

# About Integrative Medicine

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT | FALL 2017



**Jun J. Mao, MD, MSCE**  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

## Chief's Note

Welcome to *About Integrative Medicine*. In our fall issue, we highlight the latest in research, clinical programs, and classes — all designed to support you in mind, body, and spirit. Learn about the role our massage therapists play in the chemo suites at the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center; explore treatments for chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, including information on how to participate in our new yoga study; discover the benefits of shiitake mushrooms; and sign up for an exercise class to keep moving as we head into cooler months.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy fall!

## Hands-On Care during Chemotherapy

By Christina Seluzicki



*Integrative Medicine massage therapists provide comfort and symptom relief to people receiving chemotherapy at the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center.*

Throughout the third-floor chemotherapy suites at MSK's Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center, patients and nurses alike have welcomed a new friendly face: Christy Allen. During the past several months, Ms. Allen, a licensed medical massage specialist and yoga teacher for the Integrative Medicine Service, has provided hundreds of chairside massages and guided relaxation sessions to women as they receive chemotherapy. The service's goal is twofold: to improve the experience of people receiving

chemotherapy and to provide nurturing relief from pain, nausea, and discomfort during chemotherapy infusion.

With generous support from the Pam's Pals Foundation, the Integrative Medicine Service has been able to pilot this new program and provide the free service to this group of women. "Both our patients and the nursing staff have really embraced this service," says Ms. Allen. "Massage and guided relaxation can lessen the stress of chemo by providing comfort and giving the patient another focus. It also gives them something to look forward to when they return for treatment. As a therapist, it is incredibly rewarding and reassuring that we can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Join Our Research Study on Yoga for Neuropathy

By Lauren DeMarzo

The Integrative Medicine Service is conducting research to find better treatment options for symptoms related to cancer. If you are a breast cancer survivor with moderate to severe chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy you may be eligible to join our pilot study, Yoga for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy in Breast Cancer Survivors. Call 646-888-0844 or email [medyogaforCIPN@mskcc.org](mailto:medyogaforCIPN@mskcc.org) to learn more. ■

## WELLNESS FACTS CHEMOTHERAPY-INDUCED PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) is a group of symptoms resulting from damage to distant nerves in the arms, legs, and feet. Types of chemotherapy used to kill cancer cells — including platinum drugs, taxanes, and plant alkaloids — can cause this nerve damage.

### TAKE NOTE AND SPEAK UP

It is important to share with your doctor, nurse, or a caregiver if you feel any of these symptoms:

- pain or burning sensations in your hands and feet
- difficulty gripping household objects or balancing
- "pins and needles"



### INTEGRATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS

Research studies and clinical practice have found that integrative therapies, including massage, exercise, and yoga, can:

- soothe pain from nerve damage
- improve balance
- relax stiff muscles
- result in regaining sensation in hands and feet



### SELF CARE TO-DOS

- Gently massage your hands or feet.
- Practice a guided relaxation, like a body scan.
- Repeat balance and strength exercises such as calf raises, chair squats, and knee lifts at home.



### WE CAN HELP

Everyone's CIPN experience is different. Factors such as the medication you are taking and your lifestyle can affect how severe your CIPN becomes, and how long the condition lasts. For advice about CIPN, make an appointment with one of our doctors to discuss your options.

## Upcoming Events and Classes

To register and receive information about our classes, call 646-888-0800.

### Focused Fitness for Women

Improve your energy, flexibility, and strength. Join our weekly group class designed and taught by MSK's Clinical Fitness Specialist Donna Wilson.

Thursdays, 9:00 to 10:00 AM  
Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center

Wednesdays, 9:30 to 10:30 AM  
Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center

Try one Focused Fitness for Women class for free, now through November 30.

### PEX for Men Every Wednesday!

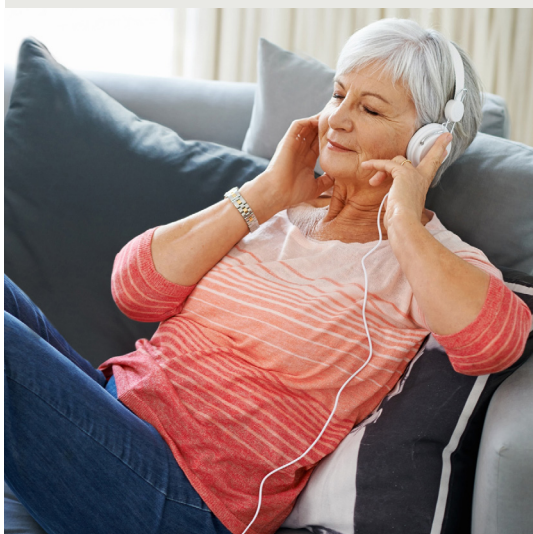
This class for men of all ages and stages of treatment is a conditioning workout that will rebuild muscle strength, improve balance, and increase endurance.

Wednesdays, 4:30 to 5:30 PM  
Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center

### Meditation 101 Online Starts November 9

Join our virtual meditation course from the comfort and convenience of your home. In six weeks, you will learn the basics of mindfulness. This practice helps us purposefully pay attention to ourselves, our surroundings, and our reactions to stress.

Fee: \$150. This includes six online classes with a certified meditation instructor, exclusive audio recordings, and a mindfulness workbook.



## Live CancerSmart Event Shines Spotlight on Integrative Medicine

On September 26, experts from the Integrative Medicine Service gathered to present the latest information on the future of integrative medicine in cancer care. During the program, they also demonstrated exercise, massage, and acupuncture techniques to treat symptoms and improve quality of life for people living with cancer. Two

patients shared their experiences with our audience as well. They discussed how taking a proactive integrative approach to their treatment has impacted their lives.

Visit [CancerSmart.org](https://www.cancersmart.org) to watch a replay of the event. ■

## ABOUT HERBS FEATURE OF THE MONTH Shiitake Mushrooms

By Jyothirmal Gubili

An edible mushroom common in eastern Asia and frequently used in cooking, shiitake is also used in traditional Asian medicine. It is generally considered safe to include in your diet after cancer treatment.

Lab studies using animal models have indicated that shiitake extracts stimulate the immune system, inhibit cell growth, prevent liver damage, and reduce the rate of mutations. In a small study, people with advanced gastrointestinal cancer who took a shiitake extract had reduced side effects from chemotherapy.



Shiitake is commonly used in cooking and in traditional Asian medicine.

Lentinan is a compound of sugar molecules (also known as a polysaccharide) that comes from shiitakes. It has been studied extensively. It is responsible for the mushroom's health-promoting effects. An injectable form of lentinan is used in some countries as cancer treatment, but it has not been evaluated in large studies. Lentinan has also showed improvements in the quality of life in some cancer patients. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Hands-On Care

Ms. Allen and the Integrative Medicine Service research team are measuring the impact of this program by assessing patients' symptoms both before and after they receive a massage or guided relaxation session. Our team will present the promising results of this pilot at the international Society for Integrative Oncology's annual conference in Chicago this November. ■

### INTERESTED IN RECEIVING A PRIVATE MASSAGE?

Call 646-888-0800 to make an appointment at the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center or the Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center.

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

The Integrative Medicine Service offers classes and self-care videos on yoga, tai chi, qigong, and meditation to help you discover the practice that is right for you. For our current class schedule and links to our video library, go to our website.