

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Summer 2022

## CHIEF'S NOTE



*Jun Mao, MD, MSCE  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service*

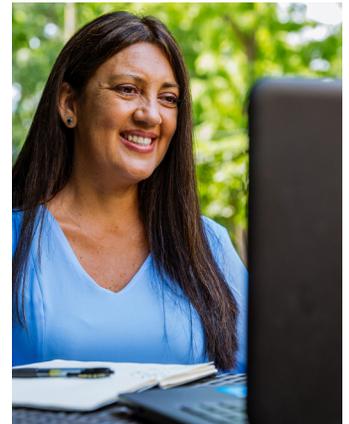
The last couple of years have been challenging for the world, and the cancer community has been no exception. As we continue to face the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to recognize its influence on our minds and take steps to care for our mental health and wellbeing. In this issue, we introduce a new study to treat anxiety in cancer survivors using music therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy, and patient advocate Jodi MacLeod discusses how she has used integrative medicine techniques to facilitate a calm and steady mind. We also share the evidence for rhodiola and talk to Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) marital arts instructor Malik Cadwell about how practices like tai chi and kung fu can support our bodies and minds. As always, we are excited to share our upcoming programming.

Be well,  
Jun

## New Study Compares Integrative Treatments for Anxiety in Cancer Survivors

by Christina Seluzicki

Anxiety is a common and troublesome symptom that many people impacted by cancer may experience. Feelings of worry and restlessness combined with sleep difficulties and depressed mood can all contribute to daily suffering that impacts a person's quality of life. Although medications are available to help manage anxiety, there are promising non-medication treatments available as well.



MELODY, a new research study at MSK funded by a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Award, aims to compare the effectiveness of two of these treatments - virtual music therapy and virtual cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) - in cancer survivors. "People with cancer commonly experience anxiety, but the COVID-19 pandemic has caused added psychological distress for many," says lead study investigator Dr. Jun J. Mao, chief of MSK's Integrative Medicine Service. "We want to not only determine which of these two treatments is better for which individuals, but also to make them as easily accessible to as many people as possible."

Researchers plan to enroll 300 English- and Spanish-speaking participants into the study. They will be randomly assigned to the virtual music therapy group or the virtual CBT group. A subgroup of 60 participants will be invited to participate in interviews after completing their treatment so that researchers can understand their experiences with their specific treatment. In addition to being open to patients at MSK, the study will soon be open to patients at the Miami Cancer Institute, an MSK Alliance member.

To learn more about the MELODY study and determine your eligibility, **call 646-449-1028** or **email [medmelodystudy1@mskcc.org](mailto:medmelodystudy1@mskcc.org)**. You can learn about our open integrative medicine research studies [here](#).



## 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**.



### COST

**Workshops:** \$20 for members;  
\$25 regular price

**Series:** \$100 for members;  
\$125 regular price

### SEPTEMBER

- › **Workshop: Building Body Awareness Through Core Strength and Yoga**  
*Monday, September 12, 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM*
- › **Series: Yoga for Core Strength**  
*Tuesday, September 20 to Tuesday, October 25  
6:00 PM to 7:15 PM*
- › **Workshop: Acupuncture for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy**  
*Thursday, September 22, 6:00 PM to 7:15 PM*

### ABOUT HERBS FEATURE

## Rhodiola

by Jyothirmai Gubili

Rhodiola is a perennial plant common in the mountainous areas of Asia and Eastern Europe. It is used in traditional medicine to treat depression, fatigue, to enhance mental and physical performance, and to support immune function.

Data from animal studies indicate that salidroside, the active compound in rhodiola, is anti-inflammatory, protects the nervous system, and may prevent cancer. In small clinical studies, rhodiola supplementation was found to improve mental performance, stress-induced fatigue, generalized anxiety disorder, mild to moderate depression, as well as physical endurance.

In breast cancer patients receiving epirubicin (Ellence), a chemotherapy medication, salidroside protected the heart. Larger trials are needed to confirm these findings.



Patients should consult their doctors before taking rhodiola supplements as they may interact with prescription antidepressants and central nervous system stimulants.

For more details about rhodiola, see our [full monograph](#) on the About Herbs website.

**Did you know we offer private virtual yoga, meditation, and martial arts sessions?  
To learn more, call 646-449-1010**



# Protecting Our Resilience Through the Pandemic

by Jodi MacLeod



*Jodi MacLeod is a patient advocate and cancer survivor who contributes to patient-centered outcomes research trials in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service. She also serves as secretary of the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) and is co-chair of the SIO Patient Advocate Committee.*

As patients, we know how it feels to be knocked down by cancer and its treatments. Cancer affects our bodies, but also our minds. Even after active treatment, we can remain vulnerable to the experience of anxiety or depression as we struggle to maintain our resilience with all the changes cancer brings to our lives.

Over the past two and half years, the global COVID-19 pandemic has delivered a similar experience to us all. Like cancer, the pandemic brought a sudden interruption of life as we knew it and put our health and our loved ones at risk. The virus swept away the illusion of a predictable future and brought in a fog of uncertainty.

How are we to cope? We can turn to the science of the mind-body connection and learn how to offer ourselves the same compassion we automatically offer others. There are many ways to help your mind be present in your body, such as moving through a tai chi sequence or getting out for a stroll into nature. Mindfulness meditation can serve as a dimmer switch on our response to chronic stress and dial up the parasympathetic, or resting, nervous system.

It can be easier than you think to include simple mind-body techniques in your day to cultivate resilience. Schedule five minutes in your daily calendar to sit quietly and watch your breath or to take a short mindful walk in your neighborhood. You can also head over to [MSK's Meditation Station](#) and choose from soothing audio recordings such as the guided imagery meditation, [Day at the Beach](#) by MSK mind-body therapist, Robin Hardbattle. Both your mind and your body will thank you.

*Please consult your healthcare provider about any changes, gradual or sudden, in your level of anxiety, depression, or feelings of overwhelm.*

## IMS INSIGHTS

### Malik Cadwell on Martial Arts for Mental Health



*Malik Cadwell is a martial arts instructor in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service, where he teaches in the Integrative Medicine at Home membership program. He combines his background in psychology and behavioral health with martial arts practices for adults and children at MSK.*

#### **This is a challenging time for many people. How can martial arts support our mental wellbeing?**

Mental wellbeing can be thought of as a state of balance in Eastern philosophy. The Taoist tradition that gave birth to the martial arts and movement therapies known as tai chi chuan and the kung fu style

Baguazhang sees the mind as having both harmony and balance. The left brain is calculating, quantitative, logical, organized, verbal, and mathematical. The right brain is creative, artistic, imaginative, rhythmic, holistic, and visual. In Tao, we practice integrating these complementary opposite halves. We see this interaction in the classical imagery of yin and yang.

We can think of these complementary pairs in several ways, including the conscious and subconscious and the emotional mind and the wisdom mind. Finding control and coordinating balance of these opposing functions is the goal of sitting, standing, and moving meditation in the martial arts. Through these meditations, we seek to calm the mind so that we can focus and be present in the moment.



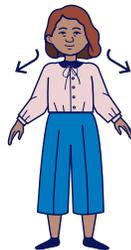
## What are some other benefits of practicing martial arts?

Learning a new skill that requires concentration, repetition, dedication, and focus, is the meaning of the Chinese term kung fu. This stimulation of the brain encourages it to grow and reorganize. As we continue to try and learn new skills, the brain “rewires” itself to form new connections in response to outside stimulation, injury, and illness.

This rewiring is one of the main benefits of martial arts exercises known as qigong, in which we build physical and mental energy through meditative movement. Deep breathing, gentle stretching movement and focus of the mind are the hallmarks of qigong. It has been shown to decrease anxiety, reduce stress and have a positive impact on depression, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

### Heaven and Earth Breath: Here is a simple qigong exercise that you can practice anywhere:

- › Stand or sit upright, with your head, neck, and spine straight and your feet shoulder width apart.
- › Lift your arms up at your sides and turn the palms up while inhaling through your nose.
- › Turn your palms down and lower your arms while exhaling through the mouth.
- › Repeat 8 times.



### Join Malik for Martial Arts Classes:

**Kung Fu (online)**, Wednesdays, 4:00 PM to 4:30 PM, through Integrative Medicine at Home. To learn more and register, visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome).

### From Self-Defense to Health Defense:

A FREE Martial Arts Program in Partnership with Abyssinian Baptist Church (132 Odell Clark Place), Thursdays, 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM, June 30 - July 28 and September 15 - October 13.

To learn more, please email [communityaffairs@mskcc.org](mailto:communityaffairs@mskcc.org).

## Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program

Start your membership online today. Visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome) to get started.

### 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

