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October 2026

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Understanding Joint Injuries and Abnormalities: WHY EARLY IMAGING MATTERS

Joint pain is one of the most common reasons people seek medical care, and for good reason. The back and knees bear the brunt of daily wear, athletic activity, and the natural aging process, making them especially prone to injury and degeneration. At Encore Imaging, we see firsthand how timely, accurate diagnostic imaging can make the difference between a quick recovery and a prolonged struggle with chronic pain. Understanding the most common joint conditions and how imaging helps identify them, can empower patients to seek care sooner and make informed treatment decisions.

THE BACK:

A Complex Structure Under Constant Stress

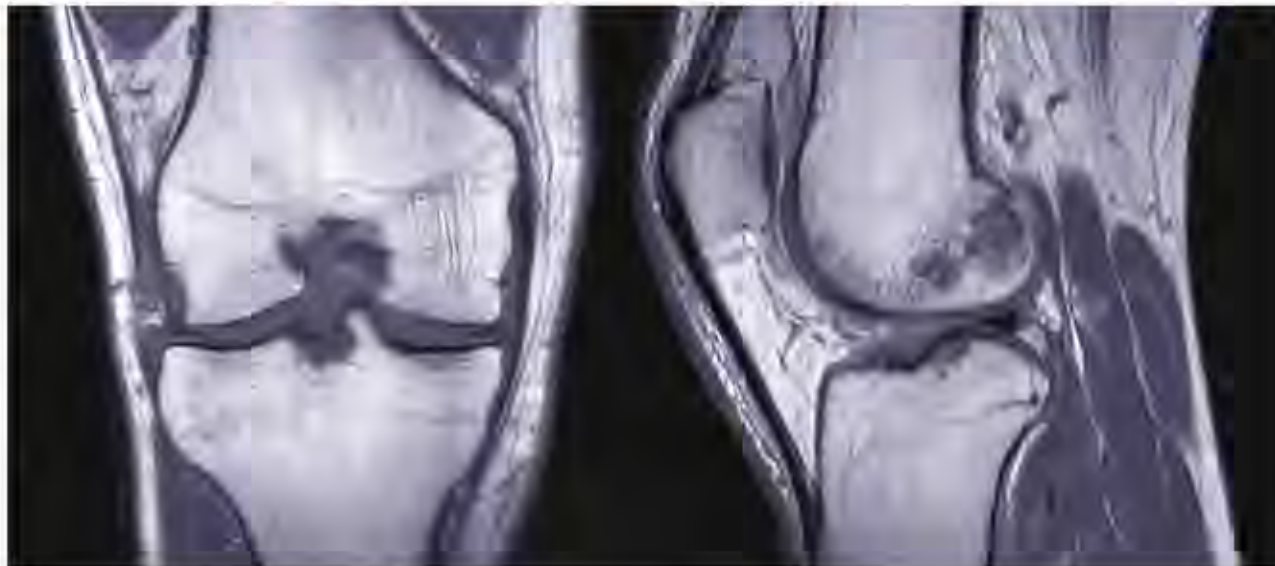
The spine is a remarkable system of vertebrae, discs, nerves, and connective tissue that supports nearly every movement we make. Unfortunately, this complexity also makes it vulnerable to a wide range of problems. Herniated or bulging discs occur when the soft cushioning between vertebrae shifts or ruptures, often pressing on nearby nerves and causing pain that radiates into the legs. Degenerative disc disease, a natural consequence of aging, gradually wears down these discs, reducing flexibility and increasing discomfort. Spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal, can compress the spinal cord or nerve roots, leading to numbness, weakness, or pain during standing or walking.

Compression fractures, often linked to osteoporosis, and spondylolisthesis, where one vertebra slips forward over another, are additional conditions that frequently go undiagnosed without proper imaging. Because back pain can stem from so many different sources, guesswork is rarely sufficient. Advanced imaging is often essential to pinpoint the exact cause.

THE KNEE:

A Hinge Under Heavy Load

The knee joint absorbs enormous force with every step, jump, and pivot, which explains why it's among the most frequently injured joints in the body. Ligament injuries, particularly to the anterior



cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial collateral ligament (MCL), are common among athletes and active individuals, often resulting from sudden twists or direct impacts. Meniscus tears, involving the cartilage that cushions the knee, can occur from acute trauma or gradual degeneration over time.

Osteoarthritis remains one of the leading causes of chronic knee pain, particularly among older adults, as cartilage breaks down and bones begin to rub against one another. Patellar tracking disorders, tendonitis, and bursitis round out the list of conditions that can significantly limit mobility and quality of life if left untreated.

Why Imaging Is the Key to Accurate Diagnosis

Physical exams and patient-reported symptoms provide valuable starting points, but they rarely tell the whole story. X-rays remain excellent for identifying fractures, bone spurs, and joint space narrowing associated with arthritis. MRI scans offer a more detailed view of soft tissues, making them indispensable for diagnosing ligament tears, disc herniations, and cartilage damage.

At Encore Imaging, our state-of-the-art equipment and experienced radiologists work closely with referring physicians to ensure every scan delivers the clearest possible picture. Accurate imaging doesn't just confirm a diagnosis, it shapes the entire treatment plan, whether that means physical therapy, medication, minimally invasive procedures, or surgery.

Don't Wait to Get Answers

Joint pain that persists for more than a few weeks, worsens with activity, or is accompanied by swelling, numbness, or instability warrants professional evaluation. Early imaging can catch problems before they progress, often opening the door to less invasive and more effective treatment options.

If you're experiencing back or knee pain, don't leave your diagnosis to guesswork. Contact Encore Imaging today to schedule a scan and take the first step toward understanding and resolving the source of your discomfort.

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Why Flu Prevention Matters More as We Age

By Mihai Macelar, MD, Internal Medicine at Millennium Physician Group

Staying protected from the flu is an important part of staying healthy throughout the year. For older adults, influenza can be much more serious. As we age, changes in the immune system can make it harder to fight infections. At the same time, chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can increase the risk of complications.

That makes flu prevention essential to your overall wellness – especially as another flu season approaches. The good news is that a few simple steps, beginning with an annual flu vaccination, can help reduce the risk of serious illness.

Flu Season Is Coming. How Can You Prepare?

Flu is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. It spreads easily when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and you can also pick up the virus from contaminated surfaces before it reaches your eyes, nose, or mouth.

For the 2026-2027 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older. Flu activity generally increases in fall and winter, although the timing and severity can vary each season. For most people, September and October are the ideal months to get vaccinated. The timing is particularly important for older adults because the body needs about two weeks after vaccination to develop its protective immune response.

This doesn't mean the opportunity to protect yourself passes after October. If you haven't received your flu vaccine, it is still worthwhile to get vaccinated later in the season while flu viruses are circulating and the vaccine is still available.

And if you've already had the flu this season, vaccination is still beneficial. Flu vaccines protect against multiple influenza strains, so having one strain does not necessarily provide protection against others that may circulate later.

Why Older Adults Face Greater Flu Risks

Adults 65 and older are more likely than younger adults to experience serious complications from influenza. One reason is immunosenescence, the natural change in immune function that occurs with age. The immune system may not respond to infections as strongly as it once did, making recovery more difficult.



The risk can be even greater for older adults living with certain chronic health conditions. Influenza can worsen existing heart and lung conditions, and may contribute to complications such as pneumonia, hospitalization, and, in several cases, death.

Recent flu seasons demonstrate why prevention matters. During the 2024-2025 season, flu-related hospitalizations and outpatient visits reached their highest levels in 15 years, with more than an estimated 710,000 hospitalizations and more than 45,000 deaths reported, according to the CDC.

Is There a Different Flu Vaccine for Older Adults?

Because the immune response can become less robust with age, the CDC recommends that adults 65 and older receive one of three types of flu vaccines when available:

- A high-dose vaccine
- An adjuvanted vaccine
- A recombinant vaccine

These vaccines are designed to produce a stronger immune response in older adults than a standard-dose flu vaccine. However, if a preferred vaccine isn't readily available, getting a standard flu vaccine is still better than delaying vaccination.

Pneumococcal Protection Matters, Too

Flu isn't the only respiratory illness worth preventing. Pneumococcal infections can cause serious conditions, including pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections, and pneumonia can also be a complication of influenza.

The CDC recommends pneumococcal vaccination for adults 50 and older, as well as for certain individuals at increased risk. If you're unsure whether you are up to date, your healthcare provider can review your vaccination history and determine which vaccine(s) is appropriate for you. In some cases, flu and pneumococcal vaccines can be given during the same visit.



A Flu Shot is One Part of Staying Well

Vaccination is an important step you can take to reduce your risk of seasonal flu, but it works best alongside everyday precautions:

- Wash hands regularly
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you're ill to limit spread

It's also important to recognize when you may need medical attention. Flu symptoms often begin suddenly and can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Intense fatigue

Older adults do not always develop a fever, so any sudden change in how you feel during flu season is worth paying attention to.

Get Ready for Flu Season with Millennium Physician Group

You don't have to navigate flu season alone. Millennium Physician Group can help you understand your vaccination options, determine which prevention plan is right for you, and answer questions about protecting yourself and loved ones from influenza and other respiratory illnesses. A conversation with your healthcare provider today can help you take a proactive approach for your health throughout flu season.

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THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

In a world where health consciousness is on the rise, one critical aspect of preventive care often goes overlooked: regular skin cancer screenings. With skin cancer being one of the most common types of cancer worldwide, the importance of early detection through routine check-ups cannot be overstated. This article delves into why staying vigilant about your skin health, particularly in checking for melanomas, could be a life-saving decision.

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells grow abnormally, often due to damage from UV radiation. While there are several types of skin cancer, melanoma is the most dangerous. Melanoma develops in the melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing skin pigment. Although it's less common than other skin cancers, melanoma is far more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught early.

The Power of Early Detection

The key to successfully treating skin cancer, especially melanoma, lies in early detection. When caught in its initial stages, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is an impressive 99%. However, this rate drops dramatically to 27% for melanomas that have spread to distant parts of the body. These statistics underscore the critical importance of regular skin checks and professional screenings.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

While professional screenings are crucial, being aware of your own skin and any changes is equally important. The "ABCDE" rule is a helpful guide for identifying potential melanomas:

Asymmetry: One half of the mole doesn't match the other half.

Border: The edges are irregular, ragged, or blurred.

Color: The color is not uniform and may include shades of brown, black, or tan.

Diameter: Melanomas are usually larger than 6mm (about the size of a pencil eraser).

Evolving: The mole changes in size, shape, or color over time.

Any mole or skin growth exhibiting these characteristics warrants immediate medical attention.

The Screening Process

A professional skin cancer screening is a quick, painless procedure that can be performed by a dermatologist or trained healthcare provider. During the screening, the doctor will thoroughly examine your skin, paying close attention to areas frequently exposed to the sun. They may use a dermatoscope, a special magnifying tool, to get a closer look at suspicious spots.

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

While everyone should be mindful of their skin health, certain factors increase the risk of skin cancer:

- Fair skin
- History of sunburns or excessive sun exposure
- Multiple or atypical moles
- Family history of skin cancer
- Weakened immune system

For those at average risk, an annual skin check is recommended. However, individuals with higher risk factors may need more frequent screenings. It's best to consult with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate screening schedule for your specific situation.

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

In between professional screenings, monthly self-examinations are crucial. These self-checks allow you to become familiar with your skin's normal appearance and help you spot any changes quickly. Use a full-length mirror and a hand mirror to examine your entire body, including hard-to-see areas like your back, scalp, and between your toes.

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

While regular screenings are vital, prevention remains the best strategy against skin cancer. Protect your skin by:

- Applying broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 daily
- Wearing protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses
- Seeking shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 am to 4 pm)
- Avoiding tanning beds and sun lamps

The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings

Regular skin cancer screenings don't just benefit individuals; they have a broader societal impact. Early detection reduces the overall burden on healthcare systems by catching cancers when they're most treatable. It also helps raise awareness about skin cancer, encouraging others to prioritize their skin health.

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

In the grand scheme of health maintenance, skin cancer screenings are a relatively small investment of time that can yield enormous benefits. By making these screenings a regular part of your health routine, you're taking a proactive step in protecting yourself against one of the most prevalent forms of cancer. Remember, your skin is your body's largest organ and its first line of defense against the environment. Treating it with the care and attention it deserves isn't just about aesthetics—it's about preserving your overall health and potentially saving your life.

Don't wait for a problem to arise. Schedule a skin cancer screening today and empower yourself with the knowledge and vigilance needed to keep your skin healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for this simple yet powerful act of self-care.



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Helping Loved Ones Hear Better

Practical Ways Families Can Support Better Communication and Stronger Connections

By Rodney Robison, H.A.S., AudioNova Sarasota

Watching someone you love struggle to hear can be frustrating, especially when communication begins changing the rhythm of everyday life. Maybe conversations are repeated more often. Maybe the television volume keeps getting louder. Perhaps family dinners feel different because someone begins withdrawing or avoiding conversation altogether.

If you have ever found yourself thinking, "Why won't they just get their hearing checked?" you are certainly not alone.

As an audiologist here in Sarasota, I often meet family members who are deeply concerned about a loved one's hearing. What many people do not realize is that hearing loss affects more than the person experiencing it. It can impact relationships, communication, patience, and even emotional connection within families. The encouraging news is that there are ways to help that feel supportive rather than frustrating.

One of the most important things to understand is that hearing loss often happens gradually. Many people do not realize how much they are missing because changes occur slowly over time. Instead of hearing clearly, the brain begins filling in gaps. It may seem like someone is ignoring conversations or not paying attention, when in reality they simply did not hear everything that was said.

For many adults, acknowledging hearing changes can also feel emotional. Hearing loss may bring feelings of aging, embarrassment, frustration, or fear of losing independence. That is why how families approach the conversation matters so much.

One of the biggest mistakes loved ones make is turning hearing concerns into repeated criticism. Statements like, "You never listen," "You need hearing aids," or "We are tired of repeating ourselves," often lead to defensiveness rather than action. Even when those comments come from a place of love, they can feel discouraging.

Instead, try approaching the conversation with empathy and curiosity. Focus on what you are noticing rather than assigning blame. For example, you might say, "I noticed restaurants seem more frustrating lately," or "I feel like conversations have become harder, and I want to help." Gentle, caring conversations are often much more effective than pressure or frustration.

There are also simple communication strategies families can use right away to make conversations easier.

First, try getting your loved one's attention before speaking. Saying their name first or making eye contact can help prepare the brain to focus on speech.

Second, avoid talking from another room. Hearing becomes much harder when people cannot see facial expressions or are trying to understand speech through walls, background noise, or distance.

Speaking clearly is helpful, but shouting usually is not. Many people assume talking louder solves the problem, but shouting can actually distort speech and increase frustration. Slowing down slightly, speaking naturally, and facing the person often improves understanding far more than volume alone.

Background noise also plays a major role. Restaurants, televisions, crowded family gatherings, and multiple conversations happening at once can make communication much harder for someone with hearing loss. Choosing quieter seating areas or reducing competing noise when possible can make conversations feel more enjoyable again.

Patience matters too. Hearing loss can be exhausting. Many people work incredibly hard to follow conversations, often using extra mental energy to piece together words and meaning. What may look like withdrawal or distraction is sometimes simple listening fatigue.

At the same time, families should not ignore signs that hearing changes may be affecting quality of life. If a loved one frequently asks people to repeat themselves, struggles in noisy environments, turns up the television volume, misunderstands conversations, or begins pulling back socially, those may be signs it is time for a hearing evaluation.

One thing I often remind families is that hearing care is not simply about hearing louder. It is about staying connected. Better hearing supports conversations with grandchildren, dinners with friends, church services, favorite hobbies, and everyday moments that bring meaning to life.

Sometimes the hardest step is simply getting started. Offering to attend an appointment together, helping ask questions, or framing the visit as gathering information rather than committing to treatment can help ease anxiety.

If someone you love may be struggling with hearing, you do not have to navigate it alone. At our office, we work closely with patients and families to better understand hearing changes and create solutions that feel comfortable and supportive.

To schedule an appointment, visit us online at www.AudioNova.com, or call us today. Healthy ears play an important role in living well, and taking care of them today can make a meaningful difference tomorrow.

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How Revision Reconstruction Restores Hope After Failed Foot and Ankle Procedures

By Dr. Ron Adduru, DPM

You went into surgery with a clear goal: to walk without pain, return to your active lifestyle, and put a frustrating foot or ankle issue behind you. But months—or even years—later, you find yourself facing a reality no patient ever wants to experience. The surgical site still throbs. Bony deformities have returned or shifted. Every step serves as a sharp, daily reminder that something went wrong.

If you are living with post-surgical pain following an operation at another podiatry practice, it is crucial to know one fundamental truth: **a failed initial procedure does not mean you are sentenced to a lifetime of pain.**

At Family Foot & Leg Center, we regularly consult with patients who feel defeated, frustrated, and fearful that further intervention might only make things worse. Having performed thousands of complex reconstructive foot and ankle surgeries, our team specializes in step-by-step revision procedures. We combine advanced surgical techniques with state-of-the-art diagnostic technology to correct structural failures, repair soft tissue damage, and restore the quality of life you were promised.

Understanding Why Foot and Ankle Surgeries Fail

The foot and ankle complex is one of the most intricate mechanical structures in the human body. Composed of 26 bones, 33 joints, and over 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments, even minor biomechanical misalignments can cause severe, cascading issues. Failed procedures can stem from several underlying factors:

- **Incomplete Biomechanical Correction:** A surgery may address the visible symptom (such as removing a bunion bump) without correcting the root mechanical instability higher up in the foot or midfoot. Over time, this leads to recurrence.
- **Nonunion or Malunion:** Bones that were cut or fused during surgery may fail to heal together (nonunion) or heal in an improper position (malunion), leading to chronic pain, altered gait, and joint stress.
- **Hardware Irritation or Failure:** Plates, screws, or pins can loosen, back out, or create localized inflammation and nerve entrapment.

- **Nerve Entrapment or Recurrent Neuromas:** Surgical scar tissue can trap surrounding nerves, leading to burning pain, numbness, or tingling. In nerve-related procedures, inadequate decompression can cause severe post-operative symptoms.

- **Soft Tissue Instability:** Undetected tendon or ligament damage can cause joint collapse, leading to persistent flatfoot deformity or ankle instability.

The Reconstructive Approach: Precision, Technology, and Optimal Outcomes

Fixing a failed procedure requires a completely different mindset than performing a primary operation. It requires specialized training, extensive surgical experience, and an unyielding commitment to precision.

At Family Foot & Leg Center, our revision surgery protocol rests on three core pillars:

1. Comprehensive Advanced Diagnostics

Before planning a revision, we must identify precisely why the first procedure failed. Utilizing high-resolution weight-bearing digital imaging, in-office diagnostic ultrasound, and advanced 3D anatomical evaluations, we map out every bone angle, joint space, and soft tissue layer. This detailed blueprint ensures we leave nothing to guesswork.

2. State-of-the-Art Surgical Technologies

Surgical technology has evolved rapidly in recent years. We utilize cutting-edge fixation hardware, advanced biologic grafts, and minimally invasive techniques designed to optimize bone healing and minimize soft-tissue disruption. Biologics and modern bone-grafting materials encourage robust healing even in compromised bone tissue, dramatically reducing the risk of nonunion.

3. Restoring True Biomechanical Alignment

Revision reconstruction is not about simply "patching up" an old surgical site. It involves re-establishing proper structural alignment from the hindfoot to the forefoot. By correcting joint axis angles, balancing tendon tension, and stabilizing load-bearing joints, we redistribute pressure evenly across the foot. This eliminates abnormal friction, prevents secondary joint breakdown, and allows you to walk naturally.

What to Expect During a Revision Consultation

Taking the step to see another surgeon after an unsatisfactory outcome requires trust. We respect the anxiety that comes with seeking a second opinion, and our consultation process is designed to provide complete clarity and reassurance:

1. A Thorough Review of Your Medical History: We examine your previous surgical reports, imaging, and treatment timelines to understand what was performed and how your body responded.

2. Detailed Physical & Biomechanical Evaluation: We assess your gait, joint range of motion, nerve response, and specific pain points under weight-bearing conditions.

3. A Customized, Honest Action Plan: Not every revision requires immediate open surgery. Depending on the findings, solutions may range from targeted nerve decompression or hardware removal to comprehensive reconstructive alignment. We clearly outline the timeline, realistic expectations, and recovery roadmap.

Reclaiming Your Life and Mobility

Living with chronic postsurgical foot or ankle pain affects far more than just your physical body—it impacts your independence, your mood, and your daily lifestyle. You do not have to accept persistent pain as your "new normal."

With thousands of successful reconstructive procedures completed and access to the latest surgical innovations, Family Foot & Leg Center is equipped to solve complex cases and help you regain lasting comfort.

If a previous foot or ankle surgery left you with ongoing pain or unresolved deformities, schedule a comprehensive evaluation with Dr. Ron Adduru at Family Foot & Leg Center today. Let us help you fix the past and step confidently into a pain-free future.



Dr. Ron Adduru is a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center in Sarasota, Florida, specializing in complex wound care and deformity reconstruction. He is committed to helping the Sarasota community remain active and healthy.

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On a GLP-1? YOUR GUT NEEDS ATTENTION, TOO

By Aiste Magitman

GLP-1 medications such as Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro and Zepbound have changed the lives of many people. But as a pharmacist, I'm also seeing another side of the story.

People taking these medications are reaching for laxatives because they're constipated, antacids because they're experiencing reflux, and sometimes even hemorrhoid creams because they're straining.

It makes sense when you look at how GLP-1 medications work. They reduce appetite and can slow gastric emptying, helping you feel full sooner and eat less.

But there's something we don't talk about enough:

When you eat less, you may also be feeding your beneficial gut bacteria less.

A smaller appetite can mean less fiber, fewer plants and less variety. Some people may also drink less because they feel full more easily. Combine that with changes in gastrointestinal motility, and constipation, bloating and unpredictable bowel habits aren't so surprising.

And this is where the **gut microbiome** comes in.

Your gut is home to trillions of microorganisms that depend, in part, on what you eat. Certain gut bacteria ferment fiber and produce beneficial compounds called **short-chain fatty acids**, including butyrate. Butyrate provides energy to the cells lining your colon and helps support your gut barrier—the protective lining that helps absorb what your body needs while keeping potentially harmful substances and microbes from crossing where they don't belong.

Your gut microbes also interact with your immune system, metabolism and nervous system. Some bacteria can produce certain B vitamins and vitamin K, while microbial activity can influence how nutrients and other compounds are processed in the gut.

So supporting your gut is about much more than bowel regularity. You're supporting an entire ecosystem.

Different gut microbes thrive on different fibers and plant compounds, which is why dietary variety matters. Prebiotic fibers provide food for gut microbes, while polyphenols can influence which bacteria thrive. Research has linked polyphenol-rich foods and supplements with beneficial bacteria such as *Akkermansia*, *Bifidobacterium* and *Faecalibacterium*.

This is exactly what inspired me to create **Best Gut Forever**.

As a pharmacist, I didn't want to focus only on managing one digestive symptom after another. I wanted to create a simple daily formula designed to support the gut from several angles.

That became my **3-3-2 formula**: three prebiotic fibers—psyllium, acacia and baobab; three polyphenol sources—pomegranate, grape seed and blueberry; and two digestive botanicals—ginger and turmeric.

Each group has a purpose. The fibers help support stool consistency and regularity while providing food for gut microbes. The polyphenol-rich ingredients provide plant compounds that can help beneficial bacteria thrive and support a diverse microbiome. Ginger and turmeric add another layer of digestive support, with ginger particularly studied for its role in gastrointestinal motility.

Instead of focusing on just one digestive symptom, the idea behind my 3-3-2 approach is simple: **support regularity, nourish your gut bacteria and support digestion—all at the same time.**

If you're taking a GLP-1, eating less may be part of the goal—but nourishing your gut still matters. Focus not only on how much you eat, but on what you're giving your gut each day: adequate hydration, fiber and a variety of plant foods.

Your GLP-1 can support your weight-management journey. **Don't forget to support your gut along the way.**



Aiste Magitman is a licensed pharmacist and founder of Best Gut Forever. This article is for educational purposes and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent disease.

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Aging Well, Worry Less

How SafeWell55 Brings Peace of Mind to Life After 55

Life after 55 can be some of the richest years of a person's life — more time for family, hobbies, travel, and doing things on your own terms. But it also comes with new realities: health can change unexpectedly, living situations shift, and the world can feel a little less predictable than it used to. For many adults in this stage of life, and for the adult children who worry about them, the question isn't whether something might happen — it's whether help will be there when it does.

That's the problem SafeWell55 was built to solve. It's a personal safety and wellness app designed specifically for adults 55 and older, bundling emergency response, everyday health care, prescription savings, cybersecurity protection, and more into a single, easy-to-use membership. Rather than juggling multiple different services — a medical alert device, a telehealth subscription, a prescription discount card, an identity theft monitor, a pet health subscription — SafeWell55 folds them into one program, accessible from a smartphone.

Help at Your Fingertips

At the core of SafeWell55 is personal safety. With a single tap, members can alert family and friends in an emergency, contact law enforcement if needed, or activate a virtual companion feature that keeps a caring eye on them during a walk, an errand, or any outing where they'd simply feel better knowing someone is watching out for them. It's the kind of quiet reassurance that lets someone head out the door with confidence instead of hesitation.

Privacy is built into the design, not an afterthought. Location is only shared with the people a member chooses, and only while safety features are actively in use — so the app supports independence rather than constant surveillance.

A companion feature, "I'm OK / I'm Not OK," gives members an easy way to check in with loved ones on their own schedule. Instead of relying on loved ones to call and check in — or worse, not hearing from someone for days and fearing the worst — members can send a quick daily update about how they're doing. They decide how often to check in and exactly who receives those updates, keeping the family circle informed without feeling like they're being monitored.

Health Care Without the Hassle

One of the more compelling parts of the SafeWell55 program is virtual care. Members get access to licensed doctors and mental health counselors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, from the comfort of home — with \$0 copay for primary care visits, urgent care needs, and behavioral health sessions. That means a nagging cough, a medication refill, a stressful week that calls for someone to talk to — all of it is a video call away, without the cost, the waiting room, or the drive.

For many older adults, prescription costs are one of the biggest recurring expenses in a monthly budget. SafeWell55 addresses this directly through its Generic Prescription Program. Depending on the plan selected, members get \$0 copay access to over 200 common acute-care generic medications, or broader coverage that includes over 2,500 chronic condition medications with no copays and no deductible. A digital card can be used at pickup, and the benefits are honored at more than 65,000 pharmacies nationwide, including major chains like CVS, Costco, Rite-Aid, and Walgreens, as well as national grocery store pharmacies. For a household managing several prescriptions a month, that kind of savings can add up quickly.

Even the family pet is covered. Through the program's pet telehealth benefit, members can consult a licensed veterinarian through the app at no additional cost — a convenient way to get guidance on a pet's symptoms before deciding whether an expensive in-person vet visit is really necessary.

Protecting More Than Physical Safety

Physical safety is only part of the picture. Adults 55 and older are frequently and disproportionately targeted by online scammers and hackers, and the financial and emotional toll of a cyberattack or identity theft can be devastating. SafeWell55's cybersecurity features monitor for threats, alert members to risks, and provide support to recover if an attack does happen — adding a layer of digital protection alongside the app's physical safety tools.

There's also a rewards component that quietly pays members back for spending they're already doing. Through SafeWell Rewards, members can earn cash back — an average of 5% instantly — at more than 300 retailers, restaurants, and travel partners, including grocery stores and pharmacies. Linking rewards to a cash-back credit card can boost those savings even further, turning routine shopping into a small but steady financial benefit.

For those who want an extra layer of protection, SafeWell55 also offers an optional wearable device that can be connected to the app. If a member falls, feels unwell, or faces another emergency, the wearable can instantly alert their loved ones — giving families additional peace of mind, especially for members who live alone or spend significant time outdoors.

Plans Built for Real Life

SafeWell55 offers two membership tiers, and both can be extended to cover a spouse:

Plan 1 — \$27.95/month individual, or \$38.95/month for individual plus spouse — includes \$0 copay acute generic prescription coverage alongside all core safety, telehealth, and wellness features.

Plan 2 — \$37.95/month individual, or \$52.95/month for individual plus spouse — expands prescription coverage to include acute and chronic condition generic medications with no copays and no deductible.

Both plans include the full suite of personal safety tools, virtual care, pet telehealth, cybersecurity protection, and rewards, with the wearable device available as an add-on for those who want it.

Why It Matters

What makes SafeWell55 stand out isn't any single feature — it's the way the pieces work together. A fall, a scam attempt, a skipped medication because of cost, a lonely stretch without a family check-in — these are often separate problems handled by separate services, if they're handled at all. SafeWell55 brings them under one roof, with one app, one monthly cost, and one goal: helping people over 55 move through their day with confidence, knowing that help — medical, financial, or personal — is never more than a tap away.

For adults navigating this stage of life, and for the families who care about them, that kind of consolidated peace of mind can be worth far more than the modest monthly cost. It's not just a safety app. It's a way to keep living fully, with a safety net quietly in place underneath. Start now and watch our informational video at www.SafeWell55.com today.



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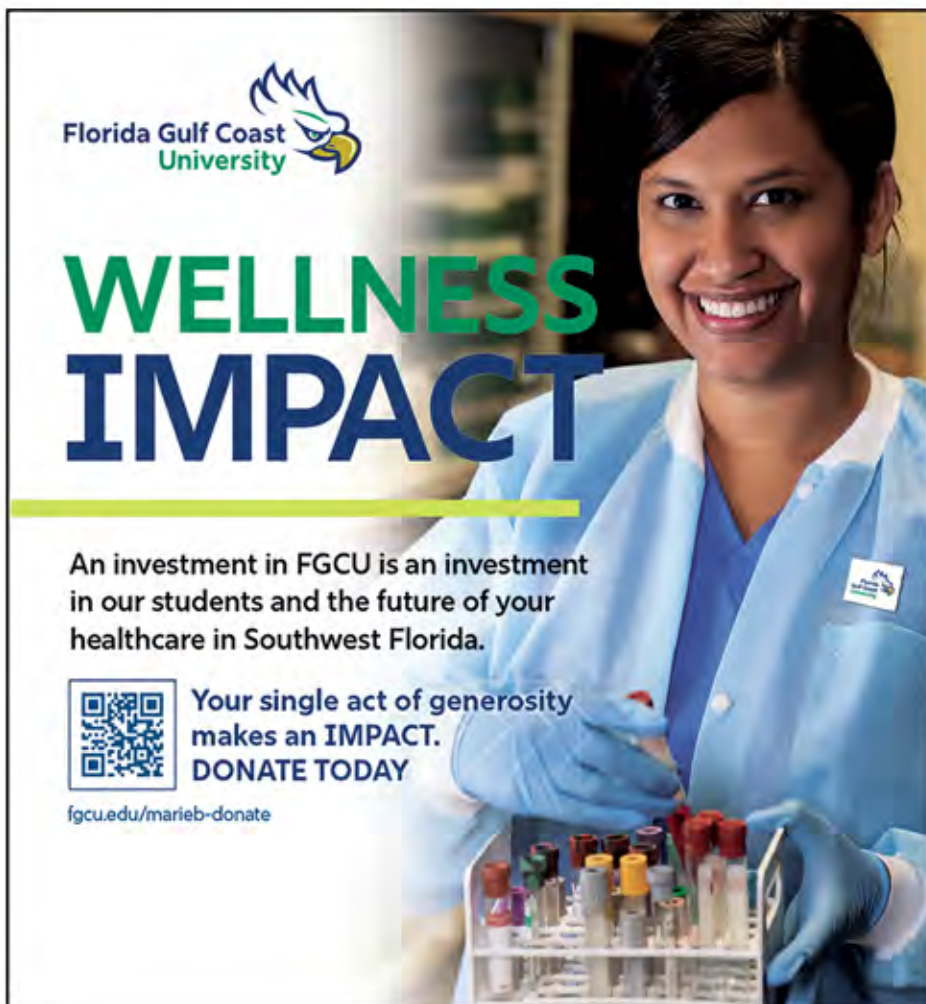
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North Port Behavioral Health is an acute psychiatric hospital in North Port, Florida, offering inpatient treatment programming for adults, and senior adults.

WHY SINGLE SENIORS FLOURISH IN SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES

Research has shown what most of us already intuitively know: After your 20s, it gets difficult to make friends, let alone find someone to date and/or marry. This issue usually gets tougher as we age. Although perceptions are slowly but surely changing, most of our culture and social activities are still built around couples. However, surrounding yourself with people of a similar life stage who share your interests, increases your chances of forming new relationships.

That's why many single seniors are considering senior living communities like Freedom Village of Bradenton. This blog post will look at our retirement lifestyle and show you how communities like ours make building relationships easier.

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT LIVING?

Senior independent living is a term used to describe a maintenance-free community designed exclusively for older adults. They also typically feature a variety of activities and amenities and services like:

- Fully-equipped fitness center with fitness classes and wellness programs
- Heated indoor pool
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- On-campus shows and concerts
- Arts and crafts studio
- Woodworking shop
- Billiards and game room

BENEFITS OF SENIOR LIVING FOR SINGLE SENIORS

Senior living communities provide a range of advantages you might not be able to get staying in your current home. Senior living can make it easier and more convenient to live the life you want. Some benefits include:

More social opportunities: For isolated seniors, senior living communities have calendars filled with social activities, classes, interest groups and clubs, outings, lifelong learning discussions and more. They also have a welcoming committee to help new residents meet people. So, you're sure to find others who share your goals and interests.

Maintenance-free lifestyle: Independent living communities have a variety of helpful services and thoughtful amenities to give you the freedom to do



more of what you want and less of what you don't. So let our talented staff handle the housekeeping, indoor and outdoor maintenance and even the cooking.

Dating opportunities: For senior singles, the prospect of dating can be intimidating. Moving to a senior living community can provide a variety of ways to put yourself back out into the dating world. From exercise classes to sharing meals with neighbors, going to group activities you enjoy is a low-pressure way to meet new people.

Community of support: Many senior living communities offer support groups and spiritual services. These circles of support often develop organically through continual social interactions.

Right-sized residences: Most senior living communities offer studio and one-bedroom senior apartments that are the perfect size for a single person. Once you compare the cost of living in your current residence with everything you get at a retirement community, you'll also find it's more affordable than you think.

Lock and leave: In addition to offering residents outings to local attractions and overnight trips, at a senior living community, you can just lock and leave

any time you please. So, take that cross-country road trip or European river cruise. While you're away, your home will be carefully looked after by community associates and neighbors.

DISCOVER THE SINGULAR FREEDOM OF FREEDOM VILLAGE

If you're looking for a group of active older adults who share your interest in getting more out of life, contact Freedom Village of Bradenton here. We'll be happy to tell you all about the perks at our community, introduce you to some residents and help set up a personal tour. Have immediate questions you want answered? Use our chat feature.



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THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEMPOROMANDIBULAR DISORDER (TMD) AND NECK PAIN: EXPLORING UPPER CERVICAL CHIROPRACTIC SOLUTIONS

By Dr. Drew Hall

Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) and its association with neck pain have long been a subject of interest in the field of chiropractic care. This complex relationship between the jaw and the neck can lead to discomfort and reduced quality of life for those affected. In this article, we will delve into the world of TMD, its connections with neck issues, and the promising solutions provided by Upper Cervical Chiropractic care.

Understanding Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD)

Temporomandibular Disorder, commonly known as TMD, is a condition affecting the temporomandibular joint, which connects the jaw to the skull. It often presents with symptoms like jaw pain, clicking or popping sounds when opening or closing the mouth, headaches, and difficulty in chewing. While these symptoms are localized around the jaw, they can have far-reaching effects on other parts of the body, including the neck.

The TMD-Neck Pain Connection

1. Muscle Tension: One of the primary reasons for the connection between TMD and neck pain is muscle tension. When the jaw is misaligned or experiences stress, it can trigger muscle tension not only in the jaw area but also in the neck and shoulders. This tension can lead to chronic neck pain and discomfort.

2. Postural Changes: TMD can also influence a person's posture. In an attempt to alleviate jaw pain, individuals may unknowingly alter their posture by tilting their head or hunching their shoulders. Over time, this can lead to neck strain and pain.

3. Nervous System Interaction: The temporomandibular joint is closely connected to the upper cervical spine and the nervous system. Dysfunction in the jaw can disrupt the delicate balance of the upper cervical region, potentially leading to neck pain and related issues.

The Role of Upper Cervical Chiropractic Care

Upper Cervical Chiropractic care focuses on the relationship between the uppermost vertebrae of the spine (the atlas and axis) and the overall



function of the nervous system. In the context of TMD and neck pain, this specialized form of chiropractic care can offer several benefits:

1. Precise Adjustments: Upper Cervical Chiropractors use gentle, precise adjustments to correct misalignments in the upper cervical spine. By addressing any misalignment in this region, they aim to alleviate not only TMD symptoms but also associated neck pain.

2. Improved Nervous System Function: Upper cervical adjustments can positively impact the nervous system, promoting overall wellness and reducing the likelihood of chronic neck pain.

3. Postural Restoration: Chiropractors specializing in upper cervical care can help patients regain proper posture, reducing the strain on the neck caused by compensatory movements related to TMD.

The relationship between TMD and neck pain is undeniable, with muscle tension, postural changes, and nervous system interactions playing crucial roles in this connection. For those seeking a holistic approach to managing these issues, Upper Cervical Chiropractic care offers promising solutions. By addressing the root cause of TMD and its impact on the upper

cervical spine, individuals can experience relief from both jaw discomfort and neck pain, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being. If you're experiencing the challenges of TMD and neck pain, consider consulting with an Upper Cervical Chiropractor to explore personalized treatment options tailored to your needs.

Dr. Drew Hall

Dr. Drew Hall brings 20 years of practice experience and taking care of 10000 patients from Los Angeles to Sarasota Florida. Dr. Hall recovered from severe chronic health problems 30 years ago after being introduced to Blair upper cervical technique. It's his lasting purpose to help as many people as possible live a life of health and happiness.



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HEALTHCARE • REGENERATIVE MEDICINE • QUALITY OF LIFE

TOP 50 MEDICAL MYTHS IN AMERICA

What if the Biggest Medical Myth is that you cannot get healthy, must live with pain, and have no choice?

By William J. Cole Jr., DO, FAACP, FAOBPMR

Before you read another medical advertisement, accept another prescription, schedule another procedure, or surrender to another surgery, I want you to do something radical: **STOP. THINK. AND ASK BETTER QUESTIONS.**

For decades, Americans have been taught that more healthcare automatically means more health. More appointments. More medications. More injections. More procedures. More surgeries. More money. Yet millions remain in pain, lose function, become dependent on medications, and are told that decline is simply part of aging.

I am not asking you to reject medicine. Drugs can save lives. Surgery can be essential. I am asking why repeated drugs and surgeries—especially those that have already failed—are so often presented as the beginning, middle, and end of the conversation. What if the American healthcare system has become far better at managing dependence than restoring independence?

Read every question. One of them may change the way you see your health—and your future.

I. WHAT HAVE WE BEEN TAUGHT TO BELIEVE?

1. Healthcare makes you healthy—and the system always puts your health first?
2. The body cannot regenerate, repair, or heal?
3. Surgical procedures are always performed to eliminate pain?
4. More medications automatically produce better results?
5. Imaging always reveals the true source of the problem?
6. COVID has been eliminated—and so have the long-term problems associated with it?
7. Surgery will eliminate pain?
8. You cannot negotiate the price of medical treatments?
9. The government could never reduce certain drug prices dramatically through decisive action?
10. As you get older, you simply must live with pain?

II. WHO DOES THE CURRENT SYSTEM REALLY SERVE?

11. There are no options beyond traditional, expensive drugs and surgery?

12. The American healthcare system works equally well for all Americans?
13. The government will eventually fix our broken healthcare system for us?
14. If a doctor did not prescribe it, you do not need it?
15. America must have the world's best healthcare because we spend the most money?
16. If you have back pain, it must be a pinched nerve?
17. Patients should not question their doctors?
18. All of your doctors routinely communicate and coordinate your care?
19. Doctors and healthcare systems are financially rewarded primarily for making you healthy?
20. Drugs and surgery work better than your God-given ability to heal?

III. PAIN, PRIVILEGE, AND PERSONAL TRUTH

21. Health-insurance coverage is automatically going to become better?
22. Dr. Cole, you have no idea what it is like to live with constant pain and dysfunction?
23. Dr. Cole, are you really one of only a few physicians with your combination of credentials?
24. Did you ever experience hardship, hunger, homelessness, disability, or being told that you could not succeed?
25. Do peptides work—and are they safe when appropriately selected and medically supervised?

IV. REGENERATIVE MEDICINE: FACT, FEAR, OR FUTURE?

26. All PRP and stem cell treatments are the same?
27. Stem cell treatments are completely illegal in the United States?
28. There are no regenerative treatments or biologic signals beyond stem cells?
29. Neurologic and brain disorders can never be meaningfully improved?
30. Long COVID affecting the body and brain has no effective treatment strategies?
31. Stem cell treatments must always be repeated again and again?
32. Any nurse, chiropractor, physician assistant, or untrained provider should be allowed to perform stem cell procedures?

33. Ozone therapy has no potential role in integrative or regenerative care?

34. After Failed Joint Surgery or Failed Back Surgery Syndrome, the only remaining choice is another surgery?

35. Politicians receive exactly the same healthcare choices and access as everyone else?

V. ACCESS, COST, AND THE CARE AMERICANS DESERVE

36. Insurance currently covers the full cost of regenerative treatments?
37. Insurance will never cover responsible regenerative treatments?
38. Regenerative medicine, peptides, and adjunct treatments must cost more than years of medications, disability, procedures, and repeat surgery?
39. The current system is working for American families, workers, seniors, and veterans to decrease pain and increase function?
40. AI alone will solve the healthcare crisis?
41. You do not need health insurance because a hospital is obligated to treat every problem anyway?
42. Expert, effective, affordable, and legally compliant regenerative treatment options are unavailable in America?
43. No one cares about quality patient care anymore?
44. You can ask 'Dr. Google' to diagnose and treat you—and you will be fine?
45. There is no such thing as SMART medicine: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely?

VI. WHO WILL CHANGE THE FUTURE?

46. There can be no 'Policies Over Politics'?
47. No one has a plan to transform American healthcare?
48. Medicare, Medicaid, and the VA are fully prepared for every future need?
49. Mental healthcare is easily accessible to every American?
50. Women already receive all the individualized healthcare they need and deserve?

NOW—HERE ARE SOME FACTS

America does not lack brilliant physicians, nurses, scientists, hospitals, or lifesaving technology. We lack a system consistently designed to reward prevention, restoration, function, and independence. We routinely pay after people become sicker, but struggle to invest before they lose their health, mobility, jobs, hope, and Quality of Life.

Americans also pay exceptionally high prices for many prescription drugs. So far, Medicare can only Negotiate 10 of 20,000 FDA Drugs in 2026. That's 99.5% subject to sky high overcharging! Policies helped create these prices, and better policies can change them.

Our medication supply is also far more dependent on foreign production than most Americans realize. The FDA reports that approximately 78% of active pharmaceutical ingredient manufacturers are located outside the United States. That is not a partisan talking point. It is a national-health, economic, and security vulnerability.

And surgery is not a guarantee. Even technically successful operations can leave patients with persistent pain, weakness, limited function, complications, or the devastating cycle called Failed Back Surgery Syndrome or Failed Joint Surgery Syndrome. When the first operation does not restore the person, why is another operation so often treated as the only serious option?

Americans do not need more failed drugs and surgeries. Americans should demand responsible access to Advanced Regenerative Stem Cell Therapy and Peptides—to help decrease pain, increase function, and provide the Quality of Life we deserve. This is our God-Given Right as Americans!

THIS IS PERSONAL

I have not reached these conclusions from a comfortable distance. I grew up with poverty, hunger, and periods of homelessness. Near the end of medical school, a life-threatening automobile collision changed my body and nearly ended my life. I lost the use of my arms more than once. I know what pain, dysfunction, fear, and being told to accept limitations feel like.

For more than 25 years, I have treated patients with chronic pain, disabling injuries, failed surgeries, brain disorders and complex neurologic disorders, and musculoskeletal damage. I have performed more than 100,000 interventional procedures. That experience taught me a lesson no textbook can fully communicate: a scan is not the patient, a diagnosis code is not a life, and managing symptoms is not the same as restoring function.

My position is not 'never use drugs' or 'never have surgery.' My position is: stop pretending they are always the best, first, only, or final answers. Use the right treatment for the right patient, at the right time, based on a proper diagnosis—and measure success by what matters: less pain, more function, greater independence, and a better Quality of Life.

WHAT IS POSSIBLE NOW?

The Human Body is Amazing! Not some passive machinery. It communicates, adapts, repairs, and regenerates through cells, growth factors, signaling molecules, immune responses, circulation, neuroplasticity, and thousands of coordinated biologic processes. Regenerative medicine seeks to work with those processes—to **Have the Body Heal the Body®**—instead of automatically overpowering symptoms or removing anatomy.

Advanced Regenerative Stem Cell Therapy is Legal in Florida, under defined state-law conditions. When ethically sourced, appropriately selected, precisely placed, and performed by a qualified and experienced physician, it accelerates the body's restorative processes. Peptides—short chains of amino acids that can act as biologic messengers—may also have important roles in carefully selected patients. Some peptide medications are FDA-approved; others remain investigational or are used under specialized medical frameworks. They are not interchangeable, they are not appropriate for everyone, and non-certified Internet products are not a substitute for medical judgment.

The same caution applies to stem cell products: not every product marketed as 'stem cells' is equivalent, and many promoted orthopedic or neurologic uses are not FDA-approved. Americans should not demand hype. They should demand science, transparency, legitimate products, qualified physicians, sterile technique, accurate diagnosis, precise placement, responsible research, ethical regulation—and access.

Imagine a system that compares your history, examination, imaging, laboratory testing, medications, nutrition, hormones, sleep, function, genetics, goals, and response to treatment—not to replace the physician, but to expand what the physician can see. AI should mean Augmented Intelligence: technology amplifying experience, recognizing patterns, measuring outcomes, and helping build a truly individualized plan.

HERE'S THE PLAN

First, stop accepting dependence as the definition of healthcare. Ask whether each treatment is merely managing a symptom or working toward restoration. Ask what happens if it fails. Ask about alternatives before—not after—irreversible surgery.

Second, demand transparency. What exactly is being prescribed, injected, implanted, or removed? What evidence supports it? What are the risks, costs, conflicts, qualifications, and realistic outcomes? Who benefits financially if you remain on the same cycle for years?

Third, demand responsible access to Advanced Regenerative Stem Cell Therapy and Peptides—not reckless access, counterfeit products, Internet injections, or promises of miracles. Demand qualified physicians, enforceable standards, real outcome registries, continuing research, ethical sourcing, honest informed consent, and treatment pathways that can eventually be recognized by insurers, Medicare, Medicaid, and the VA as evidence supports the Transition to Real Health, from Those Who Care.

Finally, demand Policies Over Politics. America should aggressively negotiate all excessively priced drugs. Only 10 negotiated Medicare drug prices are in effect. Against more than 20,000 FDA-approved prescription drug products, that is under 0.05%—meaning over 99.95% lack a Medicare-negotiated price! Strengthen domestic manufacturing, reward prevention and function, reduce unnecessary procedures, and invest in treatments that return people to their lives.

You should NOT have to be wealthy to be healthy.

This is bigger than one physician, one clinic, one therapy, or one political party. This is About America and All Americans' Right to Effective Healthcare! It is about moving from a system that too often manages decline to one that actively pursues Life, Liberty, healing, function, independence, and the Quality of Life that Every American Desires...and Deserves.

It is about **"Personalized Stem Cell Therapy Augmented with AI."**

THIS is "The Future of Medicine for All Americans" that You Must Demand—AND THE FUTURE IS NOW!



**William J. Cole Jr., DO,
FAASCP, FAOBPMR**
Double Board-Certified
Physician | Interventional PM&R
and Regenerative Medicine

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IMPORTANT MEDICAL INFORMATION: This article is educational and expresses the author's perspective. It is not individualized medical advice. Regenerative products and peptides vary in regulatory status, evidence, quality, and risk. Many promoted stem cell uses are not FDA-approved. Consult a qualified, appropriately licensed physician and verify the product, evidence, risks, alternatives, and applicable federal and state requirements before treatment.

EDITORIAL VERIFICATION SOURCES: Florida Statutes §458.3245, Stem Cell Therapy; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program and Negotiated Prices for Initial Price Applicability Year 2026; U.S. Food and Drug Administration, FDA at a Glance and FDA Globalization; FDA Consumer Alert on Regenerative Medicine Products Including Stem Cells and Exosomes; FDA Patient and Consumer Warning About Potential Serious Risks of Harm Following Use of Unapproved Products From Human Cells or Tissues.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: THE CONVERSATION THAT COULD CHANGE A LIFE

Every year, Mental Health Awareness Month serves as an important reminder that mental health is just as critical as physical health. Yet too often, individuals struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma, substance use, bipolar disorder, or other behavioral health concerns delay seeking treatment due to stigma, uncertainty, or concerns about access to care.

At North Port Behavioral Health (NPBH), we see firsthand the difference that timely intervention can make. Mental health conditions are highly treatable, but many individuals wait until symptoms significantly impact their relationships, employment, physical health, or overall quality of life before seeking help.

Every day, people walk through our doors carrying burdens that are invisible to everyone around them.

They are parents who continue showing up for their families while quietly battling depression. They are teenagers struggling with anxiety so overwhelming it impacts school, friendships, and sleep. They are professionals who appear successful on the outside yet feel emotionally exhausted, disconnected, or hopeless. They are older adults coping with grief, isolation, or life changes that have left them feeling lost.

One thing many of these individuals have in common is that they waited.

They waited, hoping things would get better on their own. They waited because they didn't want to burden others. They waited because they weren't sure their situation was "serious enough." They waited because asking for help felt uncomfortable. During Mental Health Awareness Month, one message deserves more attention than any other:

You do not have to wait until you are in crisis to seek help.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ARE MORE COMMON THAN MANY REALIZE

Behavioral health concerns affect people of all ages, backgrounds, and professions. Individuals may experience persistent sadness, overwhelming anxiety, mood instability, substance misuse, difficulty coping with life stressors, changes in sleep or appetite, or thoughts of self-harm. While symptoms can vary in severity, they all deserve attention and professional evaluation.



Mental health challenges are medical conditions, not personal failures.

Depression is not a lack of gratitude. Anxiety is not a lack of strength. Trauma is not something a person can simply "get over." Substance use disorders are not character flaws.

Mental health conditions can affect how we think, feel, sleep, work, communicate, and engage with the people we love. Left untreated, symptoms often become more disruptive over time, affecting relationships, job performance, physical health, and overall well-being.

The good news is that treatment works.

Every day, individuals who once believed things would never improve begin to regain hope, stability, and confidence through appropriate behavioral health care.

THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IS OFTEN THE FIRST ONE

One of the most common things we hear from patients after beginning treatment is:

"I wish I had come sooner."

Not because they failed.

Not because their symptoms were worse than someone else's.

But because they spent so much time struggling alone.

Seeking an assessment does not automatically mean someone will be hospitalized. It does not mean something is "wrong" with them. It simply creates an opportunity to speak with a behavioral health professional, better understand what is happening, and learn what treatment options may be available.

Just as chest pain deserves a medical evaluation, persistent emotional distress deserves a mental health evaluation.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO TREATMENT

One of the greatest challenges in behavioral health-care is access. Individuals in need of treatment frequently encounter barriers such as lengthy wait times, uncertainty about insurance coverage, or simply not knowing where to begin.

At NPBH, our goal is to eliminate as many of those barriers as possible. We believe access to care should be straightforward, timely, and compassionate.

NPBH offers:

- Walk-in assessments with no appointment required
- 24/7 admissions support
- Acceptance of most commercial insurance plans and government-funded programs
- Comprehensive psychiatric evaluations
- Inpatient behavioral health treatment
- Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP)
- Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP)
- Specialized treatment for adolescents, adults, and older adults
- Care coordination and discharge planning to support continued recovery

Whether someone is experiencing an acute behavioral health crisis or simply recognizes they are not feeling like themselves, our team is prepared to evaluate their needs and connect them with the appropriate level of care.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIALIZED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Mental health treatment is not one-size-fits-all. Effective care requires a multidisciplinary approach that addresses the biological, psychological, and social factors contributing to a person's condition.

At NPBH, psychiatrists, nurses, therapists, social workers, and clinical professionals work collaboratively to develop individualized treatment plans. This team-based approach allows patients to receive evidence-based care while building the skills and strategies needed to support long-term recovery.

We also recognize that mental health impacts entire families and communities. When an individual receives appropriate treatment, the benefits often extend well beyond the patient, improving relationships, workplace performance, academic success, and overall community wellness.

HOPE BEGINS WITH A CONVERSATION

Perhaps the greatest misconception about mental health treatment is that people must have all the answers before seeking help.

In reality, many simply need a place to start.

You do not need to know what diagnosis you may have.

You do not need to know what level of care you need.

You do not need to be certain that treatment is necessary.

You simply need to take the first step.

An assessment can provide clarity, direction, and support during a time when everything may feel uncertain.

A MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY

Mental Health Awareness Month is about more than awareness. It is about action.

It is about recognizing the friend who no longer seems like themselves. The coworker who appears overwhelmed. The family member who has withdrawn. The teenager who is struggling. The older adult who feels increasingly isolated.

Most importantly, it is about recognizing those same signs in ourselves.

If you have been wondering whether it's time to seek help, consider this your reminder:

You do not have to wait until things get worse.

The strongest people are not those who struggle alone. They are the ones who recognize when they need support and have the courage to reach out.

Help is available. Hope is real. Recovery is possible.

And sometimes, the decision that changes everything begins with a single conversation.

NPBH welcomes walk-in assessments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. No referral is required, and most insurance plans are accepted. If you or someone you care about is struggling, let us help you take the next step. A confidential assessment can provide answers, options, and hope for a healthier tomorrow.

NORTH PORT
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH 

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October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month – 3D Mammography

As technology advances, understanding medical exams and procedures becomes more complex. The quality of services provided is an important consideration.

The American Cancer Society endorses mammography, along with yearly physical examinations and monthly self-examinations, as the most effective means of detecting breast cancer at its earliest and most treatable stage. Generally, mammography can reveal benign and cancerous growths before you or your physician can feel them. If detected at the earliest, localized stage, breast cancer has a five-year relative survival rate of over 99 percent, according to the American Cancer Society, as small, early-stage cancers are more treatable and can often be removed before they spread to other parts of the body.

Breast cancer remains the most common cancer among American women, accounting for about 1 in 3 new cancer diagnoses in women each year. The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2026, about 321,910 new cases of invasive breast cancer and 60,730 new cases of non-invasive (in situ) breast cancer will be diagnosed in U.S. women, along with an estimated 42,140 deaths from the disease. Notably, about 85% of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of it — which is why the American Cancer Society recommends mammography as a life-saving screening tool for all women, not just those considered high-risk. And 3D mammography specifically is becoming the preferred choice for physicians in Southwest Florida. With over 30 years of experience and a team of board-certified radiologists, Radiology Associates of Venice & Englewood (RAVE) is proud to offer 3D mammography to our patients.

What is 3D Mammography?

3D mammography is a revolutionary state-of-the-art technology approved by the FDA in February 2011, which gives radiologists the ability to view inside the breast layer by layer, helping to see the fine details more clearly by minimizing overlapping tissue. During a 3D mammogram, multiple low-dose images known as "slices" of the breast are acquired at different angles. With 3D technology, the radiologist can view a mammogram in a way never before possible.

Is 3D a separate exam or part of my usual mammogram?

The 3D exam is a separate procedure that is performed at the same time as your regular mammogram.

What is the cost and will my insurance cover the 3D exam?

Medicare does cover 3D mammography. Even though 3D mammography is FDA approved and covered by Medicare, most private insurance companies are not yet reimbursing for this exam. However, RAVE has never charged the patient the additional 3D portion of the exam if their insurance doesn't cover it. "The Radiologists of RAVE include the additional 3D imaging regardless of payment because it's in the best interest of patient care, so there is never an additional charge." (Philip Mihm, M.D. RAVE Radiologist)

What are the benefits?

FEWER MAMMOGRAM CALLBACKS for additional mammography – 3D mammography helps distinguish harmless abnormalities from real cancers, leading to fewer callbacks for additional mammography and less anxiety for women. Studies show that combining 3D and digital mammography for screening reduces callback rates by 20-40 percent. Doctors and scientists agree that early detection is the best defense against breast cancer. 3D mammography has been shown in clinical studies to be more accurate than conventional mammography alone by detecting cancers earlier. A landmark JAMA study of over 450,000 exams found that adding 3D mammography to digital mammography increases invasive breast cancer detection by up to 40 percent while also reducing unnecessary recalls. It's truly an important component in the screening process.

After 3D mammography, if continued tests and imaging are needed, RAVE uses state-of-the-art technology, including MRI-guided breast biopsies and the Philips 3T wide bore MRI that allows our radiologists to view the breasts in a higher resolution, enabling us to have even more clarity within the breasts. RAVE has been performing MRI breast imaging for over 15 years and with Wide Bore technology, it allows us to accommodate most any sized patient comfortably. With the Philips 3T wide

bore MRI, we are able to cut down on the amount of time it takes for the patient to be scanned. Most breast MRIs take 30 minutes or less, allowing the patient to go on with their day with little disruption.

How long will it take?

The exam will take about 4 seconds longer per view while in compression than the 2D mammography.

How much radiation will I be exposed to?

It varies from person to person and is roughly equivalent to film/screen mammography. The amount of radiation is below government safety standards.

What if my doctor did not mention 3D Mammography to me?

3D is an optional service at this time and elected by the patient. Many physicians know about our new 3D technology and the feedback we have received has been very positive. If you need additional information to help you make this decision, please visit www.RaveRad.com.

Why is RAVE Imaging offering 3D Mammography?

RAVE prides itself on offering the highest quality care for our patients. Our radiologists believe strongly that 3D mammography will benefit our patients.



www.raverad.com

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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.



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Effective & Proven Chronic Pain Relief with VAX-D®

By Craig S. Aderholdt, BSc, DC

VAX-D, short for Vertebral Axial Decompression, is a patented non-surgical therapy proven to successfully treat chronic low back pain, caused by prolapsed, bulging, herniated or degenerative discs, facet syndrome, stenosis and sciatica. Even post-surgical patients and those suffering from central canal or foraminal stenosis have reported significant pain relief with VAX-D therapy. Over a series of relaxing treatment sessions, patients experience powerful pain reduction and healing. Some patients even notice relief after just one visit.

VAX-D's proven and patented technology is currently being utilized by leading physicians in orthopedic medicine, pain medicine, neurology and other specialties in hundreds of clinics around the world. Many doctors choose VAX-D over other devices because it employs the original, patented technology from which decompression therapy was born. VAX-D effectiveness is backed by clinical research. Back pain has grown to be a \$54 billion industry and has literally become a national epidemic. Due to the astounding array of varied treatment options, finding a back pain solution can be a daunting task. Knowing that a product backs its claims with clinical research makes all the difference, and that is what VAX-D offers. A recently completed 2 1/2 year study has demonstrated that VAX-D achieved a remarkable 88% success rate in the 283 chronic back pain patients studied! The patients selected for the study had been unsuccessful at finding relief with at least two previous non-surgical treatments.

VAX-D is not to be confused with traction. VAX-D lengthens and decompresses the spine, reversing high intradiscal pressure through the application of negative pressure via a patented "slow ramp-up" process. This reversal of pressure creates a vacuum inside the discs that not only takes pressure off of pinched nerves, but helps to reposition bulging discs and pull extruded disc material back into place. Simultaneously, nutrients, oxygen and fluids are drawn into the disc to create a revitalized environment conducive to healing. VAX-D stimulates the body's repair mechanism, providing the building blocks needed to actually mend injured and degenerated discs. VAX-D's process is the only patented treatment clinically proven to decrease disc pressures to the negative levels needed to facilitate healing!

How does VAX-D work?

High intradiscal pressures cause discs to bulge out and press painfully on nerve roots. They also make for a compressed, anaerobic environment unsuitable for healing. Decompression produces and sustains negative pressures within the disc, creating a vacuum effect which draws in nutrients and fluids to promote the repair of injured discs and surrounding tissues. This vacuum has also been shown to aid in the retraction of escaped cushioning gel from herniated discs. Much like gauging the air pressure in a car tire, scientists have been able to use pressure sensors to



measure the various pressures put on spinal discs while lifting, standing, sitting, lying down, undergoing traction, and during VAX-D Therapy. Like other pressures found in the body such as blood pressure, intradiscal pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). While traction, physical therapy and manipulation may reduce disc pressures to as low as 40mmHg, only VAX-D has been shown to achieve negative pressures within the spine. Clinical studies have shown that, with VAX-D Therapy, negative pressures as low as -160 mmHg* are created within the injured disc during the treatment session!

The key to the "distraction" of VAX-D is achieved through an intricately timed series of pulls, holds, and releases over the course of a treatment session. VAX-D's biofeedback system adjusts this curve of tension specifically to each patient's needs, making every session a truly individualized treatment.

VAX-D Therapy involves three phases that repeat fifteen times throughout a treatment session: the Decompression Phase, the Retraction Phase, and finally, the Rest Phase. During the Decompression Phase, tension slowly mounts, lengthening the spine; up to 99 pounds of tension may be exerted directly on the injured discs. This is where spinal pressures drop and decompression actually occurs. During the Retraction Phase, tension is slowly decreased and the spine is retracted slowly. This is followed by a short Rest Phase.

Is VAX-D Right for Me?

You may be a candidate for VAX-D if:

- You have chronic and/or severe back and/or neck pain caused by bulging or herniated discs. Degenerative disc disease, sciatica, and/or facet syndrome.
- You have been diagnosed with a clinically unstable low back.
- You have failed back surgery syndrome.
- You have been told to consider surgery.

Many patients have experienced more than a 50% reduction in pain after their first treatment! For those suffering from herniated and degenerated discs, the escaped nucleus pulposus may be partially or completely retracted back into the disc after just the first session (though usually it takes longer), relieving a great deal of pain. However, pain reduction does not indicate full recovery, and a full

recovery is essential to preventing re-injury. Each treatment session lasts approximately 45 minutes. A typical VAX-D treatment regimen consists of about 20 sessions. Some conditions require fewer visits; some require more. Many patients report relief from their pain and other symptoms during the first few treatment sessions, and most experience dramatic pain relief after completion of their prescribed VAX-D Therapy program.

VAX-D therapy is a non-surgical procedure to reduce pain by decompressing your spine and reducing the stress and pressure on your discs and spinal nerves. Contact Dr. Craig Aderholdt, at 941-756-5528 for a **free consultation** to see if you are a candidate for this revolutionary procedure. We hope you enjoy the information within and share it with others.

Contact Dr. Aderholdt today to find out if you can finally relieve your pain and suffering with this proven safe and effective nonsurgical breakthrough for neck and back pain.

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Dr. Craig S. Aderholdt, BSc, DC



At Back Pain Institute of West Florida, located in Bradenton, FL, our number one concern is to help our patients with a natural approach to pain treatment. Dr. Craig Aderholdt, BSc, DC, received his undergraduate degree from Pennsylvania State

University State College, and his Doctor of Chiropractic from life University School of Chiropractic in Marietta, GA. He then later graduated Cum Laude.

Dr. Aderholdt also holds certification in chiropractic adjunctive physiotherapy from New York Chiropractic College and completed extensive postgraduate training in therapeutic modalities at National-Lincoln School. He is a member of the Florida Chiropractic Association and American Chiropractic Association and is a certified VAX-D consultant. He was also voted a Bradenton Herald People's Choice Awards Winner for 2008, 2025 and is the Manatee Herald-Tribune Awards winner for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2021 and Sarasota Herald-Tribune finalist for 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2025 and winner in 2019 and 2024.



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COMING TO A PROVIDER NEAR YOU:

MSK Ultrasound Imaging is Rising as Unit Costs are Falling

By Rick Weber

You've likely had an MRI at some point in your life. But you probably haven't experienced musculoskeletal (MSK) ultrasound imaging.

MSK ultrasound imaging was first used in the United States in the 1970s for investigating the rotator cuff, then the Achilles tendon in the 1980s. Its popularity plateaued, likely because of the lack of physicians and sonographers trained in its use, lower reimbursement rates and the advent of the MRI.

Although it remains a specialized service that is more commonly available in large hospitals, ultrasound imaging is gaining traction and popularity, and is becoming more widely available.

"It was initially used for research purposes, but it became clear that it could be used for diagnostic and treatment purposes," says Arie van Duijn, a professor of Physical Therapy in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services. "Research started to show that the reliability and validity for diagnosing common superficial structures was in many cases comparable to the MRI, and with the rapid decline of the cost of ultrasound imaging equipment, this led to the gradual increase in use of this technology.

"Portable ultrasound imaging units can now be bought for as low as \$5,000, making it accessible to many healthcare providers, and this has led to a rapid increase in its use, especially in the last five years. Equipment manufacturers have also started to develop specialized MSK software for their units, also making it easier for providers to start using it in practice."

Van Duijn says MSK ultrasound imaging provides a low-cost, high-quality, reliable alternative to traditional imaging modalities such as MRI and CT for MSK health care providers to examine superficial MSK structures that can show these structures moving in real time.

It can assist providers when targeting structures for injections or dry needling by visualizing needle placement, and can provide information about effectiveness of treatment. It can be used for biofeedback purposes, such as allowing patients to learn how to

contract muscles that they can't see with the naked eye. And because it is a very safe imaging modality that does not require radiation, it is used in obstetrics (OB) for visualizing fetuses.

There are some downsides to MSK ultrasound imaging:

- Only superficial structures can be seen. Since sound waves cannot penetrate bone, structures that are covered by bone cannot be seen by ultrasound imaging (for instance the ACL or meniscus in the knee are both deep structures largely covered by bone so are difficult to visualize with ultrasound imaging).
- There is a learning curve for providers, so continuing education is needed to teach the technical skills needed.
- Unit cost can be a barrier, but the cost is coming down rapidly.

Facilities such as emergency rooms already had the equipment that was used for other diagnostics (such as OB and vascular), so there was early adoption there for MSK purposes. There is a rapid increase in the equipment in orthopedic physician offices and physical therapy practices now that the cost of the equipment is coming down.

Hand-held portable units are now starting to be used outside the office at what is referred to as POCUS (point-of-care ultrasound), such as in athletics, where athletic trainers, physical therapists and/or physicians use it on the sidelines. Those portable units are simply probes that connect to a phone or tablet that has the image-display app.

Van Duijn, along with FGCU Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program faculty and graduate students, has been using MSK ultrasound imaging in ongoing projects with FGCU athletics to evaluate how tendon and ligament structures behave during the course of a season in various sports and identify tissue changes that may indicate a higher injury risk.

They have measured the thickness of tendons and ligaments of baseball players and golfers at multiple times throughout the season to understand how those tissues change, and also looked at the presence of fluid in the tendon/ligament to determine what is normal.

"Once we understand the normal course that can be expected, we hopefully can identify if an athlete has abnormal changes that may indicate an increased risk for injury such as a rotator cuff or elbow ligament tear," he says. "We recently acquired the technology to also measure tissue stiffness—called shear wave elastography—that may show abnormal tissue changes that are not yet showing in a change in thickness.

"Decreased tendon or ligament stiffness means that those tissues are less able to withstand the high forces placed on those tissues by overhead throwing, etc., and may also indicate an increased injury risk. Once an athlete tears a tendon or ligament, they are usually looking at surgery (Tommy John elbow surgery) and a good number of those athletes will never be able to come back to the level they were before the injury, so it is important to try to prevent these devastating injuries.

"We are also using ultrasound measurements to evaluate other injuries such as fractures, and to evaluate to outcomes of physical therapy interventions such as manual therapy, exercise, cold water immersion, etc.

"We now are starting to understand what we can normally expect throughout the season. The next phase of these projects is to identify what kinds of deviations from those normals are associated with increased injury risk."

FGCU

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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.

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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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BETTER SPIRITUAL HEALTH

By Pastor Timothy L. Neptune

As the years accumulate, many of us notice a quiet tendency to settle. What once demanded excellence now receives a polite “good enough.” That drift appears in our exercise routines, our closest relationships—and often in the condition of our souls.

Holistic wellness is incomplete without the spiritual life. Nothing in us stays fixed. Bodies change, circumstances shift, and so does our inner world. Jesus described His purpose in terms that reach far beyond mere survival: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The word translated “abundantly” points to a life that exceeds what we anticipated—more, beyond measure.

Author Jim Collins captured a truth that applies as readily to the soul as to a company: good is the enemy of great. Contentment with an adequate prayer life, a functional marriage, or average health can quietly close the door on something richer. Greatness in any domain is largely a matter of choice followed by consistent work.

A vibrant relationship with God does not happen by accident. It requires the same kind of intentionality we already apply to nutrition, sleep, and movement. Three practices make the difference.

Clear what competes.

Before adding more spiritual activity, identify what to stop. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.” Screen time that crowds out quiet, over-commitment that leaves no margin, a hobby that has become an idol, or a habit that dulls the spirit all steal the capacity we need. Discipline is the bridge between good and great. People who grow spiritually do what they do not always feel like doing.

Protect a daily appointment.

Small choices repeated over time compound. Seeking first God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33) often looks like a few unhurried minutes with Scripture and prayer even when motivation is low. Feelings come and go; habits remain. Consistency produces the inner strength that supports every other area of wellness—physical energy, emotional resilience, and relational patience.

Walk with people who want the same thing.

Isolated effort rarely lasts. Hebrews 10:24–25 calls us to spur one another on toward love and good deeds and not to neglect meeting together. Community is God’s design both for loneliness and for growth. A handful of people who know you well and will tell you the truth keep laziness from winning.

The aim is not religious performance. It is an abundant life that overflows into the rest of who we are. This week, name one distraction to release, one daily slot to protect, and one person or group with whom you will walk. Been thinking about visiting a church? Why not start this Sunday?

God is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20). Settling for good is optional. Better is available. But great is worth the extra effort.

>>> 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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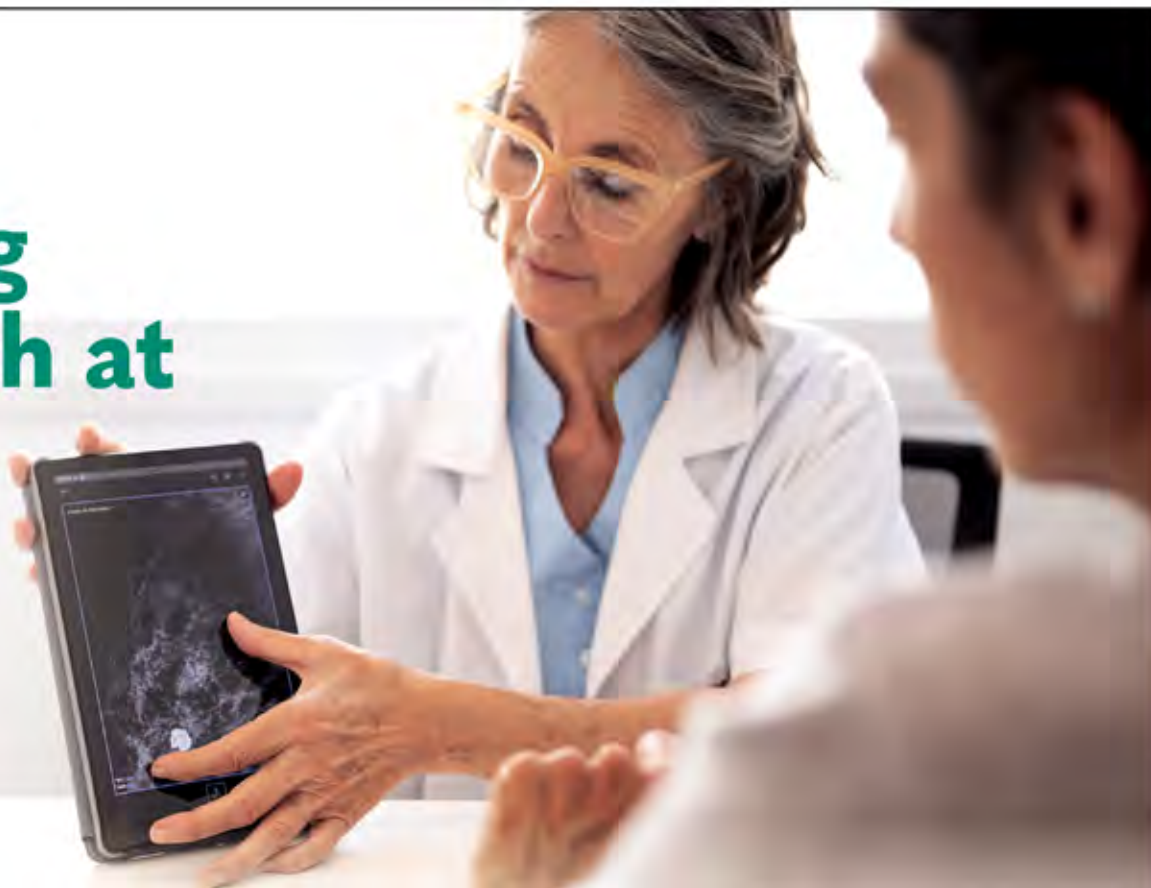
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