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Health&Wellness MAGAZINE®

May 2026

Charlotte/South Sarasota Edition - Monthly

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AVOID WEIGHT GAIN WHEN QUITTING TOBACCO

KNOW THE SIGNS, SAVE A LIFE

National Stroke Awareness Month

GOING TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM FOR A SUSPECTED STROKE

UNPLUG TO POWER UP

Why Digital Balance Matters for Mental Health

Neuro Challenge
Foundation for Parkinson's

CHARLOTTE COUNTY PARKINSON'S SYMPOSIUM

Friday, June 5, 2026
8:30 am to 2:30 pm
Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center
75 Taylor St, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Featured Speaker: Ramon A. Gil, M.D.
Diplomate American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center
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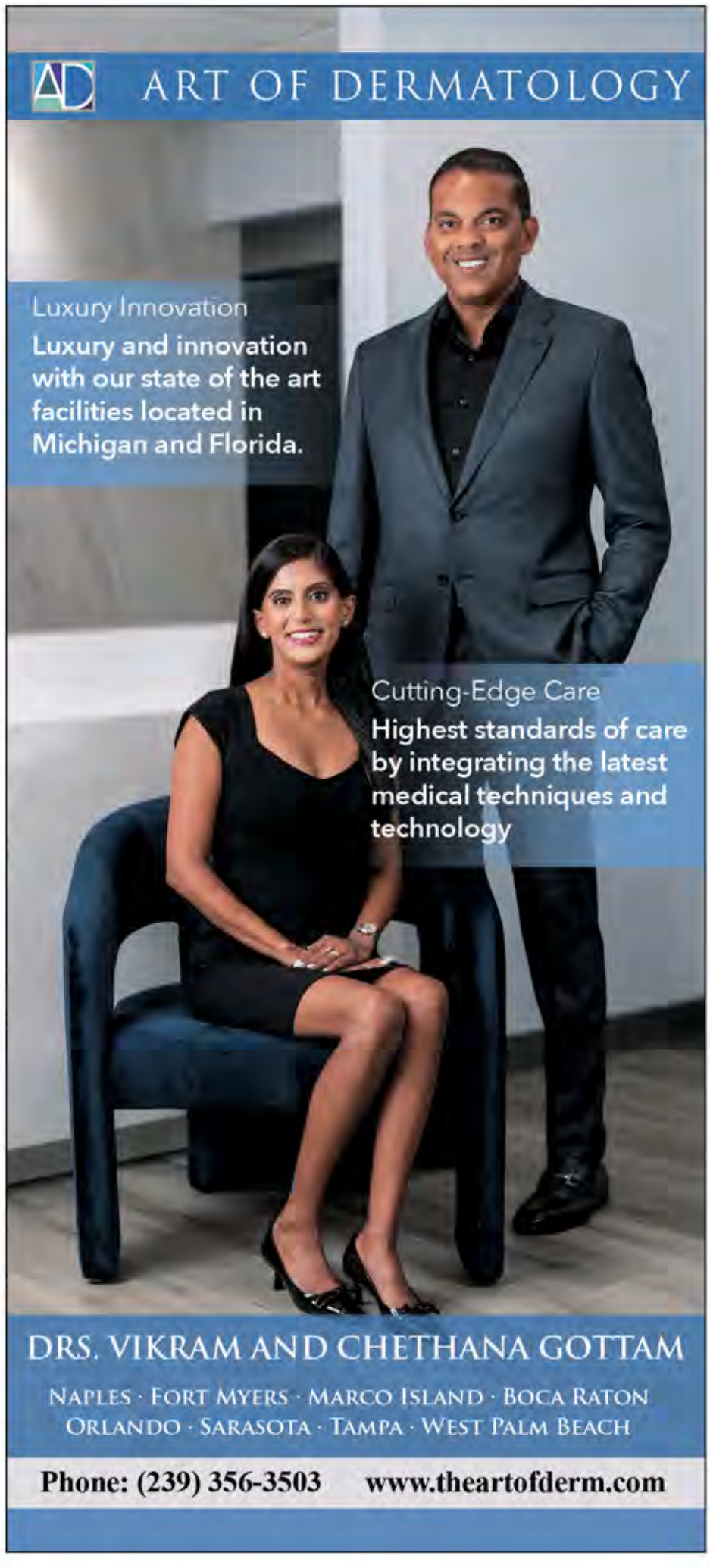

Neuro Challenge
Foundation for Parkinson's

Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center
Of Southwest Florida

Charlotte County Parkinson's Symposium

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's in partnership with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL proudly present the 2026 Spring Symposium.

Friday, June 5, 2026 | 8:30am - 2:30pm

Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center
75 Taylor St, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Free to attend. Registration is required.
Register at NeuroChallenge.org

A light breakfast, coffee, water and lunch will be provided.

Featured Speakers:

"A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body - Tips for the PD Patient and Care Partner"

Mabel Lopez, PhD
Licensed Psychologist,
Neuropsychologist
Owner & President,
Mind and Brain Care, LLC

"Tackling Walking and Balance Challenges in PD"

Philip Tipton, MD
Associate Professor of
Neurology Movement Disorders
Department University of
Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

"New Answers to Old Questions in Parkinson's"
and
"Next is Now: Innovating Parkinson's Treatment with CREXONT"
Sponsored by Amneal

Ramon A. Gil, MD
Neurologist, Movement Disorder Specialist, Medical Director, Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL

To Register:
Scan QR Code
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Or Call 941-926-6413.

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2026 SWFL PARKINSON'S DISEASE SPRING SYMPOSIUM:

Free Educational Event Coming to Punta Gorda This June

Affecting more than a million Americans and over 10 million worldwide, Parkinson's disease (PD) is the second-most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's and is the 14th-leading cause of death in the United States. The major signs of PD include progressive motor problems with slowness of movements, shaking or tremor, rigidity or stiffness, reduced facial expression and changes in gait/balance. Patients with PD also experience non-motor symptoms (e.g., sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety, low blood pressure and cognitive problems, among others). The treatment of PD is remarkably better than it was just 15 years ago. Novel drugs and new formulations of old drugs provide patients with a much better response to treatment. The incidence of PD is rapidly increasing around the world. It is estimated that 90,000 new cases are diagnosed each year in the United States alone.

Before

After

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's in partnership with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL proudly presents our **2026 Spring Symposium. It will be held on Friday, June 5th, 2026**. Admission is FREE, but registration is strongly recommended, as seating is limited. Those attending the program will enjoy three interesting and educational presentations.

Mabel Lopez, PhD will open the program with a lecture on "A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body - Tips for the PD Patient and Care Partner." This presentation will provide the audience with the most useful information regarding the benefits of good nutrition and physical exercise. The treatment of PD would be incomplete without a regimen of exercise and healthy lifestyle. You will see the evidence of this in Dr. Lopez's presentation.

Ramon Gil, M.D., will be lecturing on "New Answers to Old Questions in Parkinson's Disease. With the advances in the understanding of PD as well as with the increased number of medications and other treatments to treat PD many old questions have new answer. We will receive those from Dr. Gil's talk.

Philip Tipton, M.D., Associate Professor of Neurology, Movement Disorders Department at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville will be presenting "Tackling Walking and Balance Challenges in PD." We are honored to bring Dr. Tipton back to our program. He was part of the Faculty in one of our previous Symposiums a few years ago. Within the field of movement disorders, he has special interests in gait and balance disorders and will bring most useful information for patients to improve these challenging and at times disabling problems.

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's is excited to partner with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL and Dr. Gil with this first of many Charlotte County based symposiums.

Neuro Challenge is a 501(c)3) nonprofit organization created in 2008 to improve the quality of life of people with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers today. Neuro Challenge provides individualized care advising, community resource referrals and education, therapeutic and support programs both online and in Southwest Florida including Sarasota, Manatee, Pinellas, Highlands, Marion and Charlotte counties. Neuro Challenge hosts The Parkinson's Expo, the largest single day free PD event in the U.S., held annually in Manatee County, FL.

All Neuro Challenge services and programs are offered at no cost to people with Parkinson's disease and their loved ones. Visit NeuroChallenge.org or call 941-926-6413 to learn more.

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's

Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL & Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's present 2026 SWFL Parkinson's Disease Spring Symposium

Friday, June 5, 2026, 8:30AM – 2:30PM
Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center
75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Agenda/Speakers

8:30 AM: On site Registration/Light Breakfast Visit with Vendors & Sponsors

9:00 – 9:15 AM: Welcome/Remarks / New Partners
Dr. Gil & Jennifer Bitner, CEO, Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's

9:15 – 10:00AM: "A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body - Tips for the PD Patient and Care Partner"
Speaker: Mabel Lopez, PhD

10:00 AM: BREAK

10:15 – 11:00 AM: "New Answers to Old Questions in Parkinson's Disease" Speaker: Ramon A. Gil, M.D.

11:00 AM: LUNCH
Visit with Vendors & Sponsors

12 00 – 12:45 PM: Speaker provided by Amneal Pharmaceuticals

1:00 – 1:45 PM: "Tackling Walking and Balance Challenges in PD".
Speaker: Philip Tipton, M.D. Associate Professor of Neurology Movement Disorders Department University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

1:45 PM: Q&A. Faculty

2:15 – 2:30 PM: Recognition and Prize Drawing

2:30 PM: Adjourn
Visit with Vendors/Sponsors

To Register:
Scan QR Code
Visit NeuroChallenge.org
Or Call 941-926-6413.

Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center
Of Southwest Florida

For more information, please email Lisa Gallucci:
lisag@neurochallenge.org

Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center
4235 Kings Hwy. Suite 102, Port Charlotte, FL 33980

Going to the Emergency Room for a Suspected Stroke

A stroke is a life-threatening medical emergency that requires immediate medical attention by calling 911 or going to the nearest emergency room. During a stroke, blood flow to the brain is interrupted, depriving brain cells of oxygen and causing them to begin dying within minutes.

Studies show that nearly 1.9 million brain cells die each minute during a stroke — which is why recognizing symptoms quickly and seeking emergency care right away can save a life, including your own or someone else's.

BE-FAST Method

In 1998, a group of physicians and emergency department personnel in the United Kingdom developed an easy-to-remember acronym and method to quickly recognize stroke symptoms. Originally known as FAST, it's recently been updated to BE-FAST to include more symptoms:

B: Balance — loss of coordination or balance

E: Eyes — vision changes

F: Face — drooping on one side of the face

A: Arms — weakness in the arms or legs

S: Speech — cannot speak or understand speech

T: Time — call 911 immediately for stroke emergency room treatment

What to Do When You Suspect a Stroke

If you think you or a loved one may be having a stroke, it's important to act quickly while remaining calm. The sooner you respond, the better the chances for a positive outcome.

If you believe you need to visit the emergency room for stroke treatment:

- Immediately call 911 as calmly as possible, explain to them your symptoms and situation.
- Make a note of the time when your symptoms first started.
- Lie down or help the person having the stroke lie down, and keep the head slightly elevated to help maintain an airway.

- Find a way to support any limbs that may have become weakened.
- Loosen any restrictive or tight clothing — such as a tie or belt — to help blood flow.
- Stay with the person having a stroke, or have someone stay with you until paramedics arrive.
- Be ready to perform CPR if the person having a stroke stops breathing.

What Not to Do When You Suspect a Stroke

Understanding what to avoid during a stroke is just as critical as knowing what steps to take to protect you or your loved one.

If you suspect a stroke, don't:

- **Drive yourself or your loved one to the hospital** — While you may think jumping into the car to get to the emergency room is quicker than waiting for an ambulance, that is not usually the case. Plus, if you're having a stroke, driving puts you and others around you at risk.
- **Fall asleep** — Keep yourself or your loved one awake and alert.
- **Eat or drink anything** — Stroke can affect a person's ability to swallow.
- **Take medications** — Taking the wrong medication can make a stroke worse.

Treatment Options for Stroke

Emergency room stroke treatments are determined by the type of stroke you have, the severity of your stroke and your overall health. There are several medications used through neurological care to treat stroke, as well as surgical options depending on your situation.

Prevention and Risk Factors

Thankfully, there are things you can do right now to help prevent you or a loved one from needing emergency room stroke treatment.

Although some stroke risk factors are beyond your control, such as age, gender, and family history, many others can be changed. Addressing these modifiable risk factors now may help prevent a stroke in the future, including:

- Excessive alcohol or illegal drug use
- High blood pressure
- High LDL or "bad" cholesterol levels
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Sleeping issues
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes

There are also some preventative measures you and your loved ones can start today to help prevent a stroke tomorrow, including:

- Adhering to medications to help prevent stroke or manage conditions that are stroke risk factors
- Being more physically active
- Eating a heart-healthy diet, such as the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet
- Limiting alcohol use
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Managing your blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Quitting smoking
- Reducing stress
- Visiting your AdventHealth primary care physician (PCP) for annual check-ups

AdventHealth for Stroke Care: Timely Action Saves Lives

When dealing with a suspected stroke, every minute counts for the best possible outcome. Knowing how to "BE-FAST" to recognize stroke symptoms can help prepare you to act quickly and calmly.

To learn more, visit AdventHealthPortCharlotte.com

AdventHealth
Port Charlotte

AVOID WEIGHT GAIN WHEN QUITTING TOBACCO

When tobacco users set out to quit using tobacco, they may be faced with the obstacle of weight gain. Although it is possible to gain weight when you quit, it is not inevitable. There are many things you can do to keep the weight gain in check.

When an individual quits tobacco, there may be a slight change in metabolism – how fast the body burns calories. Nicotine in tobacco products is an appetite suppressant which means individuals may feel hungrier when they quit. Food is also going to smell and taste better as the tar that coats the nasal cavity and taste buds starts to break down. Lastly, some individuals may want to eat to keep from using tobacco.

Check out these tips for managing weight gain when you quit:

Pay attention to your plate:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat snacks like pretzels.
- Use sugar-free hard candy as an alternative to tobacco.
- Choose foods low in sodium, trans fat and added sugar. Read food labels and choose healthful options.
- Drink lots of water!

Incorporate physical activity:

- Physical activity helps to release stress.
- Physical activity can help control your appetite.
- Being active can improve your mood.
- Physical activity burns calories and can help you lose weight if you take in fewer calories than you use up.

Find other activities to stay busy or prevent boredom:

- Play with a pencil, stress ball, paper clip or marbles.
- Munch on carrots, apples, celery and sugarless gum.
- Brush your teeth often and keep a fresh taste in your mouth.
- Keep your hands busy — wash the car, garden, knit, do crossword puzzles, write letters, cook.
- Try a new sport.

So, if you are avoiding quitting smoking for good because you are afraid of weight gain, do not let it get in the way of kicking the habit to the curb once and for all! The most important thing you need to remember is that tobacco does not make you thin and quitting does not make you fat. Focus on what you will "gain" when you quit – a healthier body and outlook.

Help quitting tobacco is free! Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (GSAHEC), as part of the Group Quit option of Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way program—offers free group quit sessions to help someone quit all forms of tobacco. These group sessions held virtually and in-person, provide information about the benefits of quitting, managing stress and triggers, and will assist you with developing your own customized quit plan. ***Free*** nicotine replacement therapy in the form of patches, gum, or lozenges (*if medically appropriate and while supplies last*) is provided with the session. Attendees will also receive a participant workbook, quit kit materials, and follow up support from a trained tobacco treatment specialist. Contact us today at **866-534-7909** or visit *www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar* to schedule a class or learn more about the program!

References:

1. How can I avoid weight gain when I stop smoking? American Heart Association. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/QuitSmoking/YourNon-SmokingLife/How-Can-I-Avoid-Weight-Gain-When-I-Stop-Smoking_UCM_307852_Article.jsp#.V2gwNNjbJYU. Accessed June 20, 2016.

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UNPLUG TO POWER UP:

WHY DIGITAL BALANCE MATTERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

By Elizabeth Dosoretz, LCSW

We live in a world that rarely slows down.

Between packed schedules, constant notifications and the pressure to stay informed and connected, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Many of us move from one thing to the next without ever stopping to take a breath.

There is often an unspoken expectation to always be on, available, responsive and productive. That expectation is not realistic or sustainable. Feeling tired or overwhelmed does not mean you are failing. Not every day will feel productive, and that is okay. Taking care of your health, mentally and physically, should remain the top priority.

Sometimes what we really need is permission to pause. Setting thoughtful boundaries, especially around technology, can help reduce stress and support both our mental and physical well-being.

Digital overstimulation plays a major role in burnout and stress. Screen time adds up quickly through online shopping, group chats, social media, emails and documenting everyday life. At the same time, we are constantly exposed to curated content from companies, colleagues, friends and even family. Over time, this can quietly shape expectations and fuel comparison, making it feel as though everyone else is doing more or coping better.

At the same time, digital balance does not mean eliminating technology or disconnecting completely. It means being intentional about how, when and why we engage with digital tools. When technology use is unregulated, it can increase mental load, disrupt focus and keep the nervous system in a constant state of alert. When balanced, it can support connection and productivity.

Finding Your Balance

Part of what makes these patterns so difficult to change is how our brains are wired. Behavioral science research, including the work of Katy Milkman, shows that we naturally default to what is easy, familiar and immediately rewarding, such as scrolling or checking notifications.

Insight alone is rarely enough to create change. When our surroundings encourage constant engagement, even the best intentions can be overridden by habit. Real and lasting change happens when we make small adjustments to our environment and routines, making healthier choices more natural.

These changes reduce friction, lower decision fatigue and help new behaviors stick without requiring constant self-monitoring or discipline.

It's why creating intentional digital boundaries can be so powerful. It does not mean deleting apps or giving up devices altogether. It means pausing long enough to ask yourself why you are reaching for your phone. Is it habit, boredom, stress or a genuine desire to connect?

When possible, replace mindless scrolling with something restorative. This might include writing a few thoughts down, spending time with someone you love or engaging in a favorite activity. Many types of activities can help reset your nervous system. These moments do not need to be long to be effective.

Small and well-timed changes are often far more sustainable than sweeping resolutions. A recent study published in Jama Network Open found that even short reductions in social media use can significantly reduce mental health symptoms in young adults. Less screen time has been associated with lower anxiety, improved sleep, better focus and more space for emotional processing that often gets buried in a constantly moving, digital world.

A healthier relationship with technology is possible, even if it feels difficult right now. After all, building digital balance does not mean giving something up forever. It means learning how to use technology in a way that supports your mental health rather than draining it. With the right support, new habits can be formed and sustained over time.

Remember, the goal is not perfection. Simple steps like putting your phone away during meals, setting a tech free window before bed, turning off nonessential notifications or taking a short break from social media can create meaningful shifts. All of this is progress. Designing your environment to support these choices, rather than relying on willpower alone, makes change more realistic and lasting.

As you reflect on your habits, consider how technology truly makes you feel. What adds value, and what drains you? The digital world can be an incredible tool for connection and information, but it works best when used intentionally and balanced with other healthy habits. With consistency and self-compassion, it is possible to build a healthier relationship with technology.

Looking for support as you work on finding your digital balance? At Elite DNA Behavioral Health, we help individuals build healthier routines that support emotional well-being in a demanding, always-connected world. As one of the fastest-growing mental health providers in the Southeast, Elite DNA provides accessible, affordable mental healthcare through in-person and virtual services across Florida, Virginia, and Alabama. To learn more or request an appointment, visit EliteDNA.com.

About the Author

Elizabeth Dosoretz, LCSW, is the founder and CEO of Elite DNA Behavioral Health. As a mother of three, her personal journey through the challenges of postpartum depression inspired her to found Elite DNA Behavioral Health in 2013 with a goal to provide accessible, affordable mental health care to everyone. Now one of the fastest-growing mental health providers in the Southeast, Elite DNA provides in-person and virtual behavioral health services from more than 40 locations across Florida, Virginia, and Alabama. For more information, visit **EliteDNA.com**.

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MELANOMA UNDER THE NAIL:
WHY YOUR TOENAILS NEED A CLOSER LOOK

By Dr. Sahiba Singh, DPM - Family Foot & Leg Center

Living here in Southwest Florida, we are all very "sun-aware." We don't head out to Charlotte Harbor or the local golf courses without hats and sunscreen. However, as a podiatrist here in Port Charlotte, I often see patients who are surprised to learn that one of the most aggressive forms of skin cancer—**subungual melanoma**—can hide right beneath your toenail, an area we rarely think to protect.

Because this condition is often painless and can look like a simple bruise from a weekend hike or a long day on the boat, it is frequently overlooked until it reaches an advanced stage. Understanding what to look for isn't just about foot health; it's about life-saving early detection right here in our community.

What is Subungual Melanoma?

Unlike the skin cancers we usually see on our faces or shoulders, toenail melanoma isn't always caused by our Florida sunshine. It begins in the **nail matrix**, the area where your nail grows. It can affect anyone, regardless of skin tone, and often appears without a clear cause. Because it is relatively rare, many neighbors in our community mistake it for a fungal infection or a simple "stubbed toe."

Warning Signs You Should Never Ignore

I encourage all my patients to perform a quick "sole-to-nail" check once a month. When you are looking at your nails, keep these three major red flags in mind:

- **The "Dark Streak":** A brown, black, or purplish band running vertically along the nail. Unlike a bruise, which grows out as the nail grows, melanoma stays in the same spot or even widens.
- **Hutchinson's Sign:** This is when the dark pigment spreads from the nail itself onto the surrounding cuticle or skin.
- **Persistent Damage:** Any nail that becomes brittle, splits, or begins to lift away from the bed without a clear injury should be evaluated immediately.

Staying Proactive in Port Charlotte

If you notice a suspicious mark, come see us for a clinical exam. While the idea of a nail matrix biopsy might sound intimidating, it is a straightforward procedure that provides the clarity needed to save your health.

If you frequent our local nail salons, keep an eye on your natural nails between polish changes. If your technician mentions a "stain" or a "bruise" that won't go away, don't ignore it or cover it up with more polish. That "camouflage" can delay a diagnosis by months.

Take Action Today

Your toenails are a window into your overall health. Subungual melanoma is rare, but its impact is profound if left untreated. If you see something unusual on your nails that isn't growing out or healing, don't wait for it to hurt.

Don't ignore the warning signs. Contact Family Foot & Leg Center in Port Charlotte today to schedule your comprehensive foot exam. A quick check-up could quite literally save your life.

Dr. Sahiba Singh is a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center in Port Charlotte, Florida, specializing in complex wound care and deformity reconstruction. She is committed to helping the Charlotte County community remain active and healthy.

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www.NaplesPodiatrist.com

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

Our 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.

Inflammatory Lung Conditions and the Emerging Role of Stem Cell Exosomes

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

Inflammatory lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, post-viral respiratory syndromes, pulmonary fibrosis, and environmental hypersensitivity pneumonitis pose ongoing challenges for patients and clinicians alike. Traditional treatments such as bronchodilators, corticosteroids, and biologic therapies are effective for managing symptoms and acute exacerbations, but many individuals continue to experience persistent inflammation and impaired lung function.

In recent years, researchers and clinicians have explored next-generation biologic approaches that aim to influence the underlying immune and tissue responses in the lung. One area of interest is stem cell-derived exosomes — microscopic vesicles released by stem cells that carry regulatory molecules involved in intercellular communication.

What Are Exosomes?

Exosomes are tiny extracellular vesicles that carry microRNAs, growth factors, and signaling proteins between cells. Unlike living stem cells, they are not capable of replicating but can influence the behavior of other cells by modulating immune responses and tissue repair processes.

Routes of Delivery: Systemic and Local Approaches

Two principal methods of administering exosome-based therapies are under investigation:

- **Intravenous delivery:** Introduces exosomes into the bloodstream, where they may interact with systemic immune pathways and support vascular and inflammatory regulation throughout the body.
- **Nebulized delivery:** Converts exosomes into an aerosol that can be inhaled directly into the airways, potentially enabling local interactions with airway epithelial cells and the surrounding immune environment.

Inflammatory Lung Conditions of Interest

- **COPD:** COPD extends beyond airflow obstruction; it encompasses chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and progressive structural changes in the lungs. Exosome-based approaches are being investigated for their capacity to influence immune signaling and support tissue homeostasis in this context.

- **Asthma:** Adult-onset and difficult-to-control asthma involve complex immune hypersensitivities. There is emerging interest in whether exosomes might help regulate aberrant immune signaling without broad suppression.
- **Post-Viral Lung Syndromes (Post COVID Syndrome):** Persistent respiratory symptoms following viral infections — including long-term post-viral inflammatory states — may be linked to ongoing immune activation even after the virus has cleared. Immune modulatory signals from exosomes are under study in this setting.
- **Pulmonary Fibrosis:** In fibrosis, chronic inflammation can lead to irreversible structural changes in lung tissue. Exosomes are not expected to reverse established fibrosis but may interact with inflammatory pathways associated with early or ongoing fibrotic processes.
- **Environmental Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis:** This immune-mediated inflammatory response to inhaled antigens highlights the need for environmental management. Biologic modulators like exosomes are being examined for their potential to support immune recalibration once triggers are removed.

Scientific Context and Future Direction

It is important to emphasize that stem cell-derived exosomes are an area of scientific exploration, not established therapies. Rigorous clinical trials and regulatory evaluation are needed to clarify safety, efficacy, appropriate delivery methods, and long-term outcomes. Current research draws from preclinical models and early clinical investigations demonstrating the biological activity of exosomes in immune regulation and tissue response.

As research continues, the concept of biological regulation — influencing how cells communicate and respond to stress and injury — may offer new avenues for understanding and potentially supporting lung health in inflammatory conditions.

ABOUT AXEL RUIZ MD, DABFP, CWS

Axel Ruiz MD, DABFP, CWS is a member of the American Academy and a Board of Regenerative Medicine Researcher. Axel has been harnessing the Power of Stem Cells in Joint Pain Management since 2024.

Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS, brings over 20 years of dedicated experience to family medicine, with a passion for delivering exceptional patient care. Board-certified in Family Practice (DABFP) and specializing in wound care (CWS), Dr. Ruiz offers a comprehensive and compassionate approach to health and wellness.

He is known for his ability to explain conditions thoroughly and build strong, trusting relationships with his patients. Practices in Naples, Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres, FL. His commitment to ongoing learning and patient-centered treatment makes him an invaluable partner in your health journey.

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MENTAL HEALTH ISN'T WEAKNESS – IT'S A WARNING SYSTEM

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Mental health is often discussed only when something is "wrong"—when a person is in crisis, struggling to cope, or unable to function the way they used to. But mental health is present long before that moment. It's shaped daily, in small and often invisible ways.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, arriving as Florida settles into longer days, heavier heat, end-of-school-year deadlines, and a calendar that fills up fast. On the outside, life can look "fine." On the inside, many people are managing anxiety, low mood, grief, burnout, or substance use with a quiet determination that goes unnoticed.

Mental health concerns aren't always dramatic. They can look like sleep that never feels restful, a shorter temper, constant scrolling, more drinking "just to take the edge off," or feeling detached from people you care about. Awareness doesn't start with changing everything. It starts with recognizing patterns—especially the ones you've learned to call normal.

Mental Health Isn't a Moral Test — It's Information

Many people treat emotional struggle as a personal deficiency: *I shouldn't feel like this. Other people have it worse. I just need to toughen up.* But mental health isn't a measure of toughness. It's a reflection of how your brain and body are responding to your life—your stress load, sleep, relationships, losses, biology, and environment.

The challenge often isn't one bad day—it's what happens when anxiety, depression, trauma responses, or caregiver strain become **chronic**. Over time, concentration drops, motivation fades, patience thins, and the nervous system stays activated. Many people begin leaning harder on quick relief—alcohol, THC, prescriptions taken "a little differently," overeating, overworking, or isolating—because it feels like the only way to get through.

Instead of asking, *"What's wrong with me?"* a more supportive question may be:
"What is this trying to tell me—and what do I need?"

A More Useful Kind of Awareness

Mental health advice can start to sound like another to-do list—more gratitude, more therapy, more journaling, more discipline. Those tools can help, but awareness is often simpler: **pause**, notice what's true, and respond with intention instead of autopilot.

Consider these grounded, realistic mental health check-ins:

- **Name your baseline.** Ask: "If I'm doing okay, how do I usually sleep, eat, and interact with people?" Changes from your baseline are often the earliest clue.
- **Track what you're avoiding.** Putting off calls, canceling plans, or delaying simple tasks can be a sign of anxiety, depression, or overwhelm—not laziness.
- **Notice what calms you—and what costs you.** Some coping strategies restore you (walks, connection, rest). Others numb you (substances, doomscrolling, impulsive spending) and tend to increase distress later.
- **Make room for one honest moment.** A brief check-in—"What am I feeling right now?"—can interrupt the cycle of pushing through and help you choose your next step.

Awareness is not about diagnosing yourself. It's about responding sooner, with compassion, before things become unmanageable.

Florida's Mental Health Landscape

Life in Florida has its own rhythm—and its own pressures. Seasonal work shifts, financial strain during slower months, caring for family across state lines, and the lingering stress of hurricane seasons can all stack quietly. Add in social comparison during "vacation season," and it's easy to feel like everyone else is enjoying life more than you are.

At the same time, Florida offers built-in supports when used intentionally: daylight, movement, and time outside can improve mood and reduce stress reactivity. Even a short routine—ten minutes outside in the morning, a walk after dinner, sitting near water without multitasking—can help the nervous system settle.

The key is not assuming you should feel okay just because life looks okay.

When Mental Health Starts to Slip

When mental health is strained, it often shows up indirectly. Anxiety can look like irritability. Depression can look like "laziness." Trauma can look like control or shutdown. Substance use can look like the only reliable way to sleep, socialize, or get through a shift.

Signs it may be time to get additional support include:

- Feeling persistently down, numb, or on edge
- Sleeping too little or too much, or waking up unrefreshed
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or responsibilities
- Increased reliance on alcohol, medications, or other substances to cope
- Feeling hopeless, out of control, or like you're " not yourself"

These aren't signs of weakness. They're signals that it's time to pause—and get support.

Support Works Best When It's Early

One of the most common myths about mental health is that you should wait until things are severe to reach out. But getting support earlier often prevents a deeper crisis—and shortens recovery time.

Sometimes support looks like sleep routines, boundaries, and honest conversations. Other times, it means professional treatment—especially when anxiety, depression, trauma, or substance use begins interfering with safety, relationships, or daily functioning.

Inpatient psychiatric care and medically supervised detox exist for moments when symptoms or substance use have outpaced usual coping. These services provide structure, safety, and stabilization—helping people regain footing without judgment and without waiting for things to worsen.

Mental Health Awareness Is About Permission

Mental Health Awareness Month isn't about being positive all the time. It's about giving yourself permission to notice what's real—and to take your mental health seriously, even if you're still "functioning."

If you or someone you care about feels overwhelmed, stuck, or unsafe, help is available—and reaching out can be the first step back to steadiness.

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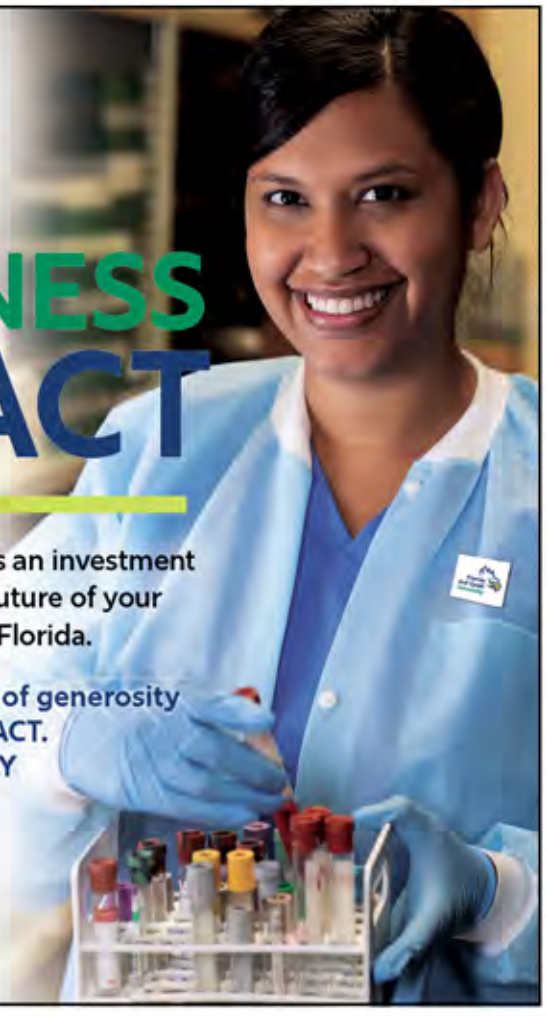

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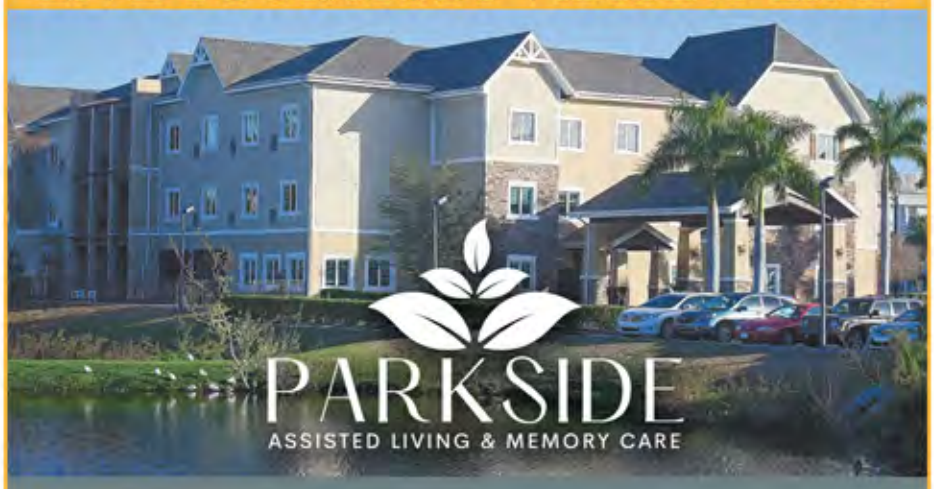

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MEMORY CARE, PERSONALIZED FOR YOU

Parkside's Gender-Specific Approach to Alzheimer's Treatment Sets Area Standard

Parkside Assisted Living and Memory Care has established itself as a pioneering force in dementia care by implementing a unique, gender-specific memory care model that stands alone in the area. This innovative approach recognizes that men and women with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia often experience different behavioral patterns, communication styles, and comfort levels, making gender-specific care environments potentially more therapeutic and calming.

Understanding the Gender-Specific Model

At Parkside's memory care cottage, male residents live on one dedicated floor while female residents occupy another, creating distinct living environments tailored to each gender's specific needs. This separation isn't about discrimination—it's about optimization. Research indicates that individuals with dementia often feel more comfortable and exhibit fewer behavioral challenges when surrounded by others who share similar life experiences and communication patterns.

The male-focused floor features activities and décor that resonate with traditional masculine interests and experiences. Common areas might showcase sports memorabilia, workshop-style activity spaces, and programming centered around topics like automobiles, military service, or professional trades. Meanwhile, the female-focused floor incorporates elements that often appeal to women of the residents' generation, such as kitchen-style gathering spaces, garden themes, and activities involving cooking, crafts, or family-centered discussions.

The Science Behind Gender-Specific Care

Memory care professionals understand that Alzheimer's and Dementia affects men and women differently, both neurologically and behaviorally. Women with dementia often maintain social connections longer and may feel more comfortable in nurturing, relationship-focused environments. Men, particularly those from older generations, may feel more at ease in environments that honor traditional masculine roles and interests.

This gender-specific approach can reduce anxiety, agitation, and confusion that sometimes occur in mixed-gender settings. Often, men may inadvertently intimidate women by entering their apartments uninvited while searching for their own rooms.

When individuals with dementia feel more comfortable in their environment, they often experience improved sleep patterns, better appetite, reduced sundowning behaviors, fewer non-consensual sexual encounters, and enhanced overall quality of life.

Comprehensive Memory Care Services

Beyond the unique living arrangement, Parkside provides comprehensive memory care services designed to support residents at every stage of their journey. The community employs specially trained care-partners who understand the complexities of dementia care and use evidence-based approaches to provide compassionate, dignified care.

Memory care programming includes cognitive stimulation activities, physical therapy, medication management, and behavioral support. Each Cottage maintains its own dining areas, activity spaces, and outdoor access, ensuring residents can enjoy structured routines while feeling secure in familiar surroundings.

The nursing team receives ongoing education in dementia care best practices, including techniques for managing challenging behaviors, communication strategies for different stages of cognitive decline, and methods for maintaining residents' dignity and independence as long as possible.

Family-Centered Approach

Parkside recognizes that memory care extends beyond the individual to encompass entire families. The community provides extensive family education and support services, helping loved ones understand the progression of dementia and learn effective communication techniques. Regular family meetings ensure care plans remain aligned with each resident's changing needs and preferences.

Setting the Standard for Innovation

As the only memory care community in the area to implement this gender-specific memory care model, Parkside demonstrates commitment to innovative, person-centered care. This approach challenges traditional memory care models and shows how communities can adapt their environments to better serve residents' unique needs.

The success of Parkside's model may inspire other communities to consider how gender-specific programming and environments could enhance their own memory care services. By prioritizing resident comfort and implementing evidence-based environmental modifications, Parkside has created a new standard for memory care excellence that puts individual dignity and comfort at the forefront of treatment.

For families seeking memory care options, Parkside's innovative approach represents a thoughtful alternative that recognizes the complex, individual nature of dementia care while providing the specialized support that residents and families deserve during this challenging journey.

To learn more about Parkside Assisted Living and Memory Care's groundbreaking gender-specific memory care program and how it might benefit your loved one, call 941-207-8609 today. Their experienced team is ready to discuss your family's specific needs and provide a personalized tour of their unique facilities.

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William J. Cole, Jr., DO, FAASCP
Double Board-Certified in Regenerative Medicine & Interventional PM&R | Founder | TheStemCellDoctors.com® | RegenaMed® | kNOwPAIN® Institute

There are moments in life when everything changes.

Sometimes it's a diagnosis that stops you in your tracks.

Multiple Sclerosis.
Parkinson's.
Alzheimer's.
Dementia.
Traumatic Brain Injury.
Long-COVID Brain Fog.

Other times, it begins quietly.

You walk into a room and forget why.
You lose your train of thought mid-sentence.
You search for a word you've used your entire life.
Your sleep becomes fractured.
Your mood shifts.
Your clarity fades.

And eventually the question rises inside you:
Is this my new normal?
Let me say something bold.
Your brain is not broken.

It just has a short in the wiring that needs fixed, as "The Body Was Designed to Be Rebuild."

For decades, patients were told the brain does not regenerate.
That neurons do not grow back.
That degeneration is permanent.

Manage it.
Medicate it.
Slow it down.
Prepare for decline.

But what if decline is not destiny?

The brain was engineered to adapt, reorganize, and regenerate.

And I know this not just as a physician... but as a patient.

There are moments when life divides into before... and after.

Traditional neurosurgeons recommended a four-level cervical fusion with a low projected success rate. That surgery would likely have ended my career.

Mine happened when I woke up from cervical spinal decompression surgery for massive bone spurs crushing my right C-7 nerve root.

For 30 days and 30 nights before that surgery, I did not sleep.

Not "poor sleep."
Not "interrupted sleep."

I did not sleep.

If you've ever been there, you know what happens next:
You stop thinking clearly.
You stop healing.
You stop functioning.
You stop being You.

When I leaned forward post-surgery, I felt a ripping sensation deep in my neck. Then electric, cattle-prod neurologic pain shot down my arms and legs with searing intensity.

True neurologic pain is different.
It is relentless.
It is merciless.

I reached up to touch my Standard Operating Procedure neck safety collar.

It wasn't there.

And in that moment I asked:
Is this the end of my career and my ability to walk?
Will I be able to hug My Lovely Wife and kids again?

That was not a physician thinking.
That was a husband.
A father.
A man staring into uncertainty.

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And that experience forced me to ask a bigger question:

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Sight sharpens.
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Taste improves.
Sound clarifies.
Balance stabilizes.

Phase Two: Brainstem Stabilizes.
Critical in Parkinson's and motor disorders.
Motor control improves.
Sleep patterns regulate.
Autonomic function recalibrates.
Balance returns.

Phase Three: Frontal Lobe Reengages.
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Focus strengthens.
Executive function improves.
Families often say, "You seem like yourself again."

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No outcome is guaranteed.

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The brain is not a machine.

It is a living, adaptive, electrical, biochemical miracle with built-in neuroplasticity that facilitates brain regeneration.

When inflammation decreases and neural signaling strengthens, the brain does what it was designed to do:

It rebuilds.

Medicine must evolve.

Not more pills.
Not more decline.
Not more fear.

Find it.
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Restore function.
Restore "Quality in Life."

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ANYONE CAN SUFFER A STROKE:

Beware of falling into trap of thinking there's a 'stereotypical high-risk patient'

By Rick Weber

Anyone can suffer a stroke. Literally *anyone.*

Stroke is not confined to a specific age group or a stereotypical "high-risk" patient. While there is a tendency to associate stroke with older adults or individuals with obvious health issues, that framing is incomplete—and a bit misleading.

"Yes, there are well-established risk factors like hypertension, diabetes and smoking, but stroke can also occur in individuals who don't fit that profile at all," says Megan Walsh, DPT, NCS, a Clinical Assistant Professor in Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health and Human Services who is recognized as a Board Certified Neurologic Clinical Specialist by the American Board of Physical Therapy.

"Younger, otherwise healthy people can experience strokes due to less obvious mechanisms like embolic events, cardiac rhythm disturbances, vascular abnormalities or even spontaneous arterial injury. In some cases, there isn't a clear, immediately identifiable cause. What complicates this further is that stroke doesn't always present in the dramatic way people expect. It's not always a sudden collapse or complete paralysis. It can be subtle, such as sudden dizziness, difficulty with balance, changes in vision or mild speech disturbances."

Those presentations are easy to dismiss, especially when the person doesn't "look like" someone at risk. So the idea that "anyone can suffer a stroke" is less about creating alarm and more about correcting that bias.

"It's a reminder that stroke is fundamentally a neurological emergency defined by its presentation, not by the person it happens to," says Walsh, who is certified in Neurodevelopmental Treatment (NDT) by the Neurodevelopmental Treatment Association (NDTA). "If symptoms appear suddenly and don't make sense, they deserve to be taken seriously, regardless of age or perceived health status."

Walsh speaks from painful experience. She did not realize that babies could have a stroke—until her second daughter, Piper, was born full-term in 2009. Within 24 hours, doctors discovered that she was experiencing seizures that necessitated admission to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). A battery of tests determined that she had suffered a large stroke affecting the left side of her brain in an area known to control right-sided movement and speech.

Walsh begged the neurologist in the NICU to tell her and her husband that Piper would still be OK and be able to live a normal life. Of course, he could not do that, instead saying, "She will be anything from profoundly disabled to relatively normal. Time, early intervention and neuroplasticity will dictate her outcome."

Piper made a phenomenal recovery. Now in 10th grade, she has participated in Irish dance, played club-level soccer and graced her school's Honor Roll on several occasions.

Even before Piper's ordeal, Walsh had developed a passion for helping people through difficult and often unforeseen circumstances. She became interested in stroke rehabilitation while working at the Rehab Hospital of the Pacific in Honolulu from 2005 to 2008. But it was not until Piper was born that she expanded that passion to include awareness and research.

From a healthcare provider and professor's perspective, she believes stroke prevention is one of the areas where they can have the most meaningful impact in the community, because so many of the major risk factors are actually modifiable.

"Hypertension is still the leading contributor, so consistent blood pressure management—through medication when needed, but also through movement and lifestyle—is fundamental," she says. "What we see clinically, though, is that these risks rarely exist in isolation. Physical inactivity, impaired glucose control and high cholesterol tend to cluster, creating a cumulative strain on the vascular system over time. Tobacco use and excessive alcohol intake further accelerate that process.

"What I consistently emphasize, both in the classroom and in practice, is that movement is not just a general wellness recommendation, but it is a targeted, evidence-based intervention. Regular aerobic activity and strength training directly improve blood pressure, insulin sensitivity and lipid profiles, which are all central to reducing stroke risk.

"There is also increasing recognition of the role that sleep quality and chronic stress play, particularly in conditions like obstructive sleep apnea, which often go under-identified. Ultimately, stroke prevention is not about a single behavior change. It is the cumulative effect of managing cardiovascular health over time. The encouraging part is that even small, consistent changes in these modifiable factors can meaningfully reduce long-term risk."

She says that when we talk about who is more susceptible to stroke, it's important to frame it less as a specific "type" of person and more in terms of non-modifiable risk factors layered on top of an individual's overall risk profile. Age remains the most significant non-modifiable factor, with risk increasing over time, but it's critical to recognize that stroke is not exclusive to older adults.

"We are continuing to see strokes in younger populations, often because modifiable risks are present but under-recognized," she says. "There are also important sex-based considerations. Women, for example, have unique risk periods related to pregnancy and the postpartum state, as well as considerations with hormonal contraception and migraine with aura, all of which can influence stroke risk through vascular and clotting mechanisms.

"In addition, race and ethnicity play a role, as African American adults in the United States experience higher stroke incidence and often at younger ages, which reflects both biological predispositions and broader social and healthcare access factors. Genetics and family history are also key non-modifiable contributors, particularly in individuals with inherited clotting disorders or early cardiovascular disease in first-degree relatives. These factors can increase baseline risk even in individuals who appear otherwise healthy.

"That said, these non-modifiable risks don't act in isolation. They interact with modifiable factors like hypertension, physical inactivity, diabetes, dyslipidemia and tobacco use, which ultimately drive the majority of stroke risk. So while we can't change age, sex, race or genetics, understanding how they influence baseline risk allows us to be more proactive and aggressive in managing the factors we *can* modify."

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Elevate Your Self-Care with Exomind Technology

By Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, we're excited to introduce Exomind, a revolutionary brain wellness technology that's transforming how we approach mental self-care and cognitive health.

In our fast-paced world, stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue have become unwelcome companions for many. While traditional self-care often focuses on physical wellness through exercise, nutrition, and relaxation techniques, we're now recognizing that true self-care must also address our cognitive and neurological well-being. This is where Exomind comes in.

What is Exomind?

Exomind represents the cutting edge of neurotechnology, offering a non-invasive approach to optimizing brain function and promoting mental wellness. This sophisticated system uses advanced brainwave technology to help balance neural activity, reduce stress, and enhance overall cognitive performance. By working directly with your brain's natural rhythms, Exomind creates a personalized experience designed to restore mental clarity and emotional equilibrium.

The treatment is remarkably simple yet profoundly effective. During an Exomind session, you'll relax comfortably while the technology gently guides your brainwaves toward optimal patterns associated with calmness, focus, and mental clarity. Many patients describe the experience as deeply relaxing, similar to meditation but requiring no prior experience or effort on your part.

The Self-Care Benefits of Exomind

Self-care isn't selfish—it's essential. When we prioritize our mental and cognitive health, we're better equipped to handle life's challenges, maintain meaningful relationships, and perform at our best in all areas of life. Exomind supports these goals by addressing several key areas of brain wellness.

First, stress reduction is one of Exomind's most immediate benefits. By promoting balanced brainwave patterns, the technology helps activate your body's natural relaxation response, counteracting the harmful effects of chronic stress. Users often report feeling calmer and more centered after just one session.

Second, many patients experience improved sleep quality. In our sleep-deprived society, restorative rest is a crucial component of self-care. Exomind helps regulate the neural patterns associated with healthy sleep cycles, making it easier to fall asleep and achieve deeper, more rejuvenating rest.

Third, enhanced focus and mental clarity represent another significant advantage. Whether you're struggling with brain fog, attention difficulties, or simply want to optimize your cognitive performance, Exomind can help sharpen your mental edge and improve concentration.

Making Exomind Part of Your Self-Care Routine

At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, we believe that comprehensive care means addressing all aspects of health—including the often-overlooked realm of brain wellness. Our experienced team is trained in the latest neurotechnology protocols and will work with you to develop a personalized Exomind treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals.

Consider investing in your most important asset: your brain. Whether you're dealing with stress, seeking better sleep, wanting to enhance focus, or simply looking to optimize your mental well-being, Exomind offers a powerful tool for transformation.

Self-care is about creating sustainable practices that support your long-term health and happiness. Unlike quick fixes or temporary solutions, Exomind works with your brain's natural capacity for healing and optimization, creating lasting changes that support your wellness journey.

We invite you to discover how Exomind can elevate your self-care routine and help you achieve new levels of mental clarity, emotional balance, and cognitive vitality. Contact Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology today to schedule your consultation and experience the future of brain wellness. Because when it comes to self-care, your mind deserves the same attention and care as your body.

Your journey to better brain health starts here.

About Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

Dr. Clark has surgical skills that encompass much of the head and neck, and really enjoys a challenge. Dr. Clark loves cochlear implants and their ability to replace the function of the inner ear by directly stimulating the auditory nerve. There is just something special about watching the face of someone hear for the first time in a long time. He also preforms ossicular chain reconstruction, which repairs the tiny bones in the middle ear. It's pretty amazing, really. He removes thyroids and parotid glands that have gone awry, or tonsils that won't stop getting infected. Dr. Clark offers balloon sinuplasty in office (or in the OR if needed) that is comfortable and heals within a few weeks, giving people a whole new way to breath easy. He also offers in office insertion of ear tubes, which he places with ease. Most importantly, Dr. Clark will explain any procedure he performs in detail and makes the patient feel confident and comfortable. He will also guide you through medical and lifestyle changes that may reduce your need for surgery. He really wants to find the best solutions for you and your family.

Island ENT
Wellness Spa and Audiology
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KNOW THE SIGNS, SAVE A LIFE: National Stroke Awareness Month

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. Every 3.5 minutes, someone dies from one. These sobering statistics place stroke among the leading causes of death and long-term disability in America. Yet according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), up to 80 percent of strokes are preventable. National Stroke Awareness Month, observed every May, exists to close the gap between those statistics and the public's understanding of what strokes are, what causes them, and how early detection can make all the difference.

Understanding Stroke: A Medical Emergency With a Narrow Window

A stroke occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain is suddenly interrupted, either by a blockage (ischemic stroke, accounting for about 87% of all strokes) or by a ruptured blood vessel (hemorrhagic stroke). When brain cells are deprived of oxygen, they begin to die within minutes. This is why the phrase "time is brain" has become a cornerstone of stroke medicine — every minute without treatment can mean the loss of nearly two million neurons.

The acronym BE-FAST helps people recognize the warning signs of stroke quickly:

B — **Balance:** sudden loss of balance or coordination

E — **Eyes:** sudden vision changes or trouble seeing

F — **Face:** facial drooping, especially on one side

A — **Arms:** arm weakness or numbness

S — **Speech:** slurred or strange speech

T — **Time:** call 911 immediately

Risk Factors You Can Control

While some stroke risk factors — such as age, family history, and race — cannot be changed, many of the most significant ones can be managed or eliminated. High blood pressure remains the single greatest modifiable risk factor for stroke. Other controllable risks include high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, smoking, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol consumption. Atrial fibrillation (an irregular heartbeat) significantly raises stroke risk as well, as does the presence of carotid artery disease — a narrowing of the arteries in the neck that supply blood to the brain.

May is National Stroke Awareness Month — a critical reminder that stroke is preventable, treatable, and beatable.

This is where preventive screening becomes a powerful tool in the fight against stroke.

Early Detection With Ultrasound Carotid Screening From RAVE Imaging

One of the most effective — and underutilized — tools for stroke prevention is the carotid artery ultrasound screening. RAVE Imaging offers this non-invasive, painless scan to help individuals and their physicians detect early warning signs of stroke before a crisis occurs.

The carotid arteries run along both sides of the neck and are the primary blood supply to the brain. Over time, plaque — made up of fat, cholesterol, and calcium — can build up along arterial walls, a condition known as carotid artery stenosis. This narrowing restricts blood flow and significantly increases the likelihood of a clot breaking off and traveling to the brain, causing a stroke or a transient ischemic attack (TIA), sometimes called a "mini-stroke."

RAVE Imaging's Ultrasound Carotid Screening uses high-frequency sound waves to create detailed images of the carotid arteries, revealing the presence of plaque buildup and the degree of arterial narrowing — often long before symptoms appear. The procedure is quick, radiation-free, and requires no contrast dye or preparation. Results are reviewed by board-certified radiologists, and findings are shared promptly with the patient and their healthcare provider.

This type of proactive screening is particularly recommended for adults over 50, those with a history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, or a family history of stroke or heart disease. Detecting carotid stenosis early allows patients and their doctors to take meaningful action — through lifestyle changes, medication, or in some cases, surgical intervention — before a stroke has the chance to occur.

This May, Take Action for Your Brain Health

National Stroke Awareness Month is more than a campaign — it is an invitation to act. Stroke does not discriminate by age, gender, or background, but knowledge and prevention can level the playing field. Scheduling a carotid artery ultrasound screening with RAVE Imaging is a concrete, accessible step that could reveal hidden risks and, ultimately, save your life or the life of someone you love.

Talk to your doctor about whether a carotid ultrasound screening is right for you, or contact RAVE Imaging directly to schedule your appointment. Because when it comes to stroke, the best time to find out about your risk is before it becomes an emergency.

RAVE is Happy to Announce Our ***MAY Community Health Self-Pay Special*** - Ultrasound Carotid Screening self-pay: $245.00

Carotid Ultrasound is a quick, non-invasive test that checks the arteries in your neck for blockages or narrowing, which could increase your stroke risk. Early detection allows you to address potential issues before they become serious. Stay proactive about your health and reduce your risk of stroke with a Carotid Ultrasound today at Rave.

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May: Better Hearing and Speech Month

Breaking the Sound Barrier of Communication

By Dr. Noël Crosby, Au.D.

Every year, May marks Better Hearing and Speech Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about hearing health and the life-changing interventions available to those affected by hearing loss. This annual observance, established by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), shines a spotlight on the often-overlooked challenges faced by millions who struggle to navigate a world filled with sounds many take for granted.

Hearing forms the foundation of human connection, yet for approximately 48 million Americans living with hearing loss—roughly 20% of the population—everyday interactions can present significant barriers. This invisible condition affects people across all age groups, from children developing language skills to seniors preserving their quality of life and independence.

The impact of hearing loss extends far beyond casual conversation. Children with untreated hearing issues often face academic challenges and developmental delays, while adults may experience career limitations, reduced earning potential, and profound social isolation. Perhaps most concerning is the strong correlation between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline, with studies suggesting hearing impairment may increase the risk of dementia by up to five times.

Our auditory system is remarkably complex yet incredibly vulnerable. The delicate hair cells in our inner ear, responsible for converting sound waves into electrical signals the brain can interpret, cannot regenerate once damaged. This makes hearing protection not just advisable but essential in our increasingly noisy world. Prolonged exposure to sounds above 85 decibels—the equivalent of heavy traffic or a noisy restaurant—can cause permanent damage over time.

Modern hearing technology has revolutionized treatment options for those with hearing loss. Today's hearing aids bear little resemblance to the bulky devices of previous generations. Many are virtually invisible, equipped with advanced features like Bluetooth connectivity, rechargeable batteries, and sophisticated algorithms that can distinguish speech from background noise. For those with more severe hearing loss, cochlear implants can bypass damaged portions of the ear to directly stimulate the auditory nerve.

Early intervention is crucial for optimal outcomes. The average person waits seven years after noticing hearing difficulties before seeking help—a delay that can have significant consequences. Regular hearing screenings should be part of everyone's healthcare routine, particularly for those over 50 or in high-risk professions involving noise exposure.

This May, consider taking meaningful action to support Better Hearing Month. Schedule a hearing evaluation for yourself or encourage loved ones to do the same. Practice safe listening habits by limiting headphone volume and using protective gear in noisy environments. Most importantly, help reduce stigma by fostering understanding toward those with hearing challenges.

Community resources abound for those seeking assistance. Audiologists work in various settings, offering specialized expertise in diagnosing and treating hearing disorders. Many organizations also provide support groups, educational materials, and financial assistance programs for hearing devices.

As we celebrate Better Hearing and Speech Month, remember that the ability to hear connects us to our world in profound ways—from the laughter of loved ones to the warning signals that keep us safe. By prioritizing hearing health, we preserve one of our most precious senses and the rich tapestry of sound that enhances our lives.

ADVANCED HEARING SOLUTIONS

Using the latest and most sophisticated technology, we determine if you have hearing loss–and, if you do, we determine the degree and type of hearing loss. If your hearing loss requires medical or surgical intervention, we can refer you to a physician (otologist or neurologist) for appropriate treatment. If your type of hearing loss can best be treated with the use of hearing aids and/or other assistive listening devices (which is true in the great majority of cases), we can select any of a wide range of hearing devices and custom fit them to your ear, programmed to augment your hearing at those frequency levels where your hearing loss is greatest.

Call Advanced Hearing Solutions today at (941) 474-8393.

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 changes for Medicare recipients. 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.

One of the biggest changes for 2026 related to Medicare Part D Prescriptions whether withing a Part C Advantage plan or a stand-alone Part D drug Plan. Your yearly Part D out-of-pocket costs will be capped at $2,100 in 2026. You must buy medications using your plan and the medication must be **in formulary** to go toward the cap. You will also have a payment option to pay out-pocket costs in monthly amounts over the plan year, instead of paying when you receive the medications. This is done through the insurance company that you purchased your plan.

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 months 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?

Special Enrollment Periods – You moved out of your plans service area, New to Medicare, Retiring and coming off your employer group plan, Going into or out of Skilled Nursing, Medicaid and other's may apply.

We offer **Free Medicare in person consultations,** please e-mail info@logicalinsurance.com to schedule or call 239-362-0855. Medicare's website is www.Medicare.gov.

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 cancelation 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 are out way the benefits.

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 education, wedding or even a 1st home purchase. The younger you are the lower the cost. There are many types of life insurance, and it is important to understand the differences between them. You also have payment options, such as 10-Pay, this type of policy you can pay the premium in full in 10 years, there are other terms available as well.

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. You have payment options such as a single payment, 10-Pay where the premium is paid-in-full in 10 years. You also get a discount with most companies doing a joint policy with your spouse. 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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All-In-One Dental Visit with CEREC

By Dr. Joseph Farag

New technologies are making our lives simpler and easier everyday and dentistry has certainly not been left behind. Thanks to a great new system called CEREC, you can now have a high-tech smile in a single visit.

In days gone by, you may have needed to visit the dentist two or three times to have a quality, white ceramic restoration. The dentist would need to take a special impression to make a plaster model for the dental laboratory to generate an extra replica of your tooth in order to hand-make your porcelain restoration. The craftsmanship of the laboratory technician is highly regarded, but generally requires a minimum turn-around time of two weeks, leaving you to function with a temporary, generally plastic, restoration.

Instead of multiple dentist appointments and weeks for a complete restoration, CEREC allows the dentist to achieve the same, if not better, results in a single visit.

CEREC is an acronym for Chairside Economical Restoration of Esthetic Ceramics. Translated, it means that a dentist can economically restore damaged teeth in a single appointment using high-quality ceramic material that matches. CEREC uses the latest Computer-Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD-CAM) technology incorporating a camera, computer and milling machine in one instrument to give you perfect, white fillings, veneers or crowns, all in a a frac-tion of the time it used to take.

Here's how it works.

Once your dentist determines that CEREC is the correct course of treatment, your visit will begin by preparing the tooth. Any decay, if present, is removed, leaving as much possible of your healthy tooth to support the CEREC restoration. Next, your dentist will use a specially designed electronic camera that makes a digital 3D model of your tooth in seconds.

You can then watch your dentist design your new restoration on a computer screen, right beside the dental chair using the 3D image created by the camera. The virtual filling is then transferred into reality, again using CEREC. A solid block of porcelain ceramic is inserted into the CEREC milling unit. Special tools then sculpt your restoration to the finest detail based on the restoration designed on the CEREC computer.

The perfect-fit restoration is completed and placed in your mouth with the whole process only taking around an hour!

CEREC fillings are natural looking, smooth, white and hard-wearing, just like the enamel surface of the rest of our teeth. The ceramic material is biocompatible and is not effected by hot or cold.

The office of Dr. Joseph Farag offers CEREC restoration. For more details and CEREC or to schedule an appointment for a check-up please call (941) 764-9555 today.

Before and after: CEREC restorations look and feel better than amalgam (above and gold (below), and can be completed in a single appointment

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BREAKING THROUGH CHRONIC PAIN:
How Myofascial Release Offers Hope When All Else Fails

By Michael Via, MSPT

For millions of people living with chronic pain, the journey to relief can feel endless. After exhausting traditional medical treatments, surgeries, medications, and conventional therapies, many find themselves trapped in a cycle of temporary fixes that never address the root cause of their suffering. However, there's a therapeutic approach that's offering new hope to those who have tried everything else: Myofascial Release.

Understanding the Hidden Culprit

Myofascial Release targets the body's fascial system—a continuous web of connective tissue that surrounds and supports every muscle, bone, nerve, and organ in your body. When trauma, inflammation, or surgical procedures damage this system, they create restrictions that can generate crushing pressures of up to 2,000 pounds per square inch on pain-sensitive structures.

The frustrating reality is that these restrictions often remain invisible on standard diagnostic tests like X-rays, MRIs, CT scans, or electromyography studies, leaving patients feeling dismissed and their pain unexplained. This diagnostic blind spot contributes to the stress and frustration experienced by countless individuals who know something is wrong but can't get concrete answers from traditional medical testing.

Think of these fascial restrictions as an internal straightjacket, creating a web of tension that pulls and compresses throughout your body. Restrictions in one area create compensatory patterns that can manifest as pain and dysfunction in seemingly unrelated parts of the body. While traditional medicine focuses on masking pain symptoms with medications, and conventional physical therapy treats only the surface effects, Myofascial Release addresses the underlying structural cause of the problem.

The Gentle Power of Sustained Pressure

The John F. Barnes' Myofascial Release Approach represents a paradigm shift in pain management that prioritizes safety, gentleness, and lasting effectiveness. This technique involves applying gentle, sustained pressure directly to fascial restrictions without oils, creams, or machinery. The direct skin contact enables therapists to accurately detect fascial restrictions and apply the appropriate amount of pressure needed for release.

The key lies in the "time element"—allowing the viscous properties of fascia to respond to low-load pressure applied slowly and consistently. During treatment, skilled therapists use their hands to detect restrictions and apply sustained pressure for extended periods, sometimes several minutes at a time. This approach leverages the piezoelectric phenomenon, where gentle, prolonged pressure allows the viscoelastic fascia to elongate and release naturally.

Unlike aggressive massage or forceful manipulation techniques, Myofascial Release works with the body's natural healing mechanisms rather than forcing change. Each treatment session is uniquely tailored to the individual, recognizing that every person's fascial restrictions and pain patterns are different.

Why Traditional Approaches Fall Short

The reason many patients experience only temporary relief with conventional treatments becomes clear when you understand fascial restrictions. Traditional physical therapy, massage, and medical interventions often treat symptoms while leaving the underlying fascial straightjacket intact. It's like trying to fix a house's foundation problems by only painting the walls—the cosmetic improvements are temporary because the structural issue remains.

Myofascial Release takes a whole-body approach, recognizing that restrictions in one area can create compensatory patterns and pain throughout the entire system. This comprehensive perspective explains why patients who have traveled from around the world seeking this treatment often find the lasting relief that eluded them through other methods.

A Beacon of Hope

The transformative power of Myofascial Release is consistently demonstrated in patient testimonials. Dawn Scheffer, who suffered from TMJ dysfunction, found success with this approach after tirelessly seeking treatment elsewhere without success. Peter Dorsa, himself a physical therapist with nearly three decades of experience who began studying Myofascial Release in 1994, describes the technique as "one of the most effective manual therapy treatments that exists."

These success stories reflect a broader pattern seen in patients who travel from around the world specifically seeking Myofascial Release treatment when traditional medicine, surgery, and conventional therapy have failed to provide lasting relief.

For those who have exhausted other options and feel trapped by chronic pain, Myofascial Release offers something precious: the possibility of authentic healing rather than temporary symptom management. By addressing the fascial system's restrictions at their source, this gentle yet powerful technique can break the cycle of chronic pain and restore the freedom of movement and quality of life that seemed lost forever.

If you're living with chronic pain and feeling hopeless about finding relief, Myofascial Release may be the comprehensive solution you've been searching for.

Call Now and SAVE $25 OFF Initial Evaluation!

About

Michael Via, MSPT, is a licensed Physical Therapist who brings over 29 years of comprehensive physical therapy experience to his practice, including 10 specialized years in pelvic floor rehabilitation. He graduated from the University of Miami in 1994 with his Masters of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) degree and has since become expert-level trained in John F. Barnes Myofascial Release, a distinction that reflects his deep commitment to this transformative treatment approach. His extensive training also includes Herman and Wallace pelvic floor assessment and treatment certification, as well as completion of Titleist Performance Institute Level 2 Medical, Level 2 Fitness, and Level 2 Junior Training programs. As the owner of Michael Via Therapy and Training Services since 2012, Mike has built his practice around a passion that drives his daily work: providing clients with the incredible feeling of chronic pain relief, particularly when other treatment avenues have previously failed them, making him a beacon of hope for those who have exhausted traditional therapeutic options.

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FINDING RHYTHM IN A RUSHED WORLD

By Pastor Tim Neptune

In our fast-paced culture, calendars overflow, to-do lists never end, and we race from one commitment to the next. We long for weekends only to collapse before Monday's demands return. Many of us live as prisoners of the clock, pushing ourselves to burnout. But what if this isn't how we were designed to live?

God built rest into our very DNA. Science confirms we need roughly eight hours of sleep per 24-hour cycle—about one-third of our lives in "recharge mode." The ancient practice of Sabbath, rooted in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11), reminds us that even the Creator rested after six days of work—not because He needed to, but to model a healthy rhythm for us.

Jesus affirmed this truth: *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27). Rest isn't a luxury or sign of laziness; it's a gift that sustains us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

We need to rest our body. Downtime boosts health, focus, productivity, and creativity. Yet, too often we stay "always on," tethered to devices that steal our recovery time. Turn them off. Protect one full day each week as a true Sabbath—clear of obligations. Embrace simplicity by eliminating clutter and unnecessary commitments. Prioritize family over endless striving for more money or success. Practice contentment, remembering that life doesn't consist in an abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15).

As the Harvard Business Review notes, silence and breaks restore the nervous system and help us navigate complex demands. Don't feel guilty for a "do nothing" day—sleep in, stay in pajamas, and recharge. Your body was designed for it.

We need to rest our minds. Racing thoughts, anxiety, and mental overload plague many of us. The Apostle Paul offers a powerful antidote in Philippians 4:4-9: rejoice, pray instead of worrying, and focus on what is true, noble, pure, and lovely. Shift from negativity and over-responsibility to trust in God.

Jesus modeled healthy boundaries by withdrawing from crowds to pray and recover (Matthew 14:23). Adopt Rick Warren's rhythm: divert daily (a short walk, music, reading, or hobby), withdraw weekly

(a full recharge day), and abandon annually (a real vacation). Even simple acts like playing piano—switching songs freely—create mental space. As Mozart observed, the beauty of music lies in the rests between notes. The same holds for life.

We need rest for our souls. True, deep rest comes from surrender. Jesus invites the weary: *"Come to me... and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me... and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:28-30). When we relinquish control and trust God with our worries—finances, health, relationships, future—we experience supernatural peace.

King David, no stranger to stress, declared, *"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety"* (Psalm 4:8). We cannot control everything, but we can entrust everything to a sovereign, loving God.

You are important—but not that important. The world will keep spinning if you step off the treadmill. Schedule rest intentionally. Protect your Sabbath. Divert, withdraw, and abandon. Most importantly, come to the One who offers soul-deep rest.

Your body, mind, and spirit will thank you. In the silence between the notes, you just might rediscover the abundant life for which you were created.

Tim Neptune is the Lead Pastor of Venture Church located at 14601 Tamiami Trail E. Naples. For service times, visit ***venturenaples.com*** *or call* ***(239) 775-5323****.*

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