

About Integrative Medicine

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT | WINTER 2019



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

CHIEF'S NOTE

Welcome to the winter issue of the Integrative Medicine Service newsletter. This month, we discuss the benefits of dance/movement therapy; examine how women with breast cancer can manage their risk of falls; explore pediatric oncology in our "Ask the Expert" series; share information about the upcoming Tai Chi for Beginners class; and learn about the medicinal mushroom *Coriolus versicolor*.

Enjoy this issue!
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UPCOMING PROGRAM

Tai Chi for Beginners Class Starts in February

Join us in February to learn and practice tai chi. This classical form of exercise is known for smooth and gentle movements that strengthen the muscles of the ankles, knees, hips, and legs. Tai Chi for Beginners makes the practice easy to learn and enjoyable, providing many health benefits in a relatively short period of time. Tai chi helps:

- reduce your fear and likelihood of falling
- increase your range of motion
- improve circulation

Dates and Times:

Thursdays, 9:30 AM–10:30 AM
February 21 and 28; March 7, 14, 21, and 28

Location:

Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center
300 East 66th Street
Second Floor Fitness Room

Class Fee:

\$120

New Dance/Movement Therapy Classes for Adults with Cancer

By Lauren DeMarzo

Living with a serious illness brings on feelings that are difficult to articulate. Creative mind-body therapies offer people a way to express themselves. Through movement, they are able to give voice to their personal experiences. For the past 16 years, with the generous support of the Andréa Rizzo Foundation, the Integrative Medicine Service's Dréa's Dream Dance/Movement Therapy Program has helped children, teens, and their parents navigate distressing situations. "Combining music, breathing activities, the sense of touch and smell, and dancing, we can create a safe space that is personalized to a family's needs in the moment," says Suzi Tortora, a dance/movement therapist at MSK. Dr. Tortora and pediatric dance/movement therapist Jennifer Whitley are now supporting adults through two new series: Barre Fusion and Dance Expressions.

Barre Fusion classes focus on increasing body awareness. "Knowledge is power and learning more about how your body functions can be instrumental in identifying where an integrative medicine specialist can help you," says Ms. Whitley. Some people may worry that barre classes are not safe for them during and after treatment, but Ms. Whitley assures them that the Barre Fusion classes are suitable for everyone. "People with cancer can benefit from barre fitness," she states. "I use traditional ballet barre exercises, which can be modified to be simpler or more challenging. I start with a body check-in and a stretch series. We then focus on strengthening our abs, hips, pelvis,

core, and arms with small isometric movements. Afterward, I teach a short movement combination. Your mood can completely change by trying the choreography and having fun with it."



Suzi Tortora

Dance Expressions is a movement-based support group for women who have undergone cancer treatment. Over four weeks, participants will learn comfortable ways to move. They'll also share what the dance steps mean to them. Dr. Tortora says, "The goal is to help women feel more comfortable and accepting of their bodies after a serious illness, in a nonjudgmental and self-loving way." Dr. Tortora emphasizes that dance/movement therapy is accessible to everyone, at any age and level of mobility, because it is a creative self-expressive experience. "In a group setting like Dance Expressions, talking and movement are always optional. What a person needs to feel refreshed can change daily," she says. "Just hearing or seeing the nonverbal expression of someone else's cancer journey can resonate within you and help restore and recover your spirit."

To learn more about Barre Fusion and Dance Expressions, call the Integrative Medicine Service at 646-888-0800.



Jennifer Whitley and a patient



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Cancer-Related Joint Pain Increases Risk for Falls

By Christina Seluzicki

Women with breast cancer are often prescribed aromatase inhibitors (AIs), such as anastrozole (Arimidex®), letrozole (Femara®), and exemestane (Aromasin®). A common and challenging side effect of these medications is joint pain. In a study recently published in *Supportive Care in Cancer*, MSK's Jun Mao and his team found that joint pain related to AI use increased the risk of falls in women with breast cancer. Falls may lead people to limit their activity due to fear of falling in the future, leading to a decrease in mobility.

MSK's integrative medicine experts suggest that people who are fearful of falling seek out activities that help them improve their balance, which can guard against future falls. MSK mind-body therapist Robin Hardbattelle recommends tai chi, a movement therapy that combines movement, meditation, and breathing to balance the body. "Tai chi is a wonderful form of rehabilitation. Movements are performed in a slow and controlled manner, with emphasis on balance and stability, while being in the present moment," he says. "Regular practice will help you steadily improve your strength, balance, and coordination, enabling you to move with more ease and confidence in your daily life."

Regular exercise that increases muscle strength is another key to reducing the risk of falls. MSK nurse and clinical fitness specialist Donna Wilson says, "There is no doubt that exercise eases the stiffness and pain from

ASK THE EXPERT

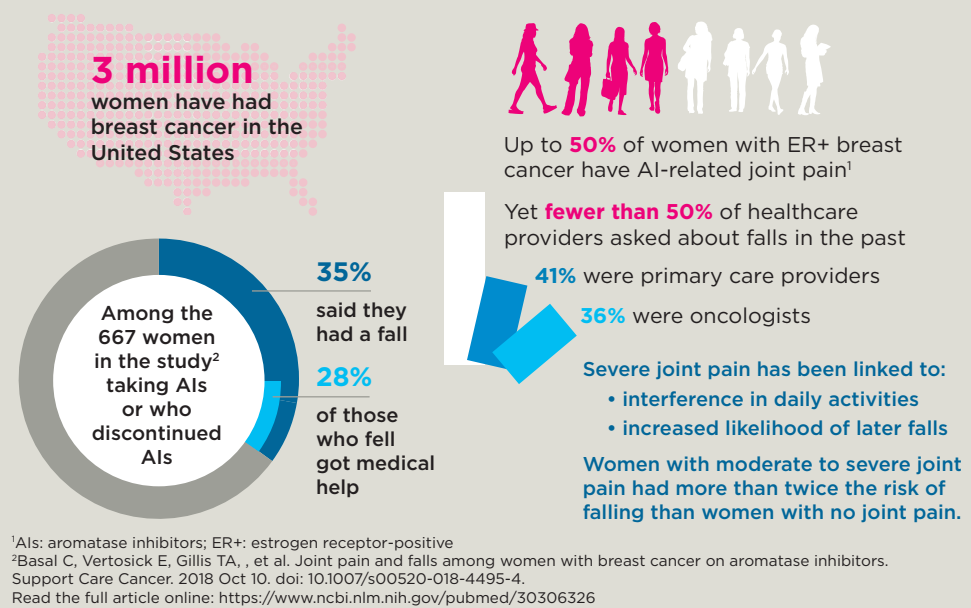
Nirupa Raghunathan, MD

As part of our ongoing "Ask the Expert" series, we talked with Nirupa Raghunathan, a primary-care doctor in MSK's Adult Long-Term Follow-Up Program. In early 2019, Dr. Raghunathan is starting a pediatric integrative oncology consult service for children and teens being treated for cancer as well as young people entering survivorship. "Childhood is so often associated with being healthy, vibrant, and active," she says. "When people go through a complicated illness when they are young, it can affect their psychosocial or physical development, and what they think they can accomplish later in life." Dr. Raghunathan will provide children and their parents with targeted recommendations for supportive treatments, such as yoga, dance therapy, meditation, and acupuncture.

How can integrative therapies help children and teens with cancer?

"There is research about the positive impact that integrative medicine has on children and younger people with cancer. We know that very young children can benefit from dance/movement and music therapies to help them manage the anxieties and stresses of treatment-related pain and long hospital stays. Creative arts therapies give children tools for self-expression as they continue to develop coping skills and build emotional resilience. For teenagers and younger adults,

JOINT PAIN AND FALL RISK IN BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS



joint pain related to aromatase inhibitors. After a few weeks of exercise — like walking on a treadmill, biking, body weight exercises, and resistance training — women have fewer complaints of joint pain as their muscular strength improves. Muscle strength and balance go hand in hand. The weaker you are, the poorer your balance. And with poor balance, there is a risk of falling. So physical activity is very important." Be sure to talk with your doctor about how to prevent falls if you are at risk.

To sign up for the Integrative Medicine Service's classes and workshops and learn more about how integrative therapies can help you cope with the side effects of cancer and cancer treatment, call 646-888-0800.

ABOUT HERBS

Coriolus Versicolor (Turkey Tail)

By Jyothirmai Gubili

Coriolus versicolor is a medicinal mushroom found around the world. Because of its resemblance to the multicolored tail of a wild turkey, it is popularly referred to as the "turkey tail mushroom." Although *Coriolus versicolor* is not edible, it has long been used as a tonic for improving strength and longevity in traditional medicine in Asia.

Laboratory studies have shown that *Coriolus versicolor* inhibits the growth of microorganisms, has antiviral effects, stimulates the immune system, and slows the growth of tumors. Two products derived from *Coriolus versicolor*, polysaccharide K (PSK) and polysaccharide-peptide (PSP), are believed to be responsible for stimulating the immune system.



PSK is commonly used to complement conventional cancer treatments in Asia. When used with chemotherapy, PSK has been shown to improve survival rates in people with gastric, colorectal, and esophageal cancer. But studies in people with breast cancer, hepatocellular carcinoma, and leukemia have reported mixed results. PSP was found to improve blood counts and antibody levels when used with chemotherapy. A third extract, versicolor polysaccharide, is also being studied for potential anticancer effects. No severe adverse effects or drug interactions have been reported following the use of *Coriolus versicolor* products.



Nirupa Raghunathan

acupuncture and yoga are helpful for lasting fatigue and sleep loss, as well as neuropathy. I take the information that the child and their parents share and give them a personalized, evidence-based plan that they can enjoy. Sometimes patients need that extra encouragement from an integrative medicine specialist who can say, 'I've taken you and your family into account, and I think these strategies that are available right here at MSK would be the best for you.'

Dr. Raghunathan sees patients at the Pediatric Ambulatory Care Center. To make an appointment with Dr. Raghunathan or another integrative medicine provider, call 646-888-0845.

Do you have a question for our integrative medicine experts? Email us with "Ask the Expert" in the subject line at aboutherbs@mskcc.org. We may feature your question in an upcoming issue!