

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Winter 2026

CHIEF'S NOTE



Jun J. Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service

As winter settles in and a new year begins, it is the perfect time to pause, reflect, and focus on what truly supports our well-being—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

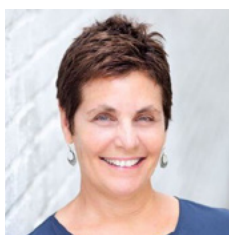
In this issue, we look ahead to 2026 and share small, meaningful steps that can make a big impact on your health. You'll learn about a national project bringing acupuncture and massage for pain relief to cancer centers across the country, explore the benefits of dance/movement therapy with Karolina Bryl, PhD, and discover the traditional Chinese herbal formula Yu Ping Feng San.

We invite you to explore our offerings and share this newsletter with someone who may benefit. Together, let's embrace this season of renewal with strength, awareness, and connection.

Be well,
Jun

Tips from our Mind-Body Experts to Start Off the New Year!

Happy New Year! January is often a time for big resolutions—but small, realistic steps can make a big difference in your health and well-being. We asked MSK experts in exercise, meditation, and nutrition to share simple, practical tips to help you feel stronger, calmer, and more energized in 2026.



Mindfulness Beth Sandweiss, Mind-Body Therapist, shares:



- Reflection: Start with a reflection that will become your north star, "In this season of my life, what do I most want to nourish? Which qualities do I want more of this year?" Some examples include relationships, creativity, exercise, or self-expression.
- Daily Mindful Savoring & Gratitude: Intend to notice and savor one small thing each day. Pause to savor a cup of tea or coffee, sunlight, a cozy chair, a hot shower, or the purr of a cat.
- Emotional Health: Allow feelings to be present, "I intend to recognize the resilience I carry, even on hard days. I intend to allow myself to feel the full range of my emotions without (or with less) judgment."



Exercise Dr. Jessica Scott, PhD, Director of the Exercise Oncology Research Program, shares:



- It's never too late to start exercising to improve physical and mental health and survival after a cancer diagnosis. You can start with shorter bouts of aerobic exercise and gradually build up to longer durations.
- Walking, strength training, and staying active throughout the day can make a difference. Mix different types of exercise like aerobic activity and strength training to improve heart and muscle health and prevent side effects of cancer treatment.
- Include higher intensity as well as lower intensity training days and adjust to meet your needs. For example, if you are feeling fatigued, instead of a 20-minute higher intensity walk, do a 30-minute easy stroll.





Nutrition

Dr. Urvi Shah, MD, Blood Cancer Specialist and Researcher in Nutrition and Cancer, shares:

Here are a few quick dietary tips to support gut (microbiome) health - small changes truly add up.

- Aim for about 30 grams of fiber daily; beans and lentils are excellent options, offering roughly 15 grams of fiber and 15 grams of protein per cup (increase gradually if needed).
- If meeting your fiber goals is tough, consider a high-fiber smoothie with berries or other fruits, leafy greens, chia or flax seeds, and silken tofu for protein.
- Try to include at least 30 different plant foods each week.
- Add small servings of fermented foods like sauerkraut or kimchi to your meals.

Always talk with your healthcare team before changing your diet or exercise plan.



Bringing Acupuncture and Massage to More People with Cancer

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE

Clinical trials are essential for improving cancer care—but their results don't always reach the patients who could benefit most.

In 2023, Dr. Jun J. Mao, Chief of MSK's Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service, and his study team published findings from the IMPACT clinical trial, funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). The study showed that acupuncture and massage can provide meaningful pain relief for people living with advanced cancer. With these promising results, Dr. Mao and his team asked: How can we make sure more patients and clinicians know about these options?

This year, with funding from PCORI, the IMAGINE project was born. Through IMAGINE, MSK is partnering with the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) to bring acupuncture and massage for pain to 35 cancer centers across the country. The IMAGINE team is now training acupuncturists and massage therapists in the evidence-based



methods used in the IMPACT study to help improve pain management and symptom relief for people with cancer.

"Bringing this research to cancer centers across the country is incredibly rewarding," says Dr. Kelly McConnell, a clinical psychologist and researcher who is co-leading IMAGINE. "Seeing clinicians embrace these evidence-based practices is exciting because it means we're training more experts to offer acupuncture and massage to patients who need them most."

The project also aims to build a strong community of acupuncturists, massage therapists, oncology clinicians, and

other leaders to share knowledge and advance evidence-based integrative oncology.

Dr. Mao, says, "By sharing the results of our research with those who are treating patients every day, we can expand patient access to safe, effective, evidence-based options to ease their pain and improve quality of life—bringing hope and comfort when it matters most."

You can learn more about IMAGINE at integrativeonc.org/ imagine-project.



Dance/Movement Therapy in Cancer Care



By Karolina Bryl, PhD

Karolina Bryl, PhD, is a creative arts therapist and research scientist who studies dance/movement therapy in the cancer setting.

What is Dance/Movement Therapy?

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) is a form of creative arts therapy defined by the American Dance Therapy Association as the “psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual.” It is based on the idea that the mind and body are interconnected. “Dance” does not mean a specific technique or choreography, but the natural movement expressed through the

body and breath. Sessions may be offered individually or in groups, in person or virtually, and are tailored to people of all ages and abilities. DMT is a distinct therapeutic profession requiring graduate-level training.

How can Dance/Movement Therapy help patients with cancer?

Cancer and its treatments can lead to fatigue, stress, pain, neuropathy, sleep disturbance, body image concerns, and emotional distress. DMT offers a whole-person approach that helps patients reconnect with their bodies and reduce these symptoms — by creating a safe space to work through emotions, lowering stress and promoting relaxation, supporting focus and mental clarity, improving body awareness and body image and creating supportive community.

By combining movement, creativity, and emotional support, DMT helps patients feel more grounded, empowered, and connected—offering a gentle yet powerful complement to medical care throughout the cancer journey.

What does research tell us about dance/movement therapy?

Research shows that DMT can help people with cancer feel better emotionally, reduce fatigue and stress, and improve quality of life. Even short weekly sessions have been shown to make a difference. In addition, studies suggest DMT can benefit both children and adults by supporting daily activities, improving body image, and helping with mood, sleep, and coping. Virtual programs have also shown to be helpful and are easy to join. Overall, evidence suggests that DMT is a promising way to boost emotional well-being and reduce distress during cancer treatment and recovery.

At MSK, we found that our virtual DMT program led to reduced anxiety and emotional distress, increased sense of joy, improved social connection, and trended toward greater physical activity. Stay tuned for future studies in this exciting field!

ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

Yu Ping Feng San

By Jyothirmal Gubili, MS



Yu Ping Feng San (YPFS) is a traditional Chinese medicine formula made up of three different herbs. It is used to treat respiratory illnesses including cold, influenza, nasal congestion, and asthma.

Small studies have shown this formula to be effective against allergic rhinitis (allergic reaction that causes congestion, sneezing, and sore throat), and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (lung diseases that restrict breathing). It also helped control symptoms in pediatric patients with asthma.

It is important that patients talk to their healthcare providers before taking any herbal formulas.

For more details about YPFS, see our [full write-up](#) on the About Herbs website or download the About Herbs app (available for Android via [Google Play](#) and iOS via [the App StoreSM](#)).

