

About Integrative Medicine

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT | FALL 2020



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

CHIEF'S NOTE

Fall is upon us! As we embrace this change in season and turn toward cooler weather, we recognize that COVID-19 is still with us. We invite you to make a self-care plan to stay healthy and active in body and mind as we continue to navigate the challenges posed by this pandemic. Through our Integrative Medicine at Home membership program, you can participate in live, online healthy lifestyle classes every day of the week. We also offer workshops and series on a range of topics to support you in self-care. Read on to learn more about some of our upcoming offerings.

In this issue, we share our recent research on music therapy for cancer-related fatigue; talk with Dr. Ting Bao, Director of Integrative Breast Oncology, about yoga for chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy; learn about oleandrin in the "About Herbs" feature; and invite you to join us for our first virtual oncology acupuncture symposium.

Best wishes and be well,
Jun

Patient Advocates Featured in Upcoming Virtual Oncology Acupuncture Symposium

This fall, MSK's Integrative Medicine Service, together with the Society for Acupuncture Research, invite all patient advocates to join us for a live virtual symposium, **Oncology Acupuncture: From Neuroscience to Patient Wellbeing**.

This two-day educational experience on November 6th and 7th will examine the neuroscience of acupuncture and explore the latest research on acupuncture for treatment of cancer-related side effects.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center



Photos from an MSK Kids music therapy group

New Study Compares Music Therapy Techniques for Cancer-Related Fatigue

By Christina Seluzicki

Music has long been associated with healing the body and mind. Music therapy is a clinical discipline in which board-certified music therapists engage with patients to provide them with emotional and social support through passive listening or active music-making activities.

The benefits of music therapy are supported by a growing body of research. A majority of National Cancer Institute-designated cancer centers now offer music therapy; cancer clinical guidelines, including those from the Society for Integrative Oncology endorsed by the American Society of Clinical Oncology, recommend it for anxiety, stress reduction, depression, and mood disorders. But little evidence has been published on music therapy specifically addressing cancer-related fatigue (CRF), a common and distressing side effect of cancer and its treatments that seriously impacts quality of life.

In a recent study, researchers in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service compared passive and active music therapy for CRF in 436 hospitalized adults with diverse types of cancer. In active music therapy, patients sing, play instruments, or write their own music with support from a music therapist. In passive music therapy, patients listen

"Our study suggests that some music therapy techniques may be more effective than others for specific cancer-related symptoms. Further research will help us improve the delivery of music therapy to improve the lives of people with cancer."

— Kevin Liou

to music their therapists play for them. The study found that among patients with moderate-to-severe CRF, active music therapy was more effective than passive music therapy for reducing CRF. They also found that, in free-text responses, patients who received active music therapy used more words describing positive emotions than those who received passive music therapy.

Integrative medicine doctor and a co-author on the study, Kevin Liou, MD, says, "Our study suggests that some music therapy techniques may be more effective than others for specific cancer-related symptoms. Further research will help us improve the delivery of music therapy to improve the lives of people with cancer."

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Dr. Ting Bao on Yoga for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy



“People in the yoga group reported reduced pain, tingling, and numbness, the three main characteristics of CIPN. They also reported improved stability and balance, which can prevent dangerous falls.”

— Ting Bao

Integrative medicine doctor, medical oncologist, and MSK’s Director of Integrative Breast Oncology, Dr. Ting Bao is conducting research on yoga for treatment of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, also known as CIPN. This common nerve disorder can dramatically alter a person’s quality of life and few effective treatments are available. We talked with Dr. Bao about her promising research findings in this challenging field.

Can yoga help improve neuropathy from chemotherapy treatment?

Not only is CIPN a highly distressing side effect of chemotherapy treatment, it is also a safety concern. The telltale signs of CIPN, such as the tingling, numbness, and loss of sensation in the hands and feet, can cause balance issues and increase a person’s risk of falls. We know that yoga is a safe and gentle movement therapy with well-studied outcomes of improved flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. Even so, until now there have been few randomized controlled studies examining yoga to reduce CIPN symptoms and improve outcomes for people who have had cancer.

I recently led a study here at MSK assessing yoga to improve moderate-to-severe CIPN

symptoms and reduce the risk of falls for breast and gynecological cancer survivors. We randomized 41 people into two groups in this 12-week study. Group one participants practiced daily yoga that included in-person and at-home classes. Group two simply continued to receive their usual care.

Our study showed that among breast and gynecological cancer survivors with moderate-to-severe CIPN, yoga was safe and showed promising effects for improving CIPN-related pain, quality of life, and physical functioning. People in the yoga group reported reduced pain, tingling, and numbness, the three main characteristics of CIPN. They also reported improved stability and balance, which can prevent dangerous falls. Our study participants who received usual care showed little to no improvement in their CIPN symptoms, balance, and mobility.

Will you continue to pursue this research?

Since this study was limited to a small number of participants, we are currently planning a second study with a larger group of participants and a longer follow-up period to confirm the specific and long-term effects of yoga on CIPN symptoms and fall prevention.

What can MSK patients do right now to combat CIPN symptoms?

If you have been diagnosed with CIPN and want to try yoga, MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service offers multiple yoga classes each week through our virtual membership program, Integrative Medicine at Home. For a smaller group environment and to address specific concerns, we offer several six to eight-week series each year. Our yoga teachers, who all have specialized and advanced oncology training, are also available to host private yoga therapy sessions on Zoom. Of course, before you add yoga or any physical activity to your daily routine, please speak with your doctor or a member of your care team.

MSK’s integrative medicine doctors and nurse practitioner are available for telemedicine consultations to help you develop a personalized wellness plan that may include yoga for CIPN. To make a telemedicine appointment, 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 abouttherbs@mskcc.org. We may feature your question in an upcoming issue!

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1, VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

With a combination of seminars, interactive breakout workshops, and live discussions, this symposium will bring together clinicians, researchers, and administrators to discuss strategies for implementing oncology acupuncture programs in cancer centers.

We are also honored to feature a group of patient advocate experts who play an essential role in guiding research and medical education: Desiree Walker, Betsy Glosik, and Jodi MacLeod. As a part of live discussion panels, these multitalented women will share their personal experiences with integrative

oncology and their vision for improving the path forward for future patients. “We have each experienced firsthand how evidence-informed integrative modalities improve our quality of life,” says Ms. MacLeod. “We are eager for our fellow patients and survivors to explore the field of oncology acupuncture research.”

Patient advocates can register to attend the symposium at a special discounted rate of \$25. To learn more about **Oncology Acupuncture: From Neuroscience to Patient Wellbeing** and to register, please go to www.mskcc.org/oncologyacupuncture.

ABOUT HERBS

Oleandrin

By Jyothirmai Gubili



An ornamental shrub, Nerium oleander is commonly found in Mediterranean regions and is grown in tropical and subtropical climates. It is used in Ayurveda to treat hemorrhoids, ulcers, skin disorders, and to induce abortion.

Oleandrin, a chemical present in this plant, is responsible for its effects. Some oleander extracts that showed anticancer properties in the lab are being tested for their safety and potential, however, human studies are very limited.

Despite lack of scientific evidence, oleander extracts are promoted to treat dermatitis, AIDS, cancer, congestive heart failure, and more recently, COVID-19.

It is important to note that all parts of the oleander plant are toxic. Several cases of poisoning and deaths have been reported after consuming them.



UPCOMING ONLINE PROGRAMMING

Therapeutic Yoga for Strong Bones

Tuesdays, October 20–November 24, 12:00–1:00 PM

Price: \$125 (full price)
\$100 (member rate)

Registration is required.
Call 646-888-0800.

In this six-week yoga course, participants will learn how to use yoga to support strong bones. Chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormonal therapy may induce bone loss in cancer patients, which can increase the risk of fractures. When done safely and actively, yoga poses can support compression forces in the muscles to build strong bone. Together, we will use therapeutic yoga to increase range of motion, flexibility, relaxation, and strength. We will also practice simple breathing techniques and meditations that support relaxation.

Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center
1429 First Avenue at East 74th Street
Appointments: 646-888-0800
www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1, MUSIC THERAPY TECHNIQUES

Our Integrative Medicine Service offers a robust program of music therapy for adults, kids, and teens receiving inpatient care at

Memorial Hospital. People receiving care close to home as well as cancer survivors can also receive music therapy through the Integrative Medicine at Home membership program. To learn more, call 646-888-0800.

Integrative Medicine Brings Live Wellness Classes into Your Home

By Lauren DeMarzo

This spring, people around the world found their lives uprooted by the COVID-19 pandemic. People with cancer faced particularly challenging disruptions to their care routines. Many experienced increased anxiety and stress as well. Such dramatic changes in daily life can cut people off from their communities when they need them most.

In recognition of this acute need, MSK's Integrative Medicine Service created a virtual space to provide a new community for many who were feeling isolated. Our expert clinicians quickly transitioned their in-person classes to a live, online format and added new classes. These classes were free and accessible to anyone in the MSK community with an Internet connection and computer, tablet, or mobile device. They immediately drew large numbers of participants, and we were thrilled with the outpouring of positive feedback on this new program.

We asked attendees about their experience in these classes to gain feedback on how to improve our program. **In the infographic below, you can learn more about some of the results from this survey.**

In response to their input, this summer we launched Integrative Medicine at Home, an affordable membership program offering daily classes in fitness, yoga, tai chi, meditation, music therapy, and dance therapy. This program also includes access to special workshops and series designed by our clinical staff to address symptom management needs for people living with cancer.

To join Integrative Medicine at Home, call 646-888-0800.

Membership Options

- One-month: \$25
- Three-month package: \$60
- Six-month package: \$120, includes a free workshop

As a member, you can enjoy:

- unlimited access to 18 classes per week
- discounts on our small-group workshops and mind-body series
- connecting with your cancer community
- staying active while practicing social distancing
- learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress

During April and May, MSK patients and caregivers:



Made **5,948** class visits



fitness



meditation



yoga

Took classes in:



music therapy



dance therapy



tai chi

And reported positive results:



96% were **extremely satisfied** with the experience



84% experienced **substantial reductions in anxiety and stress** after classes

"I am so very grateful for this resource and the way MSK Integrative Medicine has met the pandemic's challenges."

"Makes a tremendous difference in my life."

"I have never before been so engaged in caring for my body and my spirit."