

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Fall 2025

## CHIEF'S NOTE



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With the arrival of autumn, the air turns crisp, and days grow shorter. Fall invites us to slow down, restore balance, and deepen our focus on what nourishes us—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In this issue, we explore a new research study on managing constipation and share recent findings in exercise oncology. Dr. Hyowoun Jyung reflects on the role of mindfulness during the cancer journey, and we introduce the Chinese herbal formula Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan.

Our integrative medicine community remains committed to supporting your well-being with compassionate, evidence-based care. We encourage you to explore our offerings and pass this newsletter along to someone who may benefit. Let's move into this season of transition with awareness, strength, and connection—together.

Be well,  
Jun

## Cutting Edge Research Explores Benefits of Exercise During Cancer

By Christina Seluzicki, MBE

Traditionally, rest was emphasized during cancer treatment, but emerging research shows that exercise is not only safe, but it can also be highly beneficial during and after treatment. Now, groundbreaking research from MSK's Exercise Oncology (ExOnc) Research Program is using digital health tools and remotely-delivered, supervised exercise programs to explore whether exercise can prevent or delay a cancer diagnosis and reduce the risk of cancer recurrence.

The research also explores whether exercise can improve tolerance to standard cancer therapies and reduce long-term side effects, such as cardiovascular disease. The ExOnc team is translating these findings into individualized care plans that support patients across the cancer continuum. By moving beyond the traditional "one-size-fits-all" model, this evidence-based approach is setting a new standard for lifestyle management in oncology.



"Exercise is not only safe during treatment—it can significantly improve quality of life, speed up recovery, and lower the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease," says Dr. Jessica Scott, Head of the Exercise Oncology Program and principal investigator. "We're studying how remotely-delivered, supervised exercise programs can help patients at every stage—from diagnosis to survivorship. Many patients share how meaningful the encouragement to stay active is during one of the most difficult times in their lives. Our goal is to make this kind of personalized support more widely accessible."



Three studies are underway in the ExOnc Research Program in individuals recently diagnosed with breast or gastrointestinal cancer receiving chemotherapy, and in women who were previously treated for breast cancer. All participants receive a treadmill and a study kit containing digital tools such as an iPad and a heart rate monitor for the duration of the study, and personalized exercise sessions are remotely supervised by ExOnc physiologists.

To learn more about these ongoing studies or to explore eligibility for participation, visit our website <https://www.mskcc.org/research-areas/research-teams/exercise-oncology-program> or email [ExOnc@mskcc.org](mailto:ExOnc@mskcc.org).

## New Study on Chinese Herbal Medicine for Constipation Opens

By Lingyun Sun, PhD

Constipation is a persistent and distressing symptom affecting up to 90% of cancer survivors. Recommended treatments include laxatives, fiber supplements, and lifestyle/behavioral modifications. However, nearly 30% of patients who use laxatives still report severe constipation. In addition, side effects from laxatives are common and may include diarrhea, bloating and excessive gas, further worsening quality of life. Now, a new study, RELIEVE, will determine whether an oral Chinese herbal medicine ma-zi-ren-wan (MZRW) can improve bowel movements for cancer survivors with chronic constipation.

MZRW is a traditional Chinese herbal medicine containing six different herbs. It is widely consumed as an over-the-counter medicine by patients with constipation in China. “At MSK, we have used Chinese herbal medicine for cancer symptom management for more than five years, says Dr. Jun Mao, the principal investigator of the study. “Our follow-up data shows that the response rate of MZRW



for constipation is over 75%. It is safe and has no known herb-drug interactions with cancer treatment.”

Participants in the study will be randomly assigned to receive either MZRW or placebo (tablets) orally for two weeks and will be followed up for an additional two weeks. This research has the potential to help provide a higher-level evidence for use of Chinese herbal medicine for cancer symptom management.

The RELIEVE study is supported by the MSK Herbal Education and Research in Oncology (HERO) program. You can contact the study team at [abouttherbs@mskcc.org](mailto:abouttherbs@mskcc.org) to learn if you might be eligible to participate.



## Practicing Mindfulness During Cancer



By Hyowoun Jyung, MD

*Dr. Hyowoun Jyung is an integrative medicine specialist. She uses a holistic approach that includes acupuncture, mindfulness, and other integrative therapies to help manage symptoms such as fatigue, pain, nausea, anxiety, and hot flashes.*

Mindfulness is paying attention and being aware of what's happening in the present moment without judgment. It does not have to involve quieting the mind, but rather noticing the thoughts, sensations

and feelings that are present as they come and go.

Mindfulness can be practiced in our day-to-day life such as when holding a cup of tea, noticing the warmth and sensations in our hands. When we are eating, noticing the colors and textures of our food. When we are walking, noticing the breath, the sensations in our body, and sounds around us. And when we are in a conversation with others, being fully present as we listen or speak and notice our emotions in the moment.

By being present in the moment and not dwelling in the past or worrying about the future, we can allow our bodies to respond to perceived stressors more wisely without reacting. Stress reaction leads to physiological changes that can be harmful. Whether it's the uncertainty about the treatment response or fear of recurrence, using mindfulness,

we can learn to approach these stressors with more acceptance, ease, and compassion.

Mindfulness has been the focus of much research over the last few decades with evidence indicating its benefits in cancer populations. This has led the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) to recommend mindfulness-based programs for reducing anxiety and depression.

Mindfulness-based programs have also been shown to improve cancer-related fatigue both during and after the completion of cancer treatment. In addition, growing evidence indicates that mindfulness can help reduce pain. More research is underway.

## ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

### Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



Tian Wang Bu Xin Dan (TWBXD) is a traditional Chinese medicine formula made up of 15 herbs and cinnabar, a mineral. It has been historically used to treat insomnia and palpitations.

Small studies suggest benefits of TWBXD in alleviating insomnia and reducing palpitations. It was also found to be comparable to cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) in treating insomnia as well as improving sleep quality in patients with cancer. In addition, this formula helped reduce anxiety and

perimenopause-like syndrome in patients with breast cancer.

Patients should always consult with their physicians before taking herbal formulas.

*For more details about TWBXD, 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](#)<sup>SM</sup>).*

