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...
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 to watch a replay of the event.

About Herbs

**Feature of the Month**

Shiitake Mushrooms

By Jyothirmai 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.

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.

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**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.

**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.

**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

**Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center**

1429 First Avenue at East 74th Street
Appointments: 646-888-0800
www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine

**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.

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.