

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Winter 2024

CHIEF'S NOTE



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

The new year is a time of reflection and evaluation. It is also a time of action. I invite you to explore your mind, body, and spirit through our integrative medicine offerings. In need of some nurturing, hands-on care? Visit us for a massage or acupuncture session. Ready to take your physical activity to a new level? Join us online for mind-body fitness classes. Visit our [website](#) or call us at 646-449-1010 to learn more.

In this issue, we jump start the new year with exciting results from a study using our Integrative Medicine at Home program of mind-body fitness classes and enter the healing world of music therapy with MSK music therapist Karen Popkin. We also learn about our fantastic new expanded library of on-demand meditation, guided imagery, and instrumental music recordings to support you throughout your cancer experience.

Finally, I invite you to explore our lineup of [online workshops and series](#) – a great way to connect with our collective community; I hope you'll join us!

Be well,
Jun

Integrative Medicine Expands Online Meditation Library

By Robin Hardbatt, MS, LAc

From the initial diagnosis to treatment and beyond, people impacted by cancer may experience many emotional, psychological, and physical challenges. Research shows that meditation can benefit people with cancer, including improvements in quality of life, fatigue, insomnia, hot flashes, and chronic pain, as well as reductions in psychological distress. In fact, a recent joint guideline between the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) and the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) recommends mindfulness-based meditation for anxiety and depression during active treatment and after treatment completion.

This fall, in line with this growing body of evidence, Integrative Medicine expanded its online library of meditation, guided imagery, and music recordings. The goal of the revamped webpage was to provide a more comprehensive resource for our diverse population of patients and their caregivers that meets their specific needs during the cancer journey. Visitors to the website can navigate through categories including “Newly Diagnosed,” “Support Through Treatment,” “Symptom Relief,” and “Survivorship.” Recordings address specific symptoms such as stress and anxiety, pain, sleep, and hot flashes, and phases of care, including support through surgery and procedures, chemotherapy, and radiation.

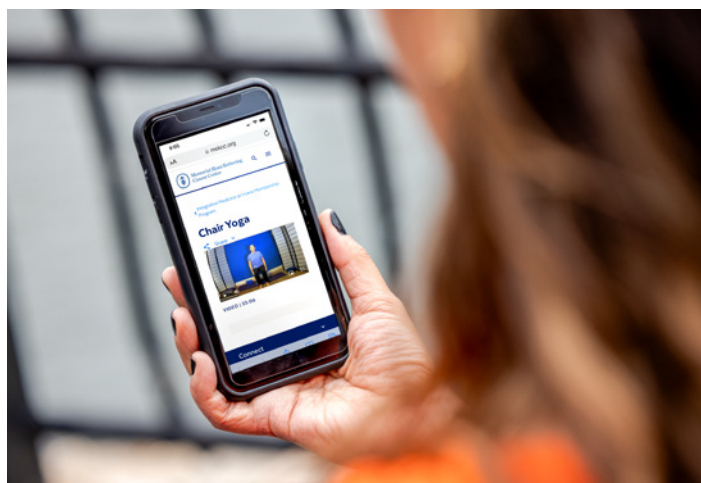


Dr. Shelly Latte-Naor, Director of Mind-Body Medicine at MSK, shares, “While the popularity of mind-body practices like meditation is growing, access to resources that reflect the experiences of people affected by cancer is still limited. Our free on-demand content accompanies patients at different stages of their care.”

Patients and caregivers can access the meditation library at <https://www.mskcc.org/meditation>. For those who are interested in opportunities to practice meditation through live online classes, our Integrative Medicine at Home membership program offers weekly sessions with MSK mind-body therapists. Visit <msk.org/athome> to view the schedule and sign up.

Study Highlights Benefits of Virtual Mind-Body Fitness Classes for People Undergoing Cancer Treatment

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE



Fitness and mind-body approaches such as meditation, yoga, tai chi, and music therapy can improve common symptoms of cancer treatments. But patients who are receiving treatment for cancer may have difficulty finding the right kind of classes that meet their needs during this challenging time in their lives. Now, a recently completed study from MSK’s Integrative Medicine Service (IMS) has found that participation in the [Integrative Medicine at Home \(IM@Home\)](#) program of virtual, live mind-body fitness classes led to reductions in hospitalizations, length of hospital stays, and urgent care visits by more than 50%.

The study included 200 study participants with a diagnosis of breast, thoracic, gynecological, head/neck, or melanoma cancer who were undergoing active treatment such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, or radiation. They were randomly placed in either the IM@Home group or an enhanced usual care group. Participants in the IM@Home group also experienced significant reductions in fatigue, psychological distress, and physical symptoms compared to participants in usual care.

Dr. Jun J. Mao, Chief of IMS and study principal investigator, presented these results at the ASCO Quality Care Symposium in October. “As hospitalizations and urgent care visits can be tremendously disruptive to patients’ and families’ lives and are extremely expensive, we were thrilled to see that our IM@Home program enabled patients to stay active during their treatment, and improved their symptoms and outcomes,” he says. “We look forward to future studies that use IM@Home to improve patients’ physical and emotional wellbeing, overall fitness, and tolerance of cancer treatment, while also reducing health care costs.”

IM@Home was designed by MSK’s experts in integrative cancer care for people diagnosed with cancer. Participate in more than 20 live classes each week from the comfort of your home. To learn more and become a member, visit <msk.org/athome> or call 646-449-1010.



The Healing Power of Music Therapy



By Karen Popkin, MA, LCAT, MT-BC

Karen Popkin is a board-certified music therapist and licensed creative arts therapist who has been providing music therapy sessions at MSK since 2006.

What is music therapy and what happens in a music therapy session?

The American Music Therapy Association defines music therapy as “an established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of

individuals.” Music therapy sessions offer a variety of experiences based on the strengths, needs, and goals of the individual patient. These may include creating, singing, moving to and/or listening to music together.

What role can it play for people affected by cancer?

Through music engagement in the therapeutic setting, we can build skills to help patients manage anxiety, stress, cognitive changes, and promote communication and creative expression. Music-based experiences can make it easier to talk about areas of concern and come up with strategies to address problems.

It’s about finding what is meaningful for that individual – not about a therapist telling them what to listen to. In this process of co-discovery, we may delve into songwriting, learn to play an instrument, or build playlists and discuss how certain pieces of music connect with their feelings and help them find a sense of

calm. And importantly, prior training in music therapy is not needed to participate!

What does research tell us about music therapy?

Research in music therapy supports its effectiveness in areas including physical rehabilitation and movement, increasing motivation to become engaged in treatment, providing emotional support, and providing an outlet for expression of feelings. The SIO and ASCO joint guideline recently recommended music therapy for patients experiencing surgical pain from cancer surgery.

If you are interested in learning more about music therapy sessions at MSK, call 646-449-1010.

Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program



Start your membership online today!
Visit msk.org/athome.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Monthly membership: **\$25**
Three-month membership: **\$60**
Six-month membership: **\$120**
(plus one free workshop)

AS A MEMBER, YOU CAN ENJOY:

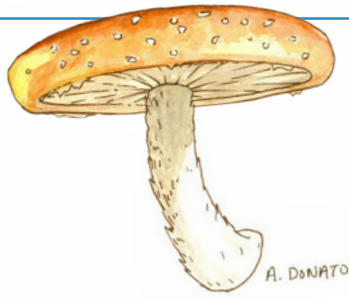
- › Connecting with your cancer community
- › Staying active, with guidance from MSK experts
- › Learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress
- › Unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes
- › Dedicated website with on-demand videos to help keep you moving on your schedule
- › Discounts on our small group workshops and mind-body series

Shiitake Mushroom

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS

An edible mushroom, shiitake is used in traditional medicine and valued for its cancer-fighting properties. Both fresh and dried forms are also used in Asian cuisine. Lentinan, a substance obtained from shiitake, was found to be responsible for the mushroom's health promoting effects.

Shiitake extracts have been shown to stimulate the immune system, inhibit the growth of tumor cells, protect the liver, and



reduce mutations in laboratory experiments and in animal models. Small clinical studies found benefits of shiitake extracts in improving the quality of life of patients with cancer receiving immunotherapy and in reducing side effects caused by chemotherapy in advanced

gastrointestinal cancer patients. These findings have yet to be confirmed in larger trials.

Shiitake is considered safe when taken as part of a diet by cancer survivors.

For more details about shiitake mushroom, 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 Store](#)SM).



Upcoming Online Programming

Register online today to join one of these upcoming virtual wellness programs. Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call [646-449-1010](tel:646-449-1010).



Workshops: \$20 members; \$25 non-members **Regular series:** \$100 members; \$125 non-members
Meditation series: \$125 members; \$155 non-members

JANUARY

- › **Workshop:** Boost Your Attention, Thinking, and Memory with Music
Tuesday, January 9
6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Meeting the Challenges of Cancer with Mindful Self-Compassion
Sundays, January 21 to February 25
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY

- › **Workshop:** Osteoporosis: How to Build Bones with Exercise and Nutrition
Thursday, February 15
1:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Massage for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy
Wednesday, February 21
1:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Barre Basics
Tuesdays, February 27 to April 2
6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

MARCH

- › **Workshop:** Feeling Good! Reclaiming Your Body Using Yoga and Dance
Sunday, March 3
11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Ayurveda & Yoga: Spring Edition
Thursday, March 21
6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.