



VOL. 13, No. 10

December 2015

CONTENTS

Group Notes November 2-4
Balance: Harvard Publication4-5
Humor 6
One Man’s Story 7
Calendar: Future Meetings..... 8

EDITOR: MARY SPRIFKE



Elizabeth Chaudhry
Mims Cushing
Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy
Harvard Health Publications
Charles Moore
Mary Sprifke

This newsletter is designed for educational and informational purposes only. The information contained herein is not intended to substitute for informed medical advice. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting a qualified health care provider. The Western Neuropathy Association (WNA) and the Yolo Neuropathy Groups (PN News) do not endorse any treatments, medications, articles, abstracts or products discussed herein.



Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no help at all.

Dale Carnegie

DAVIS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Program: DVD: *Building Better Balance* with Vanessa Kettler

Davis Senior Center
646 A Street, Davis, 95616
Call: Mary Sprifke (530) 756-5102 or
Retta Gilbert at (530) 747-0186

WOODLAND

TUESDAY: DECEMBER 8, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Program: Potluck Party
Woodland Community and Senior Center
2001 East Street,
Woodland 95695

Call: Elizabeth Chaudhry (530) 661-3859

SACRAMENTO

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1:30-3:30

Program: NO MEETING THIS MONTH

Northminster Presbyterian Church
3235 Pope Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95825
Call: Charles Moore (916) 485-7723

MEETING RECAPS



DAVIS NOVEMBER NOTES

By Mary Sprifke

In 2009, the Neuropathy Action Foundation hosted a conference in Sacramento. It was recorded and we chose to focus our meeting on Mims Cushing's DVD talk: **10 Tips for Managing PN**. She spoke for about ½ hour and shared personal experiences as well as wisdom gathered worldwide. Thanks to the internet, she was the recipient of shared stories by PN folk, and she said her speech is based upon the Wellness Chapter in her book, "**You CAN Cope With Peripheral Neuropathy 365 Days a Year.**"

Mims' 10 Tips for Managing Peripheral Neuropathy:

- 1. Be excited!** Times are changing in the medical world and both research and support are growing. The word "neuropathy" is more familiar with the public now. She noted that Randy Pausch, author of "The Last Lecture" lived with PN. She urged adding Google Alerts for current information and blogs. Her Website is www.MimsCushing.com and she welcomes stories. She suggests checking online for other PN newsletters by leaders nationwide. A small positive step she cited is that some topical creams now say, "For all kinds of Neuropathic Pain."
- 2. Think Gratitude.** Keeping a gratitude journal each day could be an effective approach to handling PN. She shared a story of being on a walk, passing people engaged with their iPhones. She spotted a gorgeous mallard duck, with sun-drenched flashing feathers and felt the impulse to point to it and share the beauty; but she realized that most were looking at the poop, not the feathers. Hmmmm.
- 3. Be Open to New Ideas.** Creativity is born in adversity and she reminded us that things we can't do now lead to new ways to do it or some other affirming activity. For Mims, this led to an African drumming circle she described as very calming.
- 4. Banish Toxic People.** If need be, 'get up and move' from an annoying situation. She recommends doctor Judith Orloff's book, *Dealing With Difficult People*. "Don't let them rent space in your head," she exclaims.
- 5. Volunteer.** Focus on something greater than yourself. Engage as you can. Find the right activity or task. Listen attentively ("You talk and I will listen.") Be kind, be nice and remember that smiling boosts your serotonin and that of those around you.
- 6. Love Cabbages and Caviar Equally.** Turn your chores into mere tasks that are followed by things or events that are your passion. You know, the fun stuff. Our lives aren't compartmentalized . . . "It takes ALL you do to make your own life." She recommends a book by Sue Bender titled *Plain and Simple*.
- 7. Be Kind to Your Body.** Find ways to be gentle with or to coddle yourself. Her example is to wear water shoes and perhaps a float belt when in the pool. Don't do exercises you hate and don't ever jump on a hard surface.
- 8. Let the Good Things Roll In.** We tend to worry and when we do, that can lead to missing

life's miracles. Find someone or something to laugh with (dogs are super!). Enjoy her suggestion for a facial: rub granulated sugar and olive oil on your face, then wash off and pat dry. Remember that crummy days will occur – spill your illness onto paper. Have a 5-minute pity party all by yourself, and avoid dumping your woes or mood on your family. Know these times do happen and prepare with music you love to listen to or some other pleasure you enjoy.

9. Enjoy Your Own Company. Friends come and go ... but you are always there, so treat yourself nicely. "You can't see yourself in running waters, but only in a still pond."

10. Embrace Something That Will Embrace You Back. Dogs, cats, small children, good conversations, shared fun activities. She reminds us the Internet has super stuff for us to find.

WOODLAND NOVEMBER NOTES

By Elizabeth Chaudhry

The Woodland Chapter of WMA was very happy to have **Sonya Wells**, pharmacist from Roseville, as our guest speaker. She brought handouts about peripheral neuropathy and how to treat it the Natural Way. We were able to make additional notes on the handouts and time was given to ask questions.

At the end of her presentation, we were given a multi-page handout with detailed information regarding hands-on treatments, pain site approaches as well as lifestyle changes, vitamins and herbs for neuropathy.

Her presentation was well received and of course, the wonderful handouts were of great help. She said that in some instances, Europe is ahead of the US in the field of natural treatments.

In conclusion, she shared with us that the Western Neuropathy Association (WNA) president Bev Anderson has a book from Europe with the latest information. A sincere thanks to Sonya for her informative presentation along with the great handouts!

Our December meeting will be a short potluck and Christmas get together.

Due to a changing family medical situation, I am stepping away from leadership of the Woodland chapter.

I will endeavor to be at the meetings whenever possible and I hope we can continue under new leadership. Elizabeth.

SACRAMENTO NOVEMBER NOTES

By Charles Moore

The Sacramento PN Support Group met on Tuesday, November 17, 2015, at Northminster Presbyterian. We had a small turn out of only 7 members, perhaps because the Sacramento Bee is no longer printing our meeting announcements each month. Mae Denman, Yoga instructor at the Sierra 2 Center, was scheduled to give a presentation on "Fall Prevention 101." Mae called me at 7:00 that morning to tell me that she had a cold and was unable to participate. So I checked the Internet for issues on fall prevention and found an article entitled "Balance training seems to prevent falls in seniors. The article noted that exercise programs help to prevent falls.

- Beyond better balance, the other benefits of multi-component exercise programs include:
- Faster reaction time. This can help you keep yourself upright if you start to fall by putting out an arm quickly to grab something stable.
- Improved coordination. This can directly help prevent falls but can also help you roll rather than crash as you go down.
- More muscle. Stronger and larger muscles can buffer the impact of a fall, providing some
- Stronger bones. Resistance exercises strengthen bones, and stronger bones are more resistant to fractures.
- Better brain function. Regular exercise helps maintain brain function with age. Clearer thinking may help you avoid situations that increase fall risk.

The article (below) then offered a simple way to begin improving balance: the Single-leg stance. You stand on one foot and raise the other foot a few inches and hold for 5 to 30 seconds. The trick lies in the ankle's strength and security. After presenting the article--in copies and reading the article aloud--, I invited the group to practice the single-leg stance, which the group did. Having taken tai chi and yoga classes and working out in a gym, moved on to some more extended exercises to achieve balance.

Balance training seems to prevent falls, injuries in seniors

Posted October 31, 2013, 3:19 pm, Updated October 31, 2013, 3:26 pm

Howard LeWine, M.D., Chief Medical Editor, Internet Publishing, Harvard Health Publications

Most people take balance for granted. They navigate without thinking, effort, or fear. For millions of others, though, poor balance is a problem. Some struggle with long-term dizziness or imbalance. Others suffer balance-related falls and injuries. A new study concludes that exercise can reduce not only the odds of falling but the odds of sustaining fall-related injuries.

French researchers analyzed the results of 17 trials that tested the effect of fall-prevention exercises on seniors' risk of falls and fall-related injuries. Overall, exercise programs reduced falls that caused injuries by 37%, falls leading to serious injuries by 43%, and broken bones by 61%. The report was published in the British Medical Journal.

Some of the exercise programs were specifically aimed at improving balance. Others were general exercise programs. Two focused on tai chi.

Balance and injury

When a toddler or child falls, he or she usually shakes it off and keeps moving. But when an older adult falls, there are often consequences. Broken bones limit mobility. They can also lead to a downward health spiral. Each year, thousands of older Americans die as a result of breaking a hip. Broken bones and head injuries can knock confidence, engender a fear of falling, and undermine independence.



We've known for some time that structured exercise with balance training helps reduce falls, and assumed that such programs would also help prevent fall-related injuries. The BMJ report supports that assumption.

Although balance training is the mainstay of fall prevention programs, any exercise that improves endurance, muscle strength and flexibility can help prevent falls and related injuries.

- Beyond better balance, the other benefits of multi-component exercise programs include:
- Faster reaction time. This can help you keep yourself upright if you start to fall by putting out an arm quickly to grab something stable.
- Improved coordination. This can directly help prevent falls but can also help you roll rather than crash as you go down.
- More muscle. Stronger and larger muscles can buffer the impact of a fall, providing some protection to bones and joints.
- Stronger bones. Resistance exercises strengthen bones, and stronger bones are more resistant to fractures.
- Better brain function. Regular exercise helps maintain brain function with age. Clearer thinking may help you avoid situations that increase fall risk.

Improving balance

In many urban areas, there's no shortage of classes aimed at improving balance. You can find them at senior centers, Y's and Jewish Community Centers, health clubs, and the like. There's also a lot you can do at home. The American College of Sports Medicine Standing recommends standing with one foot in front of another, lifting a foot off the floor, and shifting weight in various directions as three examples of home exercises.

Here's one from *Better Balance*, a Special Health Report from Harvard Medical School:



Single-leg stance

1. Stand up straight with your feet together and weight evenly distributed on both feet. Put your arms at your sides.
2. Lift your right foot a few inches off the floor, bending that knee slightly, and balance on your left leg. Hold this position for as long as you can. Five seconds is a good start; aim for 30 seconds.
3. Lower your foot to the starting position.
4. Repeat with your left leg. This completes one rep.
5. If you can, repeat once or twice more.

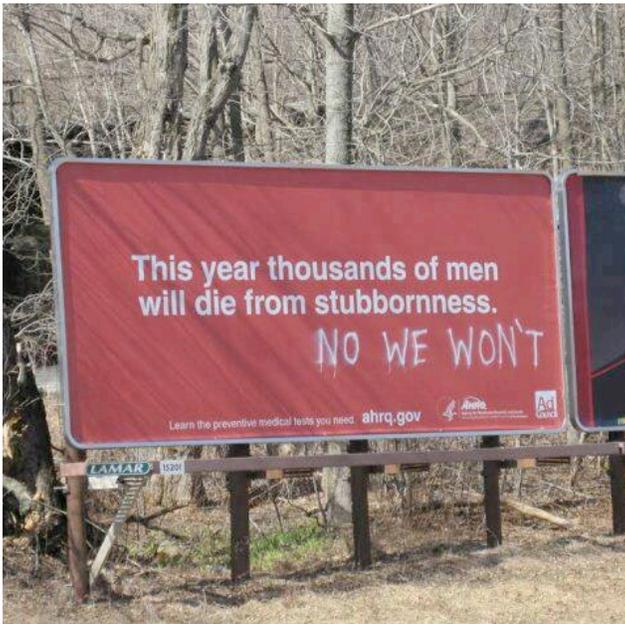
As you do this exercise, focus on a spot straight ahead. Try to maintain good posture throughout by keeping your chest lifted, your shoulders down and back, and your abdominal muscles braced. And breathe comfortably.

If this exercise is too hard, hold onto a chair or counter for support. If it's too easy, hold the leg lift for 60 seconds, or do it with your eyes closed.

Efforts to prevent falls are best started early in life rather than late in life. Even so, **you are never too old or too frail to exercise**. There are always routines that can fit your needs

It's To Laugh . . .

Who said men can't decorate?



1 picture = 1000 words



One Man's Story

From the Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy

About 15 years ago, Lance Quesenberry began developing peripheral neuropathy - he was 50 years old. His symptoms started with slight numbness in his feet just behind his toes; then a quiver in his left hand as he lifted his coffee cup. His handwriting became impaired. Fortunately, some of those early symptoms have gone away, but they have been replaced by others - tripping on sidewalks, dizziness, feet rolling over to the outsides - that have to be managed from day to day.

Living as normally as possible has helped him minimize the effects of his neuropathy. His focus is to assure that his mobility is optimal. He enjoys yoga, weight bearing exercise, Tai Chi, balance practice, water exercise and walking, finding time each day to do the exercises that he feels he need to do. Water exercise makes his feet feel almost normal for a while.

A rest or meditation during the afternoon revives him. He maintains his weight by eating a healthy diet and uses supplements and vitamins. He says, "A good foot cream can calm down the burning in my feet and at the end of the day nothing feels better than soaking my feet in Epsom salts." Then he massages his feet with a few drops of oil. He feels an ice pack can also be very comforting on the feet.

Balance can be a daunting challenge with neuropathy so Lance walks - a lot. Retro walking (walking backwards), walking in circles (good for physical and mental benefits), and walking straight lines. If there isn't a straight line, he imagines one. It works! He tries to find soft surfaces to walk on, like grass, as concrete can cause foot pain and burning. Other simple things are standing on one foot to brush his teeth, shave (no cuts so far), and wash dishes (nothing broken). He tries to be imaginative when practicing his balance - making it fun.

Wearing quality shoes is a must to minimize pain and assure safe walking. He likes Allen Edmonds dress shoes with rubber soles. The rubber sole assists with traction and decreases general foot pain; it even prevents foot heat on hot days. He now has more shoes than his wife in his quest to be pain free.

Routine medical care is very important to Lance's wellbeing. He sees Dr. Ahmet Höke, a neurologist at John Hopkins Hospital, for his neuropathy; his general practitioner is a holistic doctor who has helped him with nutrition and supplements. Several physical therapists have helped improve his neuropathic feet and dizziness. He uses mainstream PT as well as Integrative Manual Therapy, which can assist with the pain.

Lance had a good role model for living with PN. His father was diagnosed with motor neuropathy resulting from alcohol use or borderline diabetes when he was 62 years old. He had foot drop that worsened with time but he walked until his condition deteriorated. He went to water aerobics and when he could no longer do that, he did weights and the stationary bike. His doctors were amazed that he continued to walk (with two canes in his later years) until his death at 87 years old. He is an inspiration and as Lance says, "If he persevered, so can I!"

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Davis

2nd Tuesday, January 12, 3:30-5:00

(Mary Sprifke (530-756-5102))

Davis Senior Center

246 A Street, Davis



Sacramento

3rd Tuesday, January 19, 1:30-3:00

(Charles Moore 916-485-7723)

Northminster Presbyterian Church

3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento

The mission of the Yolo Neuropathy Groups is to ensure that through information, empowerment and mutual support, all may have hope and that no one will face their peripheral neuropathy alone.

Woodland

2nd Tuesday, January 12, 1:00-3:00

(Elizabeth Chaudhry (530-661-3859))

Woodland Community and Senior Center

2001 East Street, Woodland

RESOURCES:

1. Norman Latov M.D., Ph.D. – ***Peripheral Neuropathy: When the Numbness, Weakness and Pain Won't Stop***
2. Harry J. Gould, III, M.D., and Ph.D. – ***Understanding Pain: What It Is, Why it Happens and How It's Managed***
3. Alexander McLellan N.D. and Marc Spitz D.P.M. – ***The Numb Foot Book***
4. Mims Cushing & Norman Latov, MD – ***You CAN Cope With Peripheral Neuropathy 365 Days a Year***
5. John Senneff – ***Numb Toes and Aching Soles: Coping with Peripheral Neuropathy***
6. John Senneff – ***Numb Toes and Other Woes: More of Peripheral Neuropathy***
7. John Senneff – ***Nutrients for Neuropathy: How to use natural supplements to treat the severe pain of PN***
 - **The Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy- www.foundationforpn.org (a national organization)**
 - **Western Neuropathy Association (WNA) (formerly PCNA) – www.pnhelp.org or toll-free (877) 662-6298**
 - **www.neuropathyjournal.org**
 - **www.neuropathysupportnetwork.org**
 - **Neuropathy Journal at www.neuropathyjournal.org**
 - **Eugene B Richardson MDiv, MSM, EdM, MS, Patient Educator in the DVD “Coping with Chronic Neuropathy”**

To send *PN News* to others or if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact (530) 756-5102.

Yolo Neuropathy Groups
c/o Mary Sprifke, Editor
1121 Decatur Ct.
Davis, CA 95618