

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Winter 2025

CHIEF'S NOTE



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

Spring is upon us! As we embrace the changing season, it's a great time to reflect, renew, and rejuvenate—both in body and mind. Spring offers a fresh start, reminding us of the importance of self-care, resilience, and community as we move forward.

In this issue, we're excited to share a new clinical trial aimed at supporting adolescent and young adult cancer survivors in managing chemotherapy-related amenorrhea. We also explore a new collaboration with the Supportive Care Service to bring music therapy and massage therapy to hospitalized adults. In addition, we'll look at how massage therapy can aid in managing chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy. Additionally, we dive into the latest research on the traditional Chinese medicine formula, Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang, and highlight our upcoming spring workshops and series.

As we enter this season of growth and renewal, we're here to help guide you with strength, support, and a sense of community.

Wishing you a bright, healthy, and rejuvenating spring!

Be well,
Jun

Collaboration Brings Music Therapy & Massage to Hospitalized Adults

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE

This spring, the Integrative Medicine Service introduced a new program for hospitalized adults, in collaboration with the MSK Supportive Care Service. Now, patients who are receiving care from the Supportive Care team will be able to benefit from a dedicated music therapist and massage therapist. Thanks to a generous donation from the Laurance S. Rockefeller Fund, these services are offered at no cost to patients.

Our team includes highly trained music therapists and oncology massage therapists who specialize in caring for patients with cancer. They work closely with the Supportive Care team to fully understand each patient's needs and ensure the best possible care. The goal is to help relieve common symptoms like pain, anxiety, and stress, while promoting relaxation, healing, and emotional expression.



During a typical music therapy session, patients and their loved ones can enjoy listening to the therapist play music or even participate by singing or playing instruments. The music chosen is based on the patient's personal preferences, interests, and energy levels, so each session is tailored to fit their needs. Music therapy is recommended by the American Society of Clinical Oncology-Society for Integrative Oncology (ASCO-SIO) guideline for managing anxiety and depression.

Massage therapists will provide various techniques, such as reflexology on the hands and feet, as well as neck and shoulder massages. They will also show caregivers how to offer gentle massages to help ease stress and tension. Massage is recommended by ASCO-SIO guideline for pain management in patients receiving palliative care.



“When our most critically ill patients are experiencing painful symptoms or seeking integrated support during times of distress, we are grateful to offer music and massage therapy,” says Nirupa Raghunathan, MD, Integrative Medicine Medical Director.

“By partnering with Supportive Care to address both mind and body in the inpatient setting, our program can continue its mission of supporting MSK patients throughout their entire journey.”

Visit our website to learn more about [massage therapy](#) and [music therapy](#).

New Study Explores Acupuncture for Young Cancer Survivors Struggling with Menstrual Issues from Chemotherapy

By Xiaotong Li, PhD, LAc

Adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer survivors, a growing group between the ages of 15 and 39, often don't get the specialized care they need. One of the challenges faced by young female cancer survivors is a condition called chemotherapy-related amenorrhea (CRA), which causes menstrual periods to stop after chemotherapy treatment. CRA affects up to 78% of female survivors and can lead to symptoms, such as hot flashes, trouble sleeping, pain, and fatigue. It also increases the risk of infertility and other long-term health issues. Unfortunately, there's currently no treatment for CRA in young cancer survivors. A new study at MSK, Acupuncture for Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Survivors (AcuAYA), aims to change this by investigating a potential treatment that doesn't involve medication.

Acupuncture has shown promise in helping restore ovarian function and balance hormone levels in people without cancer. Dr. Jun J. Mao, the lead investigator of the



study, has found that acupuncture can also help reduce symptoms, such as hot flashes, sleep problems, and fatigue in cancer survivors. Now, a new clinical trial will test whether acupuncture can help young cancer survivors experiencing CRA. “We’ve seen some survivors’ periods return after just one or two months of acupuncture,” says Dr. Mao. “However, we haven’t yet studied how effective acupuncture is for treating CRA in young cancer survivors, so that’s what we want to explore in this study.”

This two-year study, funded by the MSK 2024 AYA Translating Science to Care Grant, will involve 60 young female cancer survivors who finished chemotherapy in the past year and are dealing with

CRA. Participants will be randomly assigned to either the acupuncture group or a usual care group. The acupuncture group will receive weekly sessions for 12 weeks. Researchers will track changes in menstruation, menopausal symptoms, quality of life, and hormone levels to better understand how acupuncture affects ovarian function. The results of this study and future follow-up research can help improve the health and well-being of many young female cancer survivors.

If you're interested in learning more about the AcuAYA study or finding out if you're eligible to participate, please contact the study team at medacuaya@mskcc.org.

Massage for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy

By Omar Martinez, LMT



Omar Martinez is a licensed massage therapist with experience in the oncology field. His decision to follow this path came from his own battle with cancer, inspiring him to help others facing similar challenges.

What is chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy?

Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) is a side effect that can occur when patients with cancer undergo chemotherapy. It happens when chemotherapy drugs damage the nerves outside of the brain and spinal cord. This nerve

damage can result in symptoms such as tingling, numbness, pain, or weakness, especially in the hands and feet. These symptoms can make everyday tasks more difficult and, in some cases, may be long-lasting or permanent.

How can oncology massage therapy help?

Oncology massage therapy is a specialized type of massage designed for people with cancer or those who have undergone cancer treatments. It aims to reduce pain, stress, and fatigue. For people dealing with CIPN, this type of massage can improve blood circulation, alleviate nerve pain, and promote overall relaxation. Gentle massage techniques can also reduce muscle tightness and help people feel better overall, making it easier to manage the symptoms of peripheral neuropathy.

What are some self-treatment options and tips for people living with CIPN?

In addition to professional treatments like oncology massage, there are several things people can do at home to alleviate CIPN symptoms. Light exercises such as walking or stretching can help improve blood flow and prevent muscle stiffness. Moisturizing the hands and feet and soaking them in warm (not hot) water can also provide relief. Wearing comfortable shoes and avoiding extreme temperatures (both hot and cold) can protect sensitive areas. It's essential to consult your doctor before starting any new treatments or exercises to ensure they are safe for you.

If you are interested in learning more about massage therapy at MSK, call 646-449-1010 to schedule an appointment.

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



Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



Xiang Sha Liu Jun Zi Tang (XSLJZT) is a traditional Chinese medicine formula made up of eight different herbs. It has a long history of use as a treatment for vomiting, gastric fullness, and symptoms and signs of gastrointestinal disturbance.

Current evidence suggests that XSLJZT is effective against diarrhea, upset stomach, and Helicobacter pylori-associated disease that includes stomach ulcers, pain, and swelling of the stomach lining. This formula has also been reported to be more effective than medications known

as prokinetic agents that are used to help move food along the digestive tract.

Because XSLJZT contains Asian ginseng that can increase risk of bleeding, patients should stop taking this formula at least one week before surgery.

For more details about XSLJZT, 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](#)).



Upcoming Online Programming

[Register online today](#) to join an upcoming wellness program. 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



APRIL

- › **Series:** Traditional Chinese Medicine & Qigong for Cancer Care
Tuesdays, April 29 to June 3
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

MAY

- › **Series:** Walk & Workout in Central Park
Mondays, May 5 to June 9 (no class May 26)
12 p.m. to 1 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Mechanics of Breathing: Perfect Exchange
Wednesday, May 7
1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

JUNE

- › **Workshop:** Ayurvedic Nutrition & Cooking for Self-Healing
Tuesday, June 10
1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Acupuncture for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy
Monday, June 16
5 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

