improved cognitive performance and a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease in some studies.

### Personalized Hormone Therapy

It is important to note that hormone therapy is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Factors such as age, sex, medical history, and individual risk factors must be carefully considered when determining the appropriate treatment plan. Bioidentical hormone therapy should be tailored to each individual's unique needs and closely monitored by a qualified healthcare professional.

Furthermore, the potential risks and benefits of hormone therapy must be weighed carefully. While bioidentical hormones are generally considered safer than synthetic alternatives, they can still carry potential side effects, such as an increased risk of certain types of cancer or cardiovascular events.

### Ongoing Research and Future Directions

While the research on the use of bioidentical hormone therapy for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease is promising, more work is needed to fully understand its mechanisms and optimal application. Larger-scale, long-term studies are necessary to validate the findings and establish guidelines for safe and effective use.

Additionally, researchers are exploring the potential synergistic effects of combining hormone therapy with other interventions, such as lifestyle modifications, cognitive training, and pharmacological treatments. By targeting multiple pathways involved in Alzheimer's disease, a multi-pronged approach may yield even better results in preventing or slowing the progression of this devastating condition.

As our understanding of the complex interplay between hormones and brain health continues to evolve, bioidentical hormone therapy emerges as a promising avenue for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease. By harnessing the body's natural processes and tailoring treatment to individual needs, we may be able to unlock a powerful tool in the fight against this debilitating condition.



Dr. Kerschner

Dr. Magdalena Kerschner is a board-certified Anesthesiologist and board-certified Interventional Pain specialist.

She completed her medical school education at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit Michigan and subsequent anesthesiology residency at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY.

After many years of practicing traditional medicine and treating illness, Dr. Kerschner realized that preventing disease before it starts results in healthier and happier patients.

The concept of preventing illness has awakened in her an interest in weight management and bio-identical hormone replacement therapies as a modern way to promote physical and emotional wellness. Dr. Kerschner holds a certificate of training from Dr. Neal Rouzier – a nationally recognized authority in bio-identical hormone replacement therapies and preventive medicine as well as receiving a Certificate of Continued Medical Education in Wellness at Canyon Ranch.

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# Stress Management

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

**H**ave you ever felt overwhelmed? Are you feeling stressed out? The holidays can sometimes be quite stressful, whether it be making the house ready, making sure you have gotten all the presents for your loved ones/friends, but you might want to take some time for yourself too. In fact, the holidays are known to bring out all sorts of ailments and health problems, more than any time of year. The stress of the holidays is real and not something to be ignored and brushed under the rug. Stress Management is truly something we all have to deal with at one point or another. Not all stress is bad, but when you start to feel overwhelmed and feel a loss of control, that's when stress can wreak havoc in your life.

The first part in managing your stress is to identify the stressor, for example-whether it be certain negative people, going through a divorce, being told of a new diagnosis or fear of losing your job. Whatever that stressor is, it's important to identify it, talk it over with a close friend/relative or perhaps write it in a stress journal. It is crucial to not keep the feelings/emotions bottled up because that in itself is truly, I believe the heart of many health problems. Stress has been linked to heart disease, depression/mental illnesses, inflammatory conditions (ie arthritis, autoimmune illnesses, etc) and even some forms of cancer.

The second part of stress management is coming up with a plan or solution to dealing with the problem that is creating the stress/turmoil in your life. This is where taking a step back for a moment can often help. Sometimes, taking a deep breath and talking out loud is all that may be needed. I also believe it is extremely important to have outlets or hobbies in your life. Some people find getting up early and meditating is a way to relax and recharge your mind. Others may find playing an instrument, listening to a Ted talk, gardening or reading a book keeps them relaxed and content. The point is, you have to find some activity that makes you happy and feel relaxed. This in itself, helps you think of the solution as a third party and coming up with a new perspective on the problem/situation creating the stress in your life.



***I think it is important to have general lifestyle principles and routines embedded in your life such as the 5 steps below:***

1. It is important to stay positive and surround yourself with people that will bring positivity in your life as well.
2. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet also helps with keeping the stress levels manageable.
3. Staying well hydrated and avoiding excessive consumption of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages also help you manage your stress.
4. Learn also how to say "no" to unnecessary requests. You need to know your limits and stick to them. It is important to know the difference between the "shoulds" and the "musts" and when needed to say "no" to taking on too much, whether

it be in your personal or professional life. Taking on too much is indeed a recipe for disaster and the root of stress for most people.

5. Lastly, getting enough sleep is also vital to stress management. Most of us are not getting the recommended 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

In the end, it is always important to ask oneself, "Is this going to make a difference in the grand scheme of things?" "Is it really worth getting upset over?"

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# CANCER CONTROL MONTH: Innovative Pain Management Solutions for a Better Quality of Life

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

**C**ancer affects millions of lives each year, and managing the associated pain remains a critical component of comprehensive cancer care. As we observe Cancer Control Month, it's essential to highlight the advances in pain management that can significantly improve patients' quality of life throughout their cancer journey. From traditional approaches to cutting-edge therapies, a wide range of solutions exists to help patients effectively manage cancer-related pain.

Cancer pain can stem from various sources—the tumor itself pressing on organs, nerves, or bones; surgical procedures; or side effects of treatments like chemotherapy and radiation. Each patient's experience is unique, requiring personalized approaches to pain management. Fortunately, medical science continues to evolve, offering more effective and less debilitating options than ever before.

Medication management remains the cornerstone of cancer pain treatment. The World Health Organization's three-step pain ladder provides a framework for physicians, starting with non-opioid medications for mild pain and progressing to stronger opioid medications for moderate to severe pain. Adjuvant medications such as antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and corticosteroids can enhance pain relief by addressing specific pain mechanisms.

Interventional techniques offer targeted relief when medications alone prove insufficient. Nerve blocks, which involve injecting anesthetics near specific nerves, can interrupt pain signals. For patients with localized pain, particularly in the spine, vertebroplasty or kyphoplasty procedures can stabilize and strengthen weakened vertebrae, significantly reducing pain and improving mobility.

Radiation therapy, traditionally used to shrink tumors, also serves as an effective pain management tool. Focused radiation can reduce tumor size, alleviating pressure on surrounding tissues

and nerves. For patients with widespread bone metastases, systemic radiopharmaceuticals deliver radiation directly to cancer cells throughout the skeletal system.

The integration of complementary therapies into conventional pain management plans has shown promising results. Acupuncture, massage therapy, and guided imagery can help reduce pain perception and decrease reliance on medications. Physical therapy maintains strength and function, while occupational therapy helps patients adapt to changing abilities, both contributing to pain reduction through improved body mechanics.

Psychological approaches acknowledge the complex interplay between physical pain and emotional wellbeing. Cognitive-behavioral therapy helps patients develop coping strategies and reframe negative thought patterns associated with chronic pain. Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing pain intensity and improving quality of life for cancer patients.

Emerging technologies are revolutionizing cancer pain management. Implantable pain pumps deliver medications directly to the spinal fluid, providing relief with lower doses and fewer side effects. Neurostimulation devices use electrical impulses to interrupt pain signals before they reach the brain, offering non-pharmaceutical options for patients with refractory pain.

Cancer Control Month reminds us that effective pain management is not just about alleviating physical discomfort but about preserving dignity, independence, and joy in patients' lives. A multidisciplinary approach combining pharmacological, interventional, psychological, and complementary therapies offers the best chance of successful pain control. By continuing to advance our understanding of cancer pain mechanisms and developing innovative solutions, we move closer to a future where no cancer patient must suffer unnecessarily from pain.



**Dr. Kerschner**

Dr. Magdalene Kerschner, a graduate of Wayne State University School of Medicine, completed her Anesthesiology residency at The University of Kentucky. Her experience in spine surgery anesthesia led to her specialization in chronic pain management. As a Board Certified Interventional Pain Physician, Dr. Kerschner believes that while pain is undeniable, suffering is optional. She aims to help patients reclaim their joy through interventional techniques and complementary therapies.

Dr. Kerschner stays involved with professional societies to keep up with medical advancements. She served as Vice President of Ohio Interventional Pain Physicians Society and is an active member of Ohio Medical Association's Substance Abuse Committee. She contributed to the development of Ohio's HB 93, known as "The Pill Mill Bill," which led to the closure of illegal pain clinics.

Her compassionate work extends internationally. Dr. Kerschner has participated in medical missions with World Medical Mission in Kenya, worked alongside Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and served in Brazil, the Philippines, and Belize. She received a Humanitarian Award from the Philippine government for her contributions.

Dr. Kerschner's Scotty Dog Foundation has awarded numerous high school scholarships in Southwest Ohio and surrounding areas.

In her practice, Dr. Kerschner emphasizes individualized treatment plans, recognizing that each patient has unique needs. She believes in using good judgment to determine the most beneficial procedures, medications, and therapies for each patient. Dr. Kerschner and her staff prioritize spending ample time with patients during consultations, ensuring they have opportunities to ask questions and fully understand their treatment options.

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# In-Home Care Aides Benefit Alzheimer's Patients and their Family Caregivers

**H**ome health care providers play a vital role in improving the quality of life for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia who are aging at home. Their services encompass a wide range of support, including assistance with daily activities, medication management, emotional support, and engaging in meaningful activities. By addressing the unique needs of both individuals with Alzheimer's and their family caregivers, home health aides can significantly enhance the well-being of those affected by the disease.

## 1. Assistance with Activities of Daily Living:

Alzheimer's and dementia often impair individuals' ability to perform routine tasks such as bathing, dressing, and meal preparation. Home health aides are trained to provide hands-on assistance with these activities, helping individuals maintain their dignity and independence while ensuring their safety. According to the Alzheimer's Association, approximately 70% of people with dementia receive care at home, highlighting the crucial role of home health aides in supporting these individuals with daily tasks.

## 2. Medication Management:

Proper medication management is essential for individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia to maintain their health and manage symptoms effectively. Home health aides can help ensure that medications are taken as prescribed, reducing the risk of medication errors and complications. According to a study published in the Journal of Applied Gerontology, home health care services have been shown to improve medication adherence among older adults, including those with dementia.

## 3. Emotional Support and Companionship:

Alzheimer's and dementia can be isolating conditions, leading to feelings of loneliness and depression among affected individuals. Home health aides provide much-needed companionship and emotional support, engaging clients in conversation, reminiscing, and stimulating activities. Research published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society has shown that social interaction and emotional support from caregivers can improve the quality of life and well-being of individuals with dementia.



## 4. Engagement in Meaningful Activities:

Keeping individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia engaged in stimulating activities is essential for maintaining cognitive function and reducing behavioral symptoms such as agitation and aggression. Home health aides can plan and facilitate activities tailored to the individual's interests and abilities, such as music therapy, art projects, and gentle exercise. According to a study published in the Journal of Clinical Nursing, engagement in meaningful activities has been associated with improved mood and cognitive function in individuals with dementia.

## 5. Respite Care for Family Caregivers:

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia can be physically and emotionally demanding, leading to caregiver stress and burnout. Home health aides offer respite care services, allowing family caregivers to take a much-needed break from their caregiving responsibilities. Research from the Alzheimer's Association indicates that family caregivers who utilize respite care services report reduced stress levels and increased satisfaction with their caregiving role.

Whitsyms home health aides play a critical role in improving the quality of life for individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia aging at home. Their support encompasses assistance with daily activities, medication management, emotional support, and engagement in meaningful activities. By addressing the unique needs of both individuals with dementia and their family caregivers, home health aides contribute to enhancing the overall well-being of those affected by the disease.

## SERVICES

- Alzheimer's & Dementia Care
- Companion Care
- Live In & 24 Hour Care
- Personal Care
- Post-Operative Care
- Respite Care
- Skilled Nursing

## PROGRAMS

- Veteran's Aid & Attendance
- Welcome Aboard

## TYPES OF CARE PROVIDERS

- Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)
- Companions & Homemakers
- Home Health Aides (HHAs)
- Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)

## SUPPORT SERVICES

- Workers' Compensation



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# Alcohol and Cardiovascular Health

## A BALANCED CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

By James V. Talano, MD, MBA, FACC - Director SWICFT Cardiovascular Partners, Naples FL

**A**s a cardiologist, I often counsel patients about the impact of lifestyle choices on heart health. Among these, alcohol consumption remains a topic of ongoing debate. Unlike tobacco use, which is unequivocally harmful, alcohol's relationship with cardiovascular disease (CVD) is more nuanced. While excessive intake is clearly associated with adverse health outcomes, moderate consumption—akin to the occasional inclusion of red meat in a balanced diet—may not necessitate complete elimination. Instead, a measured approach emphasizing moderation and infrequency is advisable.

### Alcohol and the Cardiovascular System:

#### What the Evidence Shows

Over the years, numerous epidemiological studies have examined alcohol's effects on cardiovascular health. A J-shaped curve has often been reported, suggesting that light to moderate consumption may confer some cardio-protective benefits, particularly regarding coronary artery disease (CAD). However, more recent analyses employing advanced statistical methodologies have challenged these findings, arguing that even small amounts of alcohol can elevate blood pressure, increase atrial fibrillation risk, and contribute to heart failure.

A study published in *JAMA Network Open* found that even light alcohol consumption was associated with an increased risk of hypertension and coronary artery disease. Similarly, *The Lancet* published an extensive meta-analysis concluding that no level of alcohol consumption is entirely risk-free. However, these findings do not necessarily mean that occasional alcohol intake—limited to a few times a year—poses significant harm. Instead, they highlight that habitual and excessive intake should be avoided.

#### Moderation: Defining a Practical Approach

If we draw parallels between alcohol and dietary choices, its role in cardiovascular health is comparable to that of red meat. While high consumption of processed or fatty meats is linked to cardiovascular risks, small, occasional portions may not pose significant health threats. The same applies to alcohol: rather than advocating for complete abstinence, a more balanced approach suggests reserving alcohol consumption for infrequent social or cultural occasions rather than routine use.

Guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define moderate drinking as up to one drink per day for women and two for men. However, in clinical practice, an even more conservative approach—limiting alcohol consumption to only a few occasions per year—may be more beneficial for those with cardiovascular risk factors.

#### Understanding the Risks: When Alcohol Should Be Avoided

While moderate and infrequent alcohol use may not substantially increase cardiovascular risk, certain populations should exercise particular caution:

- **Patients with Hypertension:** Alcohol can acutely raise blood pressure, and chronic use contributes to sustained hypertension.
- **Individuals with Atrial Fibrillation:** Even moderate drinking can trigger episodes of atrial fibrillation, increasing stroke risk.
- **Those with Cardiomyopathy or Heart Failure:** Alcohol can contribute to weakened heart function, particularly in those predisposed to dilated cardiomyopathy.
- **People Taking Cardiovascular Medications:** Alcohol may interfere with the metabolism of blood thinners, antihypertensives, and cholesterol-lowering drugs.

For these individuals, abstaining or limiting alcohol to only rare occasions is the most prudent choice.

#### Potential Benefits of Occasional Consumption

Despite the concerns about alcohol, occasional consumption—when done responsibly—does not necessarily confer substantial harm and may even offer certain limited benefits. Some studies suggest that compounds in red wine, such as resveratrol and polyphenols, may have vascular protective effects. However, these benefits are likely achievable through a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains without necessitating alcohol intake.

Moreover, alcohol's social and psychological benefits—such as its role in cultural rituals and social bonding—should not be overlooked. When consumed infrequently, it can be part of an enjoyable and balanced lifestyle without significantly increasing cardiovascular risk.

#### References

1. *Association of Habitual Alcohol Intake With Risk of Cardiovascular Disease – JAMA Network Open*
2. *Alcohol and Cardiovascular Health: The Dose Makes the Poison...or the Remedy – Circulation*
3. *Alcohol and Cardiovascular Disease: A Mendelian Randomization Study – European Heart Journal*
4. *Reduced Alcohol Consumption and Major Adverse Cardiovascular Events – JAMA Internal Medicine*
5. *Roles of Drinking Pattern and Type of Alcohol Consumed in Coronary Heart Disease in Men – New England Journal of Medicine*
6. *Alcohol Consumption and Cardiovascular Health: Guidelines and Risk Factors – American Heart Association*

#### Practical Recommendations for Patients

For patients seeking a heart-healthy lifestyle while still enjoying alcohol on occasion, I offer the following guidelines:

1. **Limit Consumption to Special Occasions – Aim for a few times per year rather than weekly or daily use.**
2. **Choose Lower-Risk Options – Red wine, in small amounts, may be preferable due to its antioxidant content, though this remains a debated topic.**
3. **Avoid Binge Drinking – Even rare consumption should not involve excessive intake in a single sitting.**
4. **Monitor Blood Pressure and Heart Rhythm – If you have hypertension or a history of atrial fibrillation, limit alcohol further and observe how your body responds.**
5. **Hydrate and Eat Before Drinking – Consuming alcohol on an empty stomach increases its effects and metabolic burden.**
6. **Be Aware of Medication Interactions – Alcohol may reduce the effectiveness or increase the side effects of certain cardiovascular medications.**

**Conclusion: A Moderate and Individualized Approach**  
Alcohol, like many aspects of diet and lifestyle, does not need to be viewed in absolute terms. While regular or heavy consumption is unequivocally detrimental, complete abstinence may not be necessary for everyone. Instead, an individualized approach—akin to how we view the occasional inclusion of red meat—may be most appropriate. By reserving alcohol for infrequent social or cultural occasions, patients can minimize cardiovascular risk while still engaging in a balanced lifestyle.

As with all aspects of health, moderation, awareness, and informed decision-making remain the guiding principles for achieving optimal cardiovascular outcomes.

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# Rebuilding Stronger Bones:

## Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk's Revolutionary Approach to Osteoporosis

**O**steoporosis, often called the "silent disease," affects millions worldwide as bones gradually become brittle and fragile.

This degenerative condition typically progresses without symptoms until a fracture occurs – commonly in the hip, spine, or wrist. While conventional medicine has long considered osteoporosis an inevitable part of aging, Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk is pioneering a different approach that not only halts bone loss but actively reverses it.

Dr. Shepetiuk's methodology stands apart from traditional treatments that primarily focus on medication alone. Her comprehensive program begins with advanced diagnostics that go beyond standard DEXA scans to assess bone quality and identify individual risk factors. This detailed analysis allows her to create truly personalized intervention plans tailored to each patient's unique biochemistry and lifestyle.

"Osteoporosis isn't simply a calcium deficiency," explains Dr. Shepetiuk. "It's a complex condition influenced by hormones, inflammation, gut health, and even stress levels. Effective treatment requires addressing all these factors simultaneously."

The science-backed solutions in Dr. Shepetiuk's protocol incorporate several key elements. Nutritional optimization forms the foundation, with customized dietary recommendations that balance bone-building minerals and reduce inflammatory foods that contribute to bone loss. Her approach often includes targeted supplementation, but always personalized to address specific deficiencies rather than following a one-size-fits-all formula.

Movement is another crucial component of Dr. Shepetiuk's program. She prescribes specific weight-bearing and resistance exercises designed to stimulate osteoblast activity – the cells responsible for building new bone tissue. These exercises are carefully selected based on the patient's current bone density, fitness level, and fracture risk.

What truly sets Dr. Shepetiuk apart is her integration of cutting-edge research on bone metabolism. Her protocol addresses often-overlooked factors like sleep quality, stress management, and gut microbiome health – all scientifically proven to impact bone remodeling processes.



Dr. Shepetiuk's approach also emphasizes hormone balance, particularly for postmenopausal women who face accelerated bone loss due to declining estrogen levels. Rather than automatically prescribing hormone replacement therapy, she first conducts comprehensive testing to identify specific imbalances. This allows for more targeted interventions, which might include bioidentical hormones, herbal support, or lifestyle modifications to naturally optimize hormone production.

Environmental factors play a role in her protocol as well. Dr. Shepetiuk educates patients about reducing exposure to toxins that can interfere with bone metabolism, while encouraging vitamin D synthesis through appropriate sun exposure and specific supplementation when necessary.

The results speak for themselves. Many of Dr. Shepetiuk's patients have experienced significant improvements in bone density scores, some achieving increases of 3-5% annually – outcomes rarely seen with conventional approaches.

"I was told I would need to accept progressive bone loss as part of aging," shares one patient. "After two years with Dr. Shepetiuk, my bone density has increased by 8%, and I feel stronger than I have in decades."

Another patient reports, "The comprehensive approach made all the difference. Previous doctors only offered medication without addressing my vitamin deficiencies or teaching me the right exercises. Dr. Shepetiuk's program gave me back my confidence and freedom."

For those struggling with osteoporosis or looking to prevent it, Dr. Shepetiuk's approach offers hope beyond medication management. By addressing the root causes of bone deterioration through personalized, science-backed solutions, she's helping patients rebuild stronger bones and regain confidence in their body's natural healing abilities.

Her work demonstrates that osteoporosis need not be an inevitable consequence of aging, but rather a condition that can be effectively managed and even reversed with the right comprehensive care.

### Functional and Integrative Medicine with Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

Are you concerned about osteoporosis and looking for a natural, medication-free approach to restoring your bone health?

Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk specializes in reversing bone loss and strengthening your bones using personalized, science-backed solutions. Her expertise ensures each client receives a custom plan tailored to their unique needs, helping you regain confidence in your health.

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# BROKEN BOTTLES, BROKEN BONDS: How Alcohol Abuse Fractures Relationships

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

**A**lcohol consumption is deeply woven into the social fabric of many cultures, often associated with celebration, relaxation, and connection. However, when drinking crosses into abuse or dependency, it can transform from a social lubricant into a powerful relationship solvent. During Alcohol Awareness Month, it's crucial to examine how problematic drinking behaviors can damage the connections we value most.

The ripple effects of alcohol abuse extend far beyond the individual, creating waves that crash against partners, children, parents, friends, and colleagues. These relationships often bear the heaviest burden when drinking becomes excessive or compulsive.

Trust, the foundation of any healthy relationship, is frequently the first casualty. Broken promises about cutting back, hidden bottles, financial secrets, and alcohol-influenced behaviors create fractures in relationships that become increasingly difficult to repair. Partners of those struggling with alcohol often report living in a state of constant vigilance and uncertainty, never knowing which version of their loved one will walk through the door.

Communication patterns deteriorate when alcohol becomes a third party in a relationship. Meaningful conversations are postponed until the person is sober, only to be forgotten entirely.



Arguments become more frequent, often escalating in intensity and occasionally turning volatile. The emotional distance grows as genuine connection becomes increasingly rare.

Children in households affected by alcohol abuse face unique challenges. They may take on inappropriate responsibilities, becoming caretakers for parents who should be caring for them. The unpredictability of a parent's behavior can create lasting anxiety and trust issues that follow children into adulthood. Research shows that children of parents with alcohol use disorders have higher risks of developing substance use problems themselves, perpetuating an intergenerational cycle.

Financially, alcohol abuse can strain household resources, with money diverted from necessities to sustain drinking habits. These economic pressures further intensify relationship tensions, creating a downward spiral of conflict and resentment.

Social isolation frequently accompanies advanced alcohol problems. Friends and family may withdraw after repeated disappointments or uncomfortable encounters. The individual drinking problematically might also withdraw from social connections that don't support their drinking habits, further narrowing their support network when they need it most.

Yet, amid these sobering realities, there is hope. Recovery is possible, and relationships can heal. Professional support through therapy, support groups like Al-Anon for family members, and alcohol treatment programs provide pathways toward healthier relationships. Many families report that navigating recovery together, while challenging, ultimately strengthened their bonds through improved communication, honesty, and mutual support.

This Alcohol Awareness Month, it's important to recognize that addressing alcohol problems isn't just about individual health—it's about preserving the connections that give our lives meaning. By understanding how alcohol abuse impacts relationships, we can better support those affected and promote healthier patterns of connection and communication.

If you or someone you love is struggling with alcohol, remember that reaching out for help isn't a sign of weakness but rather an act of courage and love—both for yourself and for those who matter most in your life. Dr. Richard Capiola, MD, is a board-certified psychiatrist with specialty certifications in addiction and forensic psychiatry and over 31 years of experience in the medical field. He graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1990. Be sure to call ahead with Dr. Capiola to book an appointment.

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Dr Capiola's mission is to focus on the strengths inherent in all of us to help overcome any problems and life stresses that make us feel stuck and limited. He combines psychotherapy and medication management into all patient visits.



# THE AUTOIMMUNE THEORY IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

By Jerry and Lisa Meloche, Pharm.D., Owners, Compounding Pharmacists

For decades, Alzheimer's disease has been widely considered a brain disorder primarily caused by the accumulation of beta-amyloid plaques, abnormal protein deposits that disrupt brain function. However, emerging research challenges this perspective. Scientists now suggest that Alzheimer's may be an autoimmune disease, marking a significant shift in understanding and potential treatment approaches.

Beta-amyloid, long thought to be a problematic protein, may actually play a critical role in the brain's immune system, defending against injury and infection. Unfortunately, due to the molecular similarity between bacterial membranes and brain cell membranes, beta-amyloid may mistakenly target healthy brain cells, leading to chronic inflammation, tissue damage, and cognitive decline.

This autoimmune misfire redefines Alzheimer's as a disorder of the immune system, emphasizing the role of inflammation and immune dysregulation in its progression. This paradigm shift opens new avenues for treatment, focusing on regulating immune responses rather than solely targeting beta-amyloid accumulation. This theory aligns with broader research into autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple sclerosis, which share common themes of immune system malfunction and systemic inflammation.

## How Compounding Pharmacies Can Help with Autoimmune Issues and Alzheimer's Disease

Compounding pharmacies like Creative Scripts in Naples, FL, offer personalized solutions that address the unique needs of individuals dealing with autoimmune conditions and Alzheimer's disease. Here's how:

### 1. Immune System Modulation

Compounding pharmacies can create custom formulations of medications and supplements aimed at reducing inflammation and supporting immune balance. These may include:

- **Low-Dose Naltrexone (LDN):** Shown to modulate immune responses and reduce inflammation, LDN is a promising therapy for many autoimmune conditions and potentially Alzheimer's disease.
- **Antioxidant Supplements:** Formulations containing glutathione, vitamin C, or CoQ10 can help combat oxidative stress and support brain health.



### 2. Hormone Balancing

Autoimmune diseases often involve hormonal imbalances, particularly in conditions affecting women. Compounded bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) can support hormone levels, reduce inflammation, and improve overall well-being.

### 3. Customized Anti-Inflammatory Medications

Chronic inflammation plays a pivotal role in autoimmune diseases and possibly Alzheimer's. Compounding pharmacies can create tailor-made anti-inflammatory medications, such as:

- **Topical Creams:** For localized pain and inflammation in autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis.
- **Oral Medications:** Customized dosages of medications to minimize side effects and maximize effectiveness.

### 4. Cognitive Support Supplements

For Alzheimer's patients, compounding pharmacies can provide supplements that target brain health, such as:

- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Essential for reducing brain inflammation and supporting cognitive function.
- **Curcumin:** Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, curcumin may help protect brain cells.
- **Phosphatidylserine:** A compound that supports memory and cognitive performance.

### 5. Gastrointestinal Health Support

Since gut health is closely linked to immune function, compounded probiotics and gut-healing

supplements (like L-glutamine or zinc carnosine) can help address underlying inflammation and enhance overall immune health.

### 6. Alternative Delivery Methods

For patients who struggle with oral medications, compounding pharmacies can create alternative delivery methods, such as transdermal creams, sublingual drops, or injectable formulations, ensuring optimal absorption and ease of use.

### Moving Forward

The autoimmune theory of Alzheimer's highlights the complex interplay between immune function and chronic diseases. Creative Scripts Pharmacy is uniquely positioned to help patients navigate these challenges by offering personalized treatments that address inflammation, support immune health, and enhance cognitive function. If you or a loved one is managing an autoimmune condition or concerned about Alzheimer's disease, consult with a health-care provider to explore how customized care from a compounding pharmacy can make a difference.

**Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy** custom builds medication, one patient at a time. We use the highest quality pharmaceutical-grade ingredients, state-of-the-art bases, equipment, and technology. Continual training on the newest techniques, advances in therapy, and regulations allows our pharmacists and technicians to provide the safest, most effective medications for you AND your pets. In addition to compounded medications, we offer pharmaceutical-grade nutritional supplements, health advice, and hormone consults. Creative Scripts specializes in veterinary compounding, dermatology, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT), pain management, and more. Pharmacists Jerry and Lisa Meloche have served Naples and surrounding communities since 2005.

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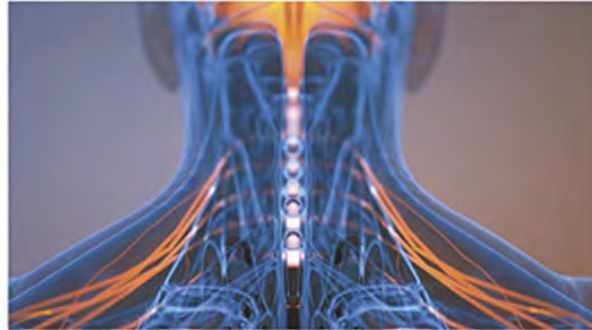
# The Matterhorn Method: A Seamless Integration Between Pain Relief and Performance

By Angela Puchalla, MS, ATC, LAT

**T**he leading company in Florida for identifying and correcting neurological compensation is Naples-based Matterhorn Fit. Through their proprietary process, called the Matterhorn Method, they have been able to successfully treat thousands of active seniors, over 70 professional athletes and 11 Olympians, in as little as two weeks. Through their comprehensive initial evaluation, they will identify exactly where the root cause of your problem is coming from, create a plan to fix it quickly, and prevent it from returning.

“Many of our clients have lost hope. They have tried traditional treatment methods and still live with pain. When you address pain, injury, and movement dysfunction from a neurological level, the results are immediate and our clients become hopeful again,” says Matterhorn Fit CEO Ryan Vesce.

Ryan Vesce was on the verge of retirement from his professional hockey career after major back and hip surgery, but mentally he was not ready. Ryan teamed up with professional athlete strength coach, Sean Sullivan, to find a solution to his chronic pain. The team spent the next five years compiling various techniques they had learned in professional sports into a systematic process and applied it to Ryan’s rehabilitation. The results were immediate and it enabled Ryan to keep playing for an additional 5 years pain free. Ryan and Sean founded Matterhorn Fit in 2018 to bring their newly developed process, called the Matterhorn Method, to everyday people who struggle with pain.



“When I retired in 2018, we had to tell the world what we had discovered,” says Vesce. “So we started testing our new process on pro athletes, and it worked. We started testing on active seniors in the area (60-80 yr olds) and it worked. In fact, the Matterhorn Method worked so well that our clients told all of their family and friends about it. That’s when we knew we had something really special. Within 2 weeks, virtually all of our patients were seeing a major reduction of pain and that has held true for thousands of our clients through today. The process worked fast. The culture was inspiring, and we began to take off.”

#### WHY IT WORKS

The reason why Matterhorn Fit has been able to consistently relieve pain in two weeks is credited to their proprietary process called the Matterhorn Method. The Matterhorn Method identifies the root cause of the issue from a neurological level and allows for muscles that were inactive to support the body again which eliminates the pain response from the brain.

The first step in Matterhorn Fit’s process is a comprehensive initial evaluation. Through their evaluation, they will be able to identify any neurological compensation in the client’s system. If they do find compensations, there is a very high probability that they can improve the client’s pain in two weeks.

“Through our initial evaluation we will be able to determine IF we can help you. If we do find something that we can fix, then we will start you with 6 sessions over a two week period to resolve your symptoms,” says Vesce. “Over 94% of our clients have reported a major reduction of pain within two weeks. After the symptoms are resolved, we build a personalized movement plan to prevent the problem from returning.”

To schedule an initial evaluation visit  
[matterhornfit.com](http://matterhornfit.com) or call the office at  
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# CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH DEMENTIA: Practical Tips for Managing Anxiety

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

Caring for a loved one with dementia can be a challenging and emotional journey. As a caregiver, you play a crucial role in providing support and comfort to your loved one as they navigate the complexities of this progressive neurological condition. One common challenge faced by individuals with dementia is anxiety, which can manifest in various ways and significantly impact their well-being and yours. In this article, we will explore practical tips for managing your loved one's inevitable anxiety, understand why they experience it, and examine how your own anxiety as a caregiver can affect them.

Anxiety is a common symptom experienced by individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's and can be triggered by a variety of factors, including:

#### • Cognitive Decline

As dementia progresses, individuals may experience memory loss, confusion, and difficulty understanding their surroundings. These cognitive changes can lead to feelings of uncertainty and fear, contributing to anxiety.

#### • Environmental Changes

Any changes in the environment, such as moving to a new place, changes in routine, or unfamiliar faces, can trigger anxiety in individuals with dementia. They may struggle to adapt to new situations and feel overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity.

#### • Loss of Independence

Dementia can gradually strip away a person's independence, leading to feelings of frustration, helplessness, and anxiety. Tasks that were once routine and effortless may become challenging, causing distress and anxiety.

#### • Communication Difficulties

Individuals with dementia may have difficulty expressing their needs and understanding verbal cues. Certainly, most experience slower processing abilities and may also have lowered hearing ability. This can lead to feeling isolated and misunderstood, further exacerbating their anxiety.

As a caregiver there are strategies you can employ to help manage your loved one's anxiety and promote their well-being:

#### • Establish a Calm and Familiar Environment

Create a soothing and familiar environment for your loved one by minimizing noise, clutter, and other potential stressors. Maintain a consistent daily routine to provide stability and predictability, which can help reduce anxiety.

#### • Practice Effective Communication

First, slow your communication down. Provide time for your loved one to follow the conversation and process what you have shared or asked. Use clear, simple language and nonverbal cues to communicate. It can be helpful to comment on their emotions which can help them identify how they are feeling. For example, "Mom, it seems like you might feel nervous...." If your loved one's language skills remain intact, your ability to voice and hold space for their emotions can help them connect with their own emotions. Validate their feelings. Reassure them they are not alone.

#### • Engage in Meaningful Activities

Encourage your loved one to participate in activities that they enjoy and find meaningful. Engaging in hobbies, music therapy, art therapy, or gentle exercise can help distract them from their worries and reduce anxiety. Loneliness and anxiety breed loneliness and anxiety. As the disease progresses, they will need more help initiating activity.

#### How Caregiver Anxiety Affects Your Loved One:

It is essential to recognize that as a caregiver, your own anxiety and stress can impact your loved one's stress.

#### • Emotional Contagion

Individuals with dementia are highly attuned to the emotions of those around them and may notice your anxiety and stress. If you are feeling anxious, your loved one may mirror those emotions, leading to increased agitation and distress for you both. They may not be able to articulate it but if your loved one feels extra stressed or anxious, check in with yourself regularly. Is your loved one picking up on your emotions?

#### • Reduced Quality of Care

Caregiver anxiety can impair your ability to provide effective care. When you are feeling overwhelmed or anxious, you may be less patient, attentive, and compassionate, which can negatively impact your



loved one's well-being. Chronic caregiver stress and anxiety can strain your relationship with your loved one, leading to increased tension and conflict. This can further exacerbate their anxiety and make it challenging to maintain a supportive and nurturing environment.

#### Managing Caregiver Anxiety

Taking care of your own mental and emotional well-being is essential for effectively caregiving. Reach out to friends, family members, or support groups for emotional support and encouragement. Talking to others who understand what you are going through can provide validation and comfort. It may be difficult, but maintain connection to your life outside of caregiving and dementia. Accept that you cannot control dementia nor provide perfect care. Set realistic expectations for yourself. Give yourself time to rest and recharge by taking regular breaks from caregiving duties. Enlist the help of other family members, friends, or respite care services to give yourself a much-needed break.

In conclusion, caring for a loved one with dementia requires patience, compassion, and understanding. By implementing practical strategies to manage anxiety and taking care of your own well-being, you can create a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes your loved one's overall quality of life. Remember that you are not alone, and there are resources available to help you navigate this challenging journey.



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# Shockwave Therapy vs. Cortisone Therapy for Plantar Fasciitis

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

**P**lantar fasciitis is a common condition characterized by inflammation of the plantar fascia, a thick band of tissue that runs across the bottom of the foot. It causes heel pain and discomfort, often impacting daily activities and quality of life. Among the various treatment options available, shockwave therapy and cortisone injections are two prominent choices. This article compares these two treatments' effectiveness, safety, and long-term outcomes.

**Effectiveness:** Shockwave therapy, also known as extracorporeal shockwave therapy (ESWT), involves applying high-energy shockwaves to the affected area. These shockwaves stimulate healing by promoting blood flow and tissue regeneration. Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of shockwave therapy in relieving pain and improving function in patients with plantar fasciitis. For instance, a meta-analysis published in the Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research found that shockwave therapy significantly reduced pain and improved functional outcomes compared to placebo or other treatments.

On the other hand, cortisone injections deliver a potent anti-inflammatory medication directly into the affected area. While cortisone injections provide rapid pain relief by reducing inflammation, their long-term effectiveness is debated. Research published in the American Journal of Sports Medicine suggests that cortisone injections may offer short-term relief but could potentially lead to tissue degeneration and increased risk of recurrence in the long run.

**Safety:** Both shockwave therapy and cortisone injections carry certain risks and potential side effects. Shockwave therapy is generally considered safe, with minimal risk of complications. However, some patients may experience temporary discomfort during the treatment or mild bruising afterward. Complications of shockwave therapy are quite rare; however, it is important that a physician assess the patient's injury and health before treatment begins.

While effective in reducing pain and inflammation, cortisone injections pose several safety concerns. Repeated injections may weaken the plantar fascia, increasing the risk of rupture or other complications. Moreover, cortisone injections can cause temporary pain at the injection site, thinning of the skin, discoloration, and even infection. Patients with diabetes or compromised immune systems may be at higher risk of adverse reactions to cortisone injections.

**Long-Term Outcomes:** When considering long-term outcomes, shockwave therapy offers more promising results than cortisone injections. Research published in the Journal of Foot and Ankle Surgery suggests that the benefits of shockwave therapy may persist for up to a year or longer after treatment. Furthermore, shockwave therapy has been shown to stimulate tissue healing and regeneration, potentially addressing the underlying causes of plantar fasciitis rather than merely masking symptoms.

In contrast, cortisone injections may provide temporary relief but often fail to address the underlying pathology of plantar fasciitis. A study published in the Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association found that while cortisone injections provided



short-term pain relief, patients experienced a high rate of recurrence within six months to a year after treatment. Additionally, the repeated use of cortisone injections may lead to tissue degeneration and worsen the condition over time.

Both shockwave therapy and cortisone injections offer benefits and drawbacks in treating plantar fasciitis. Shockwave therapy appears to be more effective in providing long-term pain relief and improving functional outcomes compared to cortisone injections. Furthermore, shockwave therapy is generally considered safer with minimal risk of adverse effects. However, individual patient preferences, medical history, and the severity of the condition should be considered when choosing the most appropriate treatment approach. Patients are encouraged to consult a qualified healthcare provider to determine the best course for managing their plantar fasciitis.



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# Health Insurance

By Ulla-Undine Merritt (Dee) National Producer Number (NPN) 8853366

## It is illegal for an insurance agent to call you regarding Medicare.

Do not talk to someone you have not given permission to call. Ask them for their National Producer number and report them to Medicare for an unsolicited call.

CMS has made many rules for 2025 Medicare season. If you want to enroll or review your plan over the phone, you need to agree to be recorded and Medicare requires us to keep the recording for 10 years. In person appointments do not have that requirement, but you need to sign a scope of appointment that authorizes us to talk to you about Medicare Advantage or a Drug Plan. It does not allow us to do anything but talk to you about these topics.

Many plans have decreased the cost of Insulin which will be a huge savings for so many in 2024. Part D after you, the plan and the pharmaceutical company paid \$8,000 you no longer have a cost for your medications for the rest of the year.

**When you turn 65 you are eligible for Medicare,** once you have worked 40 quarters roughly 10 years there is no cost for Medicare Part "A". Part A covers Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, Home Health & Hospice. Medicare Part B you can choose to take at 65 or you can hold off if you are still working and have credible coverage. If you do not have group health insurance that is considered qualified, and then you want it you would have a late enrollment penalty for each month you did not have Part B & Part D and that penalty will last for the rest of your life. Part B covers doctors, imaging, blood work, ambulance, durable medical equipment, etc. Part D is a Medicare Drug Plan and covers medications. During your initial enrollment period it is especially important to understand your options! Medicare Supplements/Medigap Plans are NOT guaranteed issue you may need to medically qualify. You can purchase a Medigap Plan during your 1st 6-month on Medicare Part B without medical underwriting. There are a lot of things you need to know. Again, work with an agent you can trust! **Especially important:** when you move you need to know your options. Can you keep the same plan? Do you need to make a change and what does that look like?



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**Individual/Family Health Insurance** – Being young and healthy does not mean you do not need health insurance. Do you know anyone that knew when they were going to be diagnosed with cancer, or when they were going to have a heart attack or even a serious accident? I do not, it happens, and insurance is there to help you get the care you need and limit your financial exposure. What are your insurance options, and what is best for you? Employer Group Coverage, Individual Medically Underwritten Health Insurance, Medicaid, or the Government Marketplace Guaranteed Issue Health Insurance. There is a lot to know about the differences, as well as the cost. The monthly premium should not be your only consideration. *You do not know what you do not know* so ask the experts, which do know about all the plans and can help educate and guide you through the enrollment process. When it comes to medically underwritten plans, most of them you can enroll all year long, but you can also be denied based on medical underwriting. The cost is the same as going directly with the insurance carrier, so why would you not seek free professional help from an agent that sells all or most of the companies in your area?

**Travel Insurance** – Did you know that most health insurance does NOT cover you outside of the country and that includes a cruise, in international

waters (4 miles out). Travel insurance is not just about trip cancellation but most importantly what if you got sick or had an accident on your trip. Medical Trip insurance is very important and most of the time not very costly when you weigh the benefits.

**Pet Insurance** – Your 4-legged family members need insurance as well, especially for the big sudden emergency room services. The younger the pet the less the cost of insurance and there are unlimited benefits as well.

**Life Insurance** – You are never too young to have life insurance and many types offer living benefits. As an example, I purchase life insurance for my grandchildren almost as soon as they are born. Their policy continues to build cash value that they can use during their lives, for maybe education, wedding or even a 1st home purchase. The younger you are the lower the cost.

**Long Term Care Insurance** – Overall, 48.7% of older adults with ADL difficulties (or an estimated 3 million persons aged 70 and older) reported needing some sort of personal assistance with one or more ADLs, and, of those individuals with need, 20.7% (or an estimated 629,000 persons) had an unmet need. Long Term Care Insurance helps pay for in home, or facility-based needs, such as assistance with acts of daily living or help with paying for a facility. Start shopping for this insurance in your 40's, but it's never too late to try. Your overall health will pay a major roll in the cost of the plan's premium. The sooner than later for affordability. Remember Medicare is NOT meant for Nursing Home Care/Skilled Nursing.

**Logical Insurance Solutions** is a SWFL Insurance Broker that works with most of the carriers, we are happy to help you through the maze. This is what we do daily, it is second nature to us. We offer virtual seminars, one on one WebEx, phone and in person appointments.

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# Easter and Springtime Hazards for Dogs and Cats

**W**hen it is time for spring cleaning, you often stow away your winter decor, perhaps dig out your Easter or springtime decorations, and transform your home for the season. If you have a cat or dog in the house, you might want to steer clear of seasonal items that might pose potential threats to your pet's health. Prevent a trip to the emergency vet by pet-proofing your spring-spiffy house.

## Easter Grass

Cats love anything that moves. Easter grass moves easily in a room with a breeze or draft, makes interesting sounds, and, for some cats, it is simply irresistible and must be eaten.

Stringy things like Easter grass or tinsel at Christmas, pose a deadly threat if ingested. Veterinarians consider Easter grass a linear foreign body. Signs that your pet has this problem, aside from the material being visible from the mouth or anus, are vomiting, straining to defecate, and a painful abdomen.

Trying to pull out visible grass strings is not recommended. Pulling the strand can cause more damage if the piece is long and trapped far inside the body. Call your veterinarian if you suspect that your cat has sampled the Easter grass. While linear foreign bodies are more common in cats, dogs may also ingest non-food material, and the same concerns apply here.



## Chocolate

Chocolate is typically more of a dog hazard, as many dogs have a sweet tooth, a great nose, and the determination to find chocolate—hidden or not. More often than not, your dog will find Reese's Peanut Butter Cups or Hershey's Kisses in eggs hidden in your backyard Easter hunt before your kids, so, keep them away.

The toxic components in chocolate are theobromine and caffeine, and the level of toxicity is based on the type and quantity of chocolate consumed as well as the size of your pet.

Different types of chocolate have different amounts of theobromine and caffeine; dark chocolate contains the highest concentrations and white "chocolate" contains the least. Early clinical signs are vomiting, diarrhea, and trembling.

The toxicity level for either a dog or cat is the same depending on weight, however, dogs are more so in danger than cats since dogs are drawn to sweets meanwhile cats are not. A cat may try some chocolate but is less likely to continue eating it.

## Xylitol

If you're baking a cake for Easter beware of xylitol. It's an artificial sweetener used in home baking and found in many products including some sugar-free gums and diet foods. It can also be found in some Easter eggs. Dogs are extremely sensitive to xylitol and even small amounts can cause toxicity. Early symptoms of xylitol poisoning include lethargy, vomiting and loss of coordination. Seizures and even death may occur. Assistance dog Ginny made a remarkable recovery after eating a toxic amount of xylitol.

## Spring flowers and plants

Spring flowers and plants can be found in many homes and gardens around Easter. Unfortunately, several are poisonous to dogs, with the bulbs posing the biggest risk. Daffodil, lily and spring crocus bulbs are all highly toxic. Symptoms of plant or bulb poisoning can include vomiting, upset stomach and heart and kidney problems.

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# Mold Toxicity and Mycotoxins

## UNDERSTANDING THE DANGERS AND IMPLICATIONS

By Scott Briggs - American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

**M**old toxicity and mycotoxins pose significant health risks to individuals exposed to indoor mold. Mold is a fungus that thrives in damp and humid environments, and when certain molds produce toxic substances called mycotoxins, it can lead to adverse health effects. Mold growth in indoor environments is a common problem that can lead to adverse health effects, known as mold toxicity.

Read carefully and you will learn as I delve into the dangers and implications of mold toxicity and mycotoxins, exploring their causes, effects, and potential preventative measures.

### Risks Associated with Mold Contamination & Mycotoxin Poisoning:

While mold toxicity can have serious health implications, it is important to note that not all molds are toxic, and the severity of symptoms may vary among individuals. However, certain vulnerable populations, such as infants, the elderly, or individuals with compromised immune systems/auto immune disorders/diseases may be more susceptible to the adverse effects, more prone to severe symptoms of mold exposure. Note: (The longer you are exposed the more sensitized you become) even in healthy individuals.

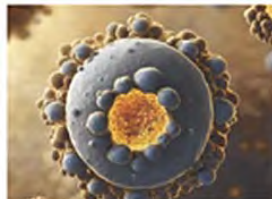
### Origins of Mold Toxicity and Mycotoxin Production:

What are Mycotoxins? Mycotoxins are secondary metabolites (waste) produced by certain molds as a defense mechanism. Mycotoxin production is primarily triggered by environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and nutrient availability.

Moisture-rich environments, water damage, and poor ventilation provide favorable conditions for mold growth and mycotoxin production. Common indoor molds capable of producing mycotoxins include species of *Aspergillus*, *Cladosporium*, *Penicillium*, *Chaetomium*, *Fusarium* and *Stachybotrys* (commonly known as black mold).

### Effects of Mold Toxicity and Mycotoxin Exposure:

Exposure to mold and mycotoxins can result in various health effects, depending on individual sensitivity and the duration and intensity of exposure. These toxic substances enter the body through inhalation, ingestion, or contact the skin (Dermal Exposure) known as skin absorption. Symptoms of mold toxicity and mycotoxin exposure may range



from mild to severe and can include respiratory problems, such as coughing, wheezing, and throat irritation and many other rhinitis or cold like symptoms. Other symptoms may include allergies, sinus congestion, headaches, fatigue, skin rashes, and gastrointestinal issues. Prolonged exposure to elevated levels of mycotoxins can lead to more serious health conditions, including neurological disorders, forgetfulness (brain fog), immune system dysfunction, and even cancer in certain cases.

### Preventative Measures:

Preventing mold growth and mycotoxin exposure is paramount for maintaining a safe and healthy indoor environment. Here are some preventive measures to consider:

**1. Moisture Control:** Thoroughly inspect and promptly address any moisture issues, leaks, or water damage. Dry out immediately; remove any saturated cellulose materials. Implement proper ventilation and consider using dehumidifiers in areas prone to dampness. Maintain and check indoor humidity under 60% to manage mold growth. (It only takes 24-48 hours of constant water leakage; high humidity to promote mold growth.

**2. Regular Mold Inspections:** Conduct routine inspections including testing to identify mold growth or signs of water damage. If mold is detected, seek professional remediation services to ensure proper removal.

**3. HVAC Maintenance:** Regularly quarterly maintenance of your equipment is necessary like condensations lines and evaporators coils; proper ventilation, filters, clean ducts, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems help prevent mold growth and ensure proper airflow. Especially in humid climates.

**4. Improve Indoor Air Quality:** Enhance indoor air quality by promoting good airflow, ensuring proper ventilation, utilize air purifiers, and regularly replacing air filters in HVAC systems/air purifiers using MERV 10 or higher.

**5. Proper Cleaning and Maintenance:** Regularly clean and dry areas prone to mold growth, such as bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. Once mold

colonies are established mycotoxins can be released. Mycotoxins are very volatile and can attract to surfaces and travel through the air on other particulate like dust. Use mold-resistant materials and hand clean mold-prone surfaces with non-toxic mold-neutralizing products. (Avoid using chemicals) mold intensifies mycotoxin release when exposed to chemicals. Note: Most individuals with mold sensitivities typically have a sensitivity to chemicals.

**6. Personal Protective Measures:** When dealing with mold removal or cleaning activities, always wear protective clothing like tubes/mesh suits,, gloves, and half face goggles or full face masks with chemical filters to minimize exposure to mold spores, mycotoxins and other fine particulates in the air.

**Conclusion:** Mold toxicity and mycotoxins can pose significant health risks to individuals exposed to indoor mold. Recognizing the causes, effects, and preventative measures associated with mold growth and mycotoxins is essential for maintaining a safe and healthy environment. The key is taking proactive steps to control moisture, conduct routine inspections, and employ proper cleaning and maintenance practices, individuals can minimize the risks of mold toxicity and mycotoxin exposure.

Creating an indoor environment that is free from mold and mycotoxins is crucial for safeguarding the well-being of occupants while promoting overall health and quality of life.

“Traditional (biological remediations) or spot treatments typically do not address both mold and mycotoxins. Once mold colonies are established and mycotoxins are released a whole home remediation may be necessary for you and your family to be free from biological contaminate exposure.”

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## Exploring the Potential of CBD in Managing Parkinson's Disease Symptoms

**P**arkinson's disease is a progressive neurological disorder that affects movement, causing tremors, stiffness, and difficulty with balance and coordination. While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease, various treatments aim to manage its symptoms and improve the quality of life for patients. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential therapeutic effects of cannabidiol (CBD), a compound derived from the cannabis plant, in managing Parkinson's disease symptoms.

CBD is one of over a hundred cannabinoids found in cannabis. Unlike tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), another well-known cannabinoid, CBD does not produce psychoactive effects. Instead, it is believed to interact with the body's endocannabinoid system, which plays a role in regulating functions such as mood, sleep, appetite, and pain sensation.

Research into the potential benefits of CBD for Parkinson's disease is still in its early stages, but preliminary studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that it may offer some relief for certain symptoms of the condition.

One of the most common symptoms of Parkinson's disease is tremors, involuntary shaking of the hands, arms, legs, jaw, or tongue. Some studies have suggested that CBD may help reduce tremors and improve motor function in Parkinson's patients. A study published in the Journal of Psychopharmacology found that CBD significantly reduced both the frequency and severity of tremors in Parkinson's patients

compared to a placebo. However, more research is needed to confirm these findings and understand the mechanisms underlying CBD's effects on tremors.

In addition to tremors, Parkinson's disease can cause muscle stiffness and rigidity, making it difficult for patients to move freely. CBD's potential muscle relaxant properties may offer relief for these symptoms. A study published in the European Journal of Pain found that CBD applied topically reduced muscle stiffness and improved mobility in rats with arthritis, suggesting that it may have similar effects in Parkinson's patients. Further clinical trials are needed to determine the optimal dosage and delivery method of CBD for managing muscle stiffness in Parkinson's disease.

Furthermore, Parkinson's disease can have a significant impact on mood and mental well-being. Depression and anxiety are common among Parkinson's patients, partly due to changes in brain chemistry caused by the disease. CBD has been studied for its potential antidepressant and anxiolytic properties, with promising results in both animal and human studies. By modulating the endocannabinoid system and interacting with serotonin receptors in the brain, CBD may help alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety in Parkinson's patients. However, more research is needed to determine the long-term effects and safety of CBD for managing mood disorders in this population.

It's important to note that while CBD shows promise as a potential treatment for Parkinson's disease symptoms, it is not a cure, and it may not work for

everyone. Additionally, CBD can interact with certain medications commonly prescribed to Parkinson's patients, so it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional before incorporating CBD into your treatment regimen.

In conclusion, while more research is needed to fully understand the effects of CBD on Parkinson's disease, early evidence suggests that it may offer relief for symptoms such as tremors, muscle stiffness, and mood disorders. As scientists continue to explore the therapeutic potential of CBD, it holds promise as a complementary treatment option for Parkinson's patients seeking relief from the debilitating symptoms of the disease.

### About Hemp Joi

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We were inspired by family members, in the massage industry, that kept getting requests from clients to use CBD oils because of their natural healing properties.

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# TOP 4 Reasons Chefs for Seniors Might Be The Right Choice For You

## #1 Shopping is Challenging

In light of our global pandemic, shopping has proven to be challenging for all ages, but if you have an underlying medical condition or are over 65, the risk of infection has become a significant concern. Along with COVID-19, shopping at the grocery store heightens the risk of other communicable illnesses such as the flu or the common cold.

In addition to these concerns, many seniors find it taxing or may not be able to drive themselves safely to the store due to mobility issues, diminished eyesight, cognitive issues, or other aspects that might make driving, parking, shopping, walking, or calculating a genuine challenge.

## #2 Cooking is Becoming Difficult or Dangerous

Perhaps you used to love cooking, or maybe you've never been keen on whipping up a meal. Some individuals find that following a recipe and cooking can be difficult, time-consuming, or in some cases, dangerous.

If you'd prefer to have someone else make your meals out of convenience, or you'd rather not unintentionally burn or overcook your food, many people feel the same way. This is especially true for seniors who no longer need to cook for an entire family and those that have issues with getting around easily or are developing neurodegenerative disorders.

## #3 You or Your Loved one Need Special Meals (Low Sodium, Low Fat, etc.)

Have you or your loved one undergone a heart procedure, stroke, or been diagnosed with diabetes? If so, you know the importance of following a strict diet that will help manage and sustain your disease and longevity.

Many people find it challenging to understand which foods are best and how to prepare those foods so that they are delicious and appetizing.

## #4 You Want Nutritious Food Without the Hassle

Combining all of the reasons that so many seniors could benefit from a chef-prepared meal is easily identified in the previously mentioned issues and

conditions. You want to eat the healthiest meals possible, meals that are good for your body, and that taste amazing so that it's easy to stick to eating the way you know you should. That's where Chefs for Seniors can help.

### Chefs for Seniors

Chefs For Seniors is a welcomed answer for many that want nutritious, flavorful foods custom-prepared right in the comfort of your home by a licensed chef that not only provides gourmet-style meals, but also compassionate companionship. They also have specialty meals for low sodium, low fat, and other dietary needs.

- Find peace of mind knowing personal chefs will handle the shopping and cooking
- Feel healthy and rejuvenated with meals for seniors that fit your diet
- Truly affordable and much less expensive than eating out
- All personal chefs are servsafe licensed, undergo background checks, and are fully insured

The company's local professional chefs prepare affordable meals for the week in the home using the freshest ingredients, while offering a fun interactive experience. Chefs for Seniors is a private meal preparation service which specializes in providing companionship with the chefs preparing the meals in the home of the client. Clients select meals from a regional menu which can be customized to the client's dietary preferences and needs. The process aims to be an affordable option for seniors who may want fresh home-cooked meals, but who may be physically unable to cook the meals for themselves.

### Professionally Prepared Meals and Clean Up!

Chefs for Seniors offers rotating menu options, which includes select Chef creations inspired by the region. Clients select their desired meal in advance, allowing the chef to shop and prepare the meals on the designated cooking day. Chefs prepare the meals between two to two and a half

hours. And an added benefit is that after the meal is prepared and stored according to the client's preferences, the chefs clean before leaving the house.

Your chef will bring their own "toolbox" with pots, pans, knives, and utensils into the home. You don't need to have anything on hand except an appetite and working appliances!

### Cost and Insurance Coverage

The price of our services are region-specific and depends on your individual needs. Our goal is to provide an affordable solution that seniors can use long-term. We offer three different service packages to meet a variety of needs: Standard, Custom, and Non-Standard.

Some Long Term Health Insurance Policies may cover certain in-home services like Chefs For Seniors.

### Multiple Meals During Visit

During a 2-hour home visit, your personal chef will prepare 4 different entrées and 10-12 individually-packaged servings of meals. The exact number of servings depending on your appetite and the types of meals ordered and serving sizes can be adjusted with your chef.

Most clients have their personal chef visit their home every week, although some choose to schedule services every 2 weeks or 2x per week. We can work within your budget, appetite, and needs.

### Special Diets

We can accommodate most dietary concerns and diets. Our chefs and menus are particularly well-suited for low-sodium, diabetic friendly, gluten-free, Kosher, and renal diet meals. We also take inspiration from the DASH Diet (Dietary Approach To Stopping Hypertension), when designing our weekly menu rotations. Our Custom Package is well suited for clients with less common diets or dietary concerns.

*For any questions, please contact Chefs For Seniors at 239-776-1758.*



**CHEFS FOR SENIORS**

chefsforseiors.com

Phone: 239-776-1758

Email: bill.springer@chefsforseiors.com

# UNDERSTANDING THE ANNUAL CHECK-UP PANEL

**W**hen it comes to taking control of your health, prevention and regular monitoring are key. The Annual Check-up Panel at Any Lab Test Now offers a comprehensive screening solution that provides valuable insights into your overall health status without requiring a doctor's prescription or insurance approval.

The Annual Check-up Panel is designed to evaluate multiple aspects of your health through a single blood draw. This convenient testing package includes essential markers that healthcare professionals typically review during yearly physical examinations. The panel analyzes various components of your blood to assess organ function, detect potential health issues, and establish baseline measurements for future comparison.

One of the primary components of the panel is the Complete Blood Count (CBC), which examines red and white blood cells, platelets, and hemoglobin levels. This provides crucial information about your immune system function, oxygen-carrying capacity, and ability to fight infections. The CBC can also help identify conditions such as anemia, infections, or blood disorders.

The Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP) is another vital element of the annual check-up. This portion evaluates liver and kidney function, electrolyte and fluid balance, and blood sugar levels. By measuring proteins, enzymes, and minerals in your

blood, the CMP can reveal potential issues with major organ systems before symptoms become apparent.

Lipid profile testing is included to assess cardiovascular health by measuring cholesterol levels – both the "good" HDL and "bad" LDL cholesterol – as well as triglycerides. These results help evaluate your risk for heart disease and stroke, enabling early intervention through lifestyle changes or medical treatment if necessary.

The panel also includes thyroid function tests, which measure hormones that regulate metabolism, energy levels, and various bodily functions. Thyroid disorders are common but often go undiagnosed without proper screening.

Any Lab Test Now makes the testing process straightforward and accessible. Appointments are typically not required, and results are usually available within 24-72 hours. The company's certified laboratories maintain high standards of accuracy and confidentiality, ensuring reliable results you can trust.

Once you receive your results, you can share them with your healthcare provider for interpretation and guidance. This proactive approach to health monitoring can lead to earlier detection of potential health issues, more informed discussions with your doctor, and better-managed healthcare decisions.

The Annual Check-up Panel is particularly valuable for individuals who:

- Want to establish baseline health measurements
- Need regular monitoring of existing conditions
- Are interested in preventive healthcare
- Have family histories of specific health conditions
- Wish to track the effectiveness of lifestyle changes or treatments

Regular annual check-ups through comprehensive testing can help identify potential health concerns before they become serious issues. By providing a detailed snapshot of your health status, the Annual Check-up Panel at Any Lab Test Now serves as a fundamental tool in maintaining and optimizing your well-being through informed, proactive healthcare management.

Any Lab Test Now Naples is staffed by certified technicians who can properly collect samples for blood tests, urine tests, saliva tests, hair tests and more. They are knowledgeable about all the tests offered and can help customers select the right screening for their needs. Test results are typically available within 24-48 hours.

With the opening of the Naples location, residents of Collier County now have convenient access to professional lab testing services. Stop by Any Lab Test Now on Immokalee Road and take control of your health today.

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## Are You Practicing Mindful Wealth?

Courtesy of Nina Azwoir, First Vice President, Investments

If the past few months have given you more time for introspection, use it to improve your financial plan in a big-picture way. Even for the privileged among us who still have our jobs, are not on the front lines with the pandemic, and have not had anyone close to us felled by COVID-19, the current crisis has brought hardships big and small.

Parents have confronted the daily struggle of trying to do their jobs while also home-schooling. Adult children have not been able to visit their elderly parents. Graduations, weddings, and even funerals have been put on hold or "Zoomified." Yet as difficult as it has been, there have been a few silver linings too, especially for those of us lucky enough to not be touched directly by the crisis. One of the most valuable is that pressing pause on our usual routines has given many of us the opportunity to take a step back, get out of our ruts, and take stock. What do we really value? What do we really miss? What can we not wait to do when this is all over? What "necessity" of our past lives, whether the daily purchased latte or frequent meals in restaurants, are we finding that we are quite happily doing without?

Travel may be someone's greatest longing, while others miss cooking and entertaining big groups of family and friends. Talking about how the pandemic has changed our thinking on a topic, or made us want to do more of something else, can help us feel like we are using the present situation productively. The current sense of isolation will not be for naught, because it is shaping how we intend to use our lives in the future, when we once again have a full set of choices before us.

### Are You Allocating Your Time and Money with Your Intentions?

It can be argued that now is a good time to put a fresh set of eyes on your financial plan, taking a similarly expansive view of it that you might not have been able to do when you were busy and mired in your day-to-day activities. Too often, one expert opined, financial plans (and planners) move straight to the "solution" phase, without stopping to ask some basic questions about what someone is trying to achieve and what their real problems are.

*"Much of the scientific research about spending and happiness points to a clear connection between spending on experiences versus things."*

What will constitute "success" for you over the next few years, not just in financial terms, but in life terms, too? Are you allocating your time and money in line with your intentions, what you find fulfilling, and what brings you joy? These questions are incredibly personal; no one else can answer them for you.

Whether you are well into retirement or early in your career, it can be easy to backburner questions like these and move straight to logistics, determining your asset allocation and minimizing taxes, for example. Those are all worthy pursuits, but if you find yourself with a bit of extra time to think a bit more broadly and introspectively about your financial plan, here are some of the key questions to ask yourself.

### What Expenditures Bring You Happiness?

As most investors know, the biggest determinant of whether you achieve financial success is how much you spend versus how much you save. But as important as it is to make sure your intake exceeds your outgo, budgeting can seem like sheer drudgery. Here is a different way to think about budgeting. Simply begin to take note of how various discretionary expenditures make you feel. It can be incredibly illuminating. Much of the scientific research about spending and happiness points to a clear connection between spending on experiences versus things. Many would also argue that many of life's most memorable experiences cost very little.

### How Are You Allocating Your Precious Resources?

Investors should strive to make smart allocations of financial capital across opportunity sets, not just saving versus spending but also debt pay down versus investing in the market, how much to allocate to retirement savings versus college, and so on. These are crucial topics worthy of significant analysis and introspection. Ultimately, the right answers are a matter of math (expected return on "investment") and personal preference.

Many of us pay much less attention to how we allocate an even more scarce resource, our time, even though that allocation will ultimately have an even greater impact on whether we feel like we have met our goals. Of course, some of our time expenditures are pre-ordained, the time we spend working or caring for children, for example. Even within those allocations it seems worthwhile to be more mindful, to help ensure that your allocation of time in a given day, week, or year aligns with your goals and vision for that period. An audit of how you are allocating your time currently is a good starting point. Technology tools can help you determine how much time you waste (uh, spend) on social media and other activities that could be detracting from your productivity and happiness.

### What Is Your Definition of "Enough"?

Many of us are operating with an incredibly vague notion of how much we really need to save in order to achieve our financial goals and find security. Even financial planners might rely on rules of thumb when setting your retirement savings target. For example, they might assume that you will need 80% of your working income in retirement and extrapolate the rest of your plan from there.

As humans, we often have a natural tendency to reach for more more more, regardless of whether that "more" is actually bringing more happiness and security. Trying to keep up with the people around us, in terms of possessions and outward signs of success, can get exhausting and may not get us any closer to our life's goals. That is why, in this period of limited activity, spending, and social contact, it is worthwhile to think through your own definition of enough, both now and for the future.

### What Do You Want Your Legacy to Be?

When taking a strictly financial and estate-planning perspective, leaving a "legacy" is one of those topics that can seem overly narrow. It is about leaving assets behind for children, grandchildren, and other loved ones, as well as charity if we so choose. It is about making sure we do not burden the people we care about. Those are crucial considerations and they are why everyone needs an estate plan that includes wills, powers of attorney, and beneficiary designations, among other key documents.

While you are at it, why not think big picture about your legacy, too? What do you hope people will say about you after you are gone? What life philosophy or pieces of wisdom do you hope that your loved ones will always associate with you? If you find yourself with a bit of extra time for introspection, write down a few ideas along these lines. And no, you are not too young to start thinking about this. You can find templates for creating a "personal legacy" online, but some good advice is not to overthink it. Balance more serious ideas with more lighthearted ones. We all have credos that we live by; make sure your loved ones know yours.

**Nina Azwoir, First Vice President of Investments,  
Wintrust Wealth Management.**

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# Your Clean Home is Our Business



Did you know that a cleaning service company can do so much more than keep your home clean? Did you know that a service like this can actually help to reduce the amount of stress that you are suffering from? Let me explain. Cleaning takes a lot out of you. I mean, even the slightest clean to your home can take a lot of effort.

This is just going to add more stress onto you. Things become extra bad if you have had a pretty stressful day as it is. You just don't want to clean. If you don't clean the problem becomes much worse. You see, studies have shown time and time again that living in an unclean environment can actually lead to all sorts of stress and health concerns, anxiety attacks and high blood pressure which can lead to heart issues. Being unable to clean this environment how you want to is just going to make things a lot worse.

Don't sell yourself short, your time is extremely valuable. Need a dollar value? Just calculate how much you make per hour, and multiply it by the amount of time it will take to clean your place, and then multiply that by the value you place on spending that time with your family. Chances are it's much less expensive to hire a house cleaning company, than to do it yourself.

Maid Pro understands the stress that comes from worrying about a clean house. At Maid Pro, they understand that their customers are the reason they exist. That's why all of their team members follow a set of core beliefs that center around you, the customer. They know that listening to the wants and needs of their customers and delivering a personalized service makes for a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

**Less Stress:** a healthy organized home can reduce stress levels and ensure you're feeling your best even when not at home.

**Healthy Lifestyle:** airborne pollutants and allergens can irritate our immune systems and trigger respiratory issues such as asthma.

**Have Friends & Family Over:** a clean home is an inviting home. Don't stress about having people over because of the clutter in your home. Stay on top of it with Maid Pro's cleaning services and spend more quality time with those you love.

When you are surrounded by a mess, the hormone Cortisol is released into your system. This is a stress causing hormone that can speed up aging and increase your chances for heart disease. When your messy home is cleaned up, endorphins are released. This makes you feel great.

There are plenty of reasons to choose, and love, Maid Pro. Maybe it's because they work with you to build a cleaning plan, tailored to your needs and budget. Or because their cleaning staff are expertly trained to provide the highest quality clean. It could be because they allow you to choose when and how often they clean so that they fit perfectly into your life and schedule. No matter the reason, at the end of the day cleaning is their passion and it's what they bring to each and every home they touch.

February is dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing knowledge about prevention. Eliminate stress and worry from your life where and when you can. Your heart will thank you. Maid Pro can help reduce that unwanted stress and keep your home clean and beautiful which will allow you more quality time with your family and loved ones.



A clean house is also beneficial towards our general health. When our houses are not maintained and cleaned often, the germs, and bacteria, if not taken care of properly, can accumulate to the point that they create sickness. Our body's natural immune systems can only tolerate so much. If we let the germs and bacteria get out of hand, then not only our health, but our family's health will be at risk. When we take care of and maintain a clean home it will ensure long term good health for your family to enjoy for years to come.

Valentine's day is right around the corner give the gift of a clean healthy home give Maid Pro a call, let them know what you need and they will give you an estimate right then and there. They believe that everyone should have a clean and healthy home. That's why they make sure the products, tools and processes they use are in the best interest of the planet and every customer whose life they touch.

Maid Pro takes the work out of "housework" for you. Your home is in good hands with Maid Pro they clean so you don't have to.

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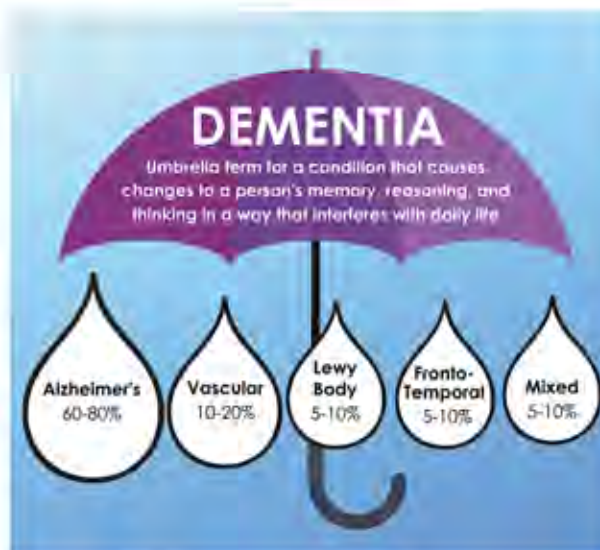
# MEMORY MATTERS

**W**ow, it is already April! How many of you remember the saying “April showers bring May flowers”? It was always important to have your umbrella handy. That is not necessarily true here in Florida, but I remember it distinctly growing up in NW Ohio. We needed a little pep talk to get through the gray, rainy and cloudy days of April with the promise that in May, our gardens would be blooming with the beauty of spring. Lilacs, lilies of the valley, the later blooming tulips all put on a gorgeous show in NW Ohio in May. After a long, cold and sometimes snowy winter, May’s flowers bring hope and happiness.

How do showers and flowers relate to this month’s article? We are going to explore in more detail the topic of dementia, and how it serves as an umbrella term for different types of dementia. The beauty of May’s flowers bring hope, just like research can bring hope to those who are living with Alzheimer’s disease.

Let’s look at the term “dementia” in a bit more detail. The national institute of Aging describes dementia as the loss of cognitive functioning, thinking remembering and reasoning to such an extent that is interferes with a person’s daily life and routine. Personality changes can also be part of the dementia experience. Dementia is not a specific disease, but more of a general term. The Alzheimer’s Association notes that dementia can be thought of as a general term for loss of memory, language, problem solving and other thinking abilities that interfere with daily life.

How does this connect to an umbrella? Dementia can be thought of as an “umbrella” term, where there are many different types of conditions that fall under the umbrella. There are likely over 100 different types of forms of dementia, and the most well known type is Alzheimer’s disease.



Here is a quick overview of the most common types of dementia from the National Institute

### Alzheimer’s Disease

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia with an estimated 60 – 80% of dementia being of the Alzheimer’s type. In Alzheimer’s disease abnormal deposits of proteins form amyloid plaques and tau tangles throughout the brain. Symptoms include repetitive questions, getting lost in familiar places and as the disease progresses, problems recognizing friends and family, along with impulsive behavior and significant communication issues. Alzheimer’s disease typically impacts individuals in their mid 60s and older, although there are instances of individuals with younger onset Alzheimer’s (occurring before age 65).

### Frontotemporal Dementia

In Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), abnormal amounts or forms of tau and TDP-43 proteins accumulate inside neurons in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. Two types of FTD are Primary Progressive Aphasia and the Behavioral variant. There can be difficulty planning and organizing, impulsive behavior, changes in personality as well as apathy. In primary progressive aphasia, there are language challenges such as issues with both verbal communication and understanding speech. This type of dementia is typically diagnosed at a younger age, between mid 40s and 65.

### Lewy Body Dementia

In Lewy Body dementia, abnormal deposits of a protein called alpha-synuclein, also called “Lewy bodies” impact the brain’s chemical messengers. Difficulty concentrating, illogical ideas, visual hallucinations, sleep disorders, including vivid nightmares, and challenges with movement can be part of Lewy Body dementia, which typically impacts individuals over the age of 50.

### Vascular Dementia

Vascular dementia is a result of damage to the blood vessels in the brain which disrupts blood flow. Symptoms can vary depending on the area of the brain impacted due to the impaired blood flow. Some common symptoms can include confusion, problems with concentration, difficulty with planning, organization and difficulty following directions and learning new information. Hallucinations may be a symptom along with poor judgment. This type of dementia is more common over the age of 65.

### Mixed Dementia

Individuals may have more than one type of dementia. In those cases, the person is considered to have mixed dementia.

If you or someone you know is experiencing one or more of these symptoms, it is time to get checked out. We can help! Knowing your cognitive status via an easy and free memory screen is a service we provide to the community. See our ad to learn more. We also offer free memory screens at other times if that is more convenient. Just call us at 239-939-7777. **Memories matter!**

References:  
Alzheimer’s Association | Alzheimer’s Disease & Dementia Help  
Understanding Different Types of Dementia | National Institute on Aging (nii.gov)



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# When You Are At Your Wits End

**H**ave you ever been at your wits' end? Have you ever been so confused that you didn't really know which way was up? Have you ever had the feeling, "I know I need to do something...but I don't know what 'something' to do."

The Bible tells the story of a group of sailors who went out to sea and encountered a huge storm that almost killed them:

*<sup>23</sup>Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. <sup>24</sup>They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. <sup>25</sup>For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. <sup>26</sup>They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. <sup>27</sup>They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. <sup>28</sup>Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. <sup>29</sup>He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. <sup>30</sup>They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. <sup>31</sup>Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Psalm 107:23-31*

**Can you relate to this group of sailors?** Maybe the circumstances in your life have caused your courage to melt away. Perhaps you are going through a storm of your own. You may find yourself at your wits' end without any clear direction as to what to do next. If so, follow the example of the sailors in the Bible.

There first thing they did was cry out to the LORD in their trouble. Don't underestimate the power of prayer. An old gospel song says, "when God is all you have, you'll find He's all you need." God responded to the sailor's prayer by bringing them out of their distress. In fact, it says he stilled the storm to a whisper and the waves of the sea were hushed. God can do that in your life and in your situation as well. Call out to him. His timing is not always as quick as we may like but He knows what is best for each of us.

When the storm was over, the text says that God guided the sailors to their desired haven. They found their place of rest and peace. Storms don't last forever... and neither will yours. Keep your faith in God. Cry out to Him in your pain. Trust that He knows what's best and keep praying and seeking your desired haven... it may be just around the corner.



And then, don't forget to thank God when He does bring you through the storm. The story concludes by saying, "Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men."

Storms, crises, pain and problems are an unfortunate reality of life. We grow through the pain and learn valuable lessons during these times. Don't give up, give in, or quit. When you find yourself at your wits' end...hang on, cry out to God, and look for His deliverance.

*Tim Neptune is the lead pastor of Venture Church in Naples, Florida. Venture Church meets on the campus of FSW State College on Lely Cultural Blvd. in East Naples. For times and directions, visit [www.venturenaples.com](http://www.venturenaples.com).*



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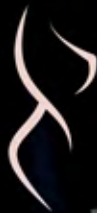
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