

About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Spring 2026

CHIEF'S NOTE



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

As spring arrives, we're reminded of the importance of renewal, hope, and thoughtful care during every stage of the cancer journey. At MSK's Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service (IMWS), our mission is to support your well-being by combining evidence-based integrative therapies with compassionate, whole person care.

In this issue, we're pleased to share information about a new research study exploring an herbal option for pain management, announce our upcoming Survivorship Celebration, and learn about the martial arts practices of tai chi and qigong. We also share information about a Chinese herbal medicine formula for constipation.

We hope you find this issue informative and empowering as you explore ways to support your health this season.

Be well,
Jun

New Study Evaluates Herbal Topical Plaster for Pain Management

By Xiaotong Li, PhD, L.Ac

Memorial Sloan Kettering is pleased to share that a new research study is now open for enrollment. This study focuses on improving pain management for people living with cancer and cancer survivors.



Pain can be a challenging concern for many patients, even with standard treatments. While opioids are often helpful, they can also cause side effects and may not fully relieve pain for everyone. This new study, called **EASE (Integrating Topical Herbal Plasters to Enhance Pain Management and Reduce Opioid Use in Cancer Patients)**, will explore whether adding a topical (on-the-skin) herbal plaster can be used safely and effectively alongside opioids to help manage pain.

Specifically, the study will look at whether the herbal plaster can help reduce pain severity; lessen the need for short term opioids (taken as needed); and reduce common opioid-related side effects such as nausea, dizziness, and constipation. Participants will receive seven daily topical herbal plasters and will be monitored throughout the study period using questionnaires.

Participation is voluntary, and all study-related care is provided at no cost. Each participant will have the option to receive up to \$100 in gift cards for completing the study.

Dr. Jun J. Mao, lead researcher of EASE, shares, "This study is important because its findings will help researchers develop better strategies to enhance the safety and effectiveness of pain management for people with cancer who require opioids for pain."

Who May Be Eligible

You may be able to participate if you:

- Are 18 years or older and able to communicate in English
- Have cancer or a history of cancer
- Are currently taking short-term opioids for pain
- Have localized pain (such as muscle or joint pain, bone pain, or abdominal pain)
- Do not have allergies to herbal products

Additional eligibility criteria apply and will be reviewed by the study team.

Interested in Learning More?

To find out if this study may be right for you, please contact the MSK Integrative Medicine Research Team.

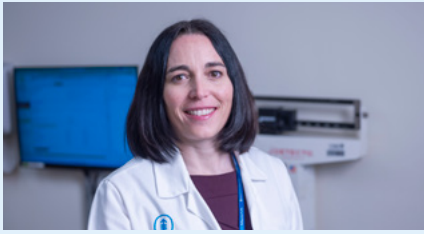
Email: EASEStudy@mskcc.org | Phone: 332-229-1764



SAVE THE DATE

MSK Survivorship Celebration 2026 – Resilience in Motion

Friday, June 12, 2026 | 4:00 PM ET via Zoom



Jessica Scott, PhD
Director, Exercise Oncology Program

Please join Memorial Sloan Kettering’s Integrative Medicine & Wellness Service and Survivorship Program **“MSK Survivorship Celebration 2026: Resilience in Motion”** — a special virtual event to honor cancer survivors, caregivers, and the many paths of life after cancer.

“Resilience in Motion” reflects both the physical and emotional movement that defines survivorship—whether through rebuilding strength, embracing wellness, or stepping into a new chapter of life beyond diagnosis.

Keynote speaker and MSK exercise oncology expert Dr. Jessica Scott will explore the important role exercise plays in cancer survivorship, sharing the latest evidence behind its benefits and offering supportive, practical guidance to help you begin—or continue—an exercise routine that feels right for you.

The event will also feature:

- A multidisciplinary panel of survivorship clinicians addressing common questions and long-term care
- Patient and caregiver stories highlighting resilience, hope, and real-life experiences
- Experiential movement-based wellness practices

Whether you are newly transitioning into survivorship or years beyond treatment, this event is designed to support, empower, and connect you with resources to help you move forward with confidence.

Visit [this page](#) to register!



ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

Ji Chuan Jian

By Jyothirmal Gubili, MS



Ji Chuan Jian (JCJ) is a traditional Chinese medicine formula made up of six different herbs. It has historically been used as a treatment for constipation.

Small studies of patients with constipation indicate that JCJ may help shorten the colonic transit time (time it takes for food to move from the small intestine into the rectum) and improve

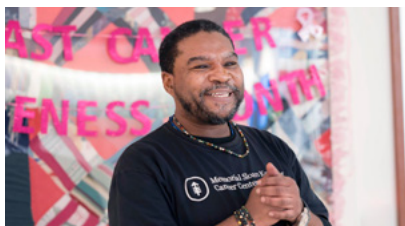
the quality of life. This formula also helped decrease symptoms in those with functional constipation (condition in which patients have hard, infrequent bowel movements that are often difficult or painful to pass). Larger trials are needed to strengthen the evidence.

It is important that patients consult with their healthcare providers before taking any herbal formulas.

For more details about JCJ, 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).



Practicing Tai Chi and Qigong During Cancer



By Malik Cadwell

Lifelong martial artist Malik Cadwell is an MSK mind-body instructor who integrates martial arts and meditation into therapeutic care for pediatric and adult patients and families. He leads community-based [tai chi classes](#) in collaboration with MSK partners across New York City.

What is the difference between qigong and tai chi?

People often ask me about the differences between tai chi and qigong. It's helpful to understand the relationship between these practices, which are closely related.

Tai chi is actually a specific form of qigong. It is based on the movements of the martial art form Tai Chi Chuan, which means "Grand Ultimate Fist." Tai chi was developed from Taoist philosophy, emphasizing harmony with nature and balance, with movements mimicking those of a snake and a crane.

Qigong, often translated as "Energy Cultivating Exercise," is easier to approach and learn more quickly. It typically involves shorter routines that focus on intentional breathing, posture alignment, mindfulness, rhythmic movement, and gentle stretching.

Tai chi, by contrast, follows a longer sequence with roots in self-defense

and is a practice that has been refined and deepened over time.

What are the benefits of qigong and tai chi for people with a cancer diagnosis?

Both practices are gentle mind-body practices that can support people with a cancer diagnosis by promoting relaxation, stress reduction, and emotional wellbeing. The slow, mindful movements can help calm the mind, as well as build leg strength, flexibility, and balance, improving circulation and self-regulation. Importantly, they are highly adaptable and can be practiced standing, seated in a chair, or even from bed, making them accessible across treatment and recovery.

What are the best ways to get started with these practices?

People can start by finding a qualified instructor, ideally one experienced in working with people impacted by cancer. Begin slowly, choosing beginner or therapeutic classes and practicing at a comfortable pace. You can learn more about MSK offerings on our website. Online videos or virtual classes can also be helpful resources for home practice. MSK offers a [Tai Chi Video Series](#) and martial arts classes in its [Integrative Medicine at Home Video Library of Mind-Body and Fitness Classes](#). Most importantly, listen to your body, modify movements as needed (including seated or bed-based practice), and practice consistently, even for short periods.



Upcoming Wellness Programming

Integrative Medicine offers a regular schedule of in-person and online classes, workshops, and series. 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**.

