

PN News

Yolo County

VOL. 5, NO. 5

MAY 2007

The mission of the Yolo County Peripheral Neuropathy Support Groups (YCPNSG) is to insure, through Information, Empowerment and Mutual Support that all may have hope and no one faces their peripheral neuropathy alone.

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.
Henry Ford

Martha Chandley, Editor (916) 371-1125 kairoschandley@sbcglobal.net

May Yolo Neuropathy Group Plans

Woodland Neuropathy Group: Monday, May 7 at 4:30 pm,

Woodland Community & Senior Center, 2001 East Street

“Nutrition in the Golden Years”

Kevin Mould, MD, Family Practice, Woodland Health Care, Davis

Contact: Delia Genera at (530) 661-3238

Davis Neuropathy Group: Wednesday, May 9 at 2:30 pm

Institute for Restorative Health, 1460 Drew Avenue, Suite 300

“Bowen Therapy for Reducing Chronic Pain and Stress”

Raymond Augustyniak, PhD, Bowen Healing Systems, Sacramento

Contact: Martha Chandley at (916) 371-1125

West Sacramento Neuropathy Group: Thursday, May 17 at 2 pm

A. F. Turner Library, 1212 Merkley Avenue

“Relaxation techniques for Neuropathy Stress”

Audio tapes from Neuropathy Association & American Chronic Pain Association

Contact: Sandra Vinson at (916) 372-6093

About Our May Speakers

Born in London, England, **Kevin Mould, MD** received his BS degree in Nutrition from UC Berkeley and his medical degree from New York Medical College. His internship and residency was at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx in social medicine. He has a special interest in health maintenance and nutrition and is Board certified by the American Academy of Family Practice. He is on the staff of Woodland Healthcare, and is committed to long lasting, strong doctor/patient relationships.

As previously reported, **Bowen Therapist Raymond Augustyniak, PhD**, was literally dying of chemical poisoning from toxins at his work. After a great deal of prolonged suffering and no help from many doctors and different types of treatments, his life and health were totally restored after receiving a few treatments from an Auburn, CA Bowen therapist. Once a mechanical engineer, he became a master Bowen therapist, author and trainer of other practitioners. He will be discussing and demonstrating Bowen's unique techniques for relieving pain and stress at the Davis meeting.

May is Neuropathy Awareness Month in Northern California and May 14-18 is National Neuropathy Awareness Week in the US

There will be a lot going on in May with exciting plans unfolding, even as you read.

Thanks to **Tina Tockarschewsky**, Interim Executive Director, and **Ronnie Chaliff**, President of **The Neuropathy Association**, for a special grant and donations from some local PNeers, we shall soon have 500 charming, newly designed **NCCNA** posters available for raising awareness about neuropathy in our metro Sacramento region. They are scheduled to be placed on the **Sacramento RT** buses this month as a way to reach out to the broader community. We hope they'll soon be appearing on Yolo, Placer and El Dorado buses as well. Some additional posters will be available for distribution by support groups to area medical and community institutions.

We are extremely grateful to **RT's General Manager and CEO, Beverly Scott, PhD**, her board and staff for RT's continuing generosity in helping us get the word out in our ongoing public awareness campaign. We've enjoyed working with the staff of Encore Graphics in West Sacramento to develop the poster design in maroon on white poster board. It features a delightful cartoon representation of a foot and hand with symbols of the most common neuropathy symptoms that enumerates symptoms, directs people to call us, check out our regional [www.pnhelp.org] and national [www.neuropathy.org] web sites and urges those with the noted symptoms to see their doctors for diagnosis and treatment. Callers will be sent some essential neuropathy information and a list of area support group contacts in the target counties.

(If you have not joined NCCNA or renewed your membership for 2007, doing so at this time would be a great help in financing these and other outreach activities in Yolo County and across the region. Please use the membership form included with this newsletter.)

TNA has released their award winning 30 second **Public Service Announcement** spot that features the ever gracious **Angela Lansbury** In a lovely garden setting, talking about symptoms of neuropathy and urging viewers to see their physicians. As her late husband suffered from neuropathy, she well knows our realities. The PSA spot received a Bronze Telly Award for the National PSA contest from among 13,000 annual entries and is being distributed on the national CBS news-feed, as well as in local cities via the National Association of Broadcasters.

We will be working to make sure that Ms. Lansbury will be seen on area television stations as we continue our efforts to educate ourselves and the public about neuropathy. TNA has sent support group leaders across the US a wonderful public relations package with tips on how to maximize media and governmental agencies cooperation in promoting public awareness of neuropathy. **Could sure use some help in saturating Yolo resources with these tools. Call Martha at 916/371-1125 if interested in helping!**

The handsome new TNA brochures will be arriving soon and we hope you'll use them to join to help keep the momentum going in TNA's campaign to raise public awareness, improve the lives of those afflicted and ultimately seek a cure to prevent future millions from suffering.

Neuropathy Awareness Action Day: Let's Go to San Francisco Together!

Last month's newsletter included a conference agenda and registration form for the event sponsored by the **Neuropathy Action Foundation**, with the hope that many of us will be able to attend the event on Tuesday, June 26th. The event will be at UCSF's Mission Bay Conference at 1675 Owens Street in San Francisco. One of the featured speakers will be Jeffrey Ralph, MD,

head of the TNA Neuropathy Center at UCSF.

The cost for the total experience of bus ride, afternoon lectures and panel discussions, the reception and dinner is only \$25 for each person with neuropathy and one other person, such as a spouse or care-giver. The charge for others will be \$75. The registration deadline is June 5. Early registration is particularly encouraged, especially for those with special mobility needs. You may use the enclosed registration form for June 5th deadline.

This is a marvelous opportunity for you and yours to learn more about the types of neuropathy, your health care rights and alternative treatment options, and visit with other Pners from across the region, as well as representatives of the medical community who are being encouraged to attend.

NAF is providing free bus service from Auburn to San Francisco and back for 47 folks who can get to the pick-up sites. For those who have asked about walking difficulties, we have been assured that on-site walking at the conference center will be quite minimal. However, for those riding the bus and needing an electric wheelchair or scooter, please note that on your form. Once your registration form and check has been received in San Francisco, NCCNA board member **Grant Whitney** will be notified and will call to confirm your place on the bus and discuss how best to accommodate your mobility needs. You may call him at **530-887-9881** with questions. He is working with NAF to make arrangements for accommodating the special mobility needs of our attendees.

The bus route from Auburn to San Francisco will have several pick-up points, but for most of our readers, the relevant ones are in Sacramento and Yolo Counties, as follows: **Sacramento at Coco's at 1840 Arden Way at 10:20 am. West Sacramento at Baker's Square Restaurant at 1235 Harbor at 10:40 am. Davis at Burger King at Mace and Chiles Roads at 11 am.** All three locations have safe parking and will be well lit for our returning arrivals later that evening following a departure from San Francisco shortly after 8 pm.

You may wish to bring a bottle of water and a sack lunch to eat on the way, although there will be snacks served on the patio from 1-3 or so. Reasonably priced lunches may be purchased at the cafeteria on the first floor but sessions will begin shortly after our arrival. The reception will be at 5 and dinner will be from 6-8.

NAF and NCCNA are hoping there will be a very large turnout to drive home the message that we Pners are many and we deserve a greater responsiveness to our needs and concerns from the medical community, Congress and the legislature, governmental agencies and insurance companies that are limiting our health care options. However tiring the day might be for many of us, this is our chance to do something very concrete and really significant for ourselves and others dealing with Neuropathy. Come to learn, be inspired and empowered! Please, do join us on June 26th!

“Peripheral Artery Disease Seminar”
Jack W. Casas, MD, FACC, Cardiologist, Mercy Medical Group
3160 Folsom Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95816. 916-733-3344

The April 2 meeting in Woodland was a phenomenal success with a tremendous speaker and a crowd so large that we had to open up an adjacent room to accommodate everyone! Leader Delia Genera's long-time dream of having a “full house” had come true at last! Some 70 people from around the County were eager to welcome Woodland native and resident Dr. Casas to learn about the causes of their leg pain and what to do about it. And they were delighted with his funny, informative and patient-friendly power point presentation. Special thanks to the Davis and Woodland newspapers for the publicity bringing so many together to learn about **Peripheral Artery Disease**,

and how it is diagnosed and treated.

In addition to his work in Sacramento with Mercy Medical Group, Dr. Casas is at Woodland HealthCare once a week, and is one of two cardiologists in the region specializing in a non-surgical, out-patient procedure to resolve a leg pain and weakness problem common with seniors known as intermittent claudication that occurs with exertion but then subsides with rest.

Peripheral arterial disease is a common circulatory problem in which narrowed arteries reduce the blood flow to one's limbs, causing "hardening of the arteries" from a build up of fatty deposits. Some 10 million people over 50 years of age have the condition, while 12-20% of those over 75 are likely to have the condition known as **atherosclerosis**. Common risk factors for the problem are smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, being overweight, sedentary life styles and a family history of having heart or vascular disease.

PAD symptoms and complications: With blocked arteries, the resulting diminished blood flow means our muscles are deprived of needed nutrients and oxygen causing pain and discomfort. Other symptoms can be tingling, numbness, coldness, leg cramps, and ulcers/wounds that may be slow to heal. These are also common with peripheral neuropathy. Peculiar to PAD are skin discoloration, toe nail changes, and hair loss on the lower legs and feet. Unfortunately many with PAD believe, or even been told by their doctors, that these symptoms are just a part of "getting older" and so never seek treatment for their symptoms until substantial damage has developed. One result is that we are now seeing some 400,000 foot and/or leg amputations a year, virtually all of which could probably have been prevented with proper care. And mortality rates increase considerably after an amputation.

Diagnosing PAD: Internists and podiatrists frequently refer PAD patients to Dr. Casas for further diagnosis and treatment procedures. If neuropathy is also present, he will screen for the presence of vasculitis - a blood vessel inflammation. One of the diagnostic screening procedures is the ABI – **Ankle Brachial Index**, particularly if there is a slow, faint pulse in cold feet. The ABI measures a resting blood pressure measured at the ankle and arm, then measured again after five minutes on a treadmill. If the index numbers drop after exercise, significant narrowing and/or blockage of arteries are likely present with remedial treatments needed. However, some ABI results can be misleading and additional tests may be required, such as ultrasound, x-ray and/or an MRI.

Treatments can include lifestyle adjustments like low fat and low salt dietary changes and regular exercise, control of diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure levels, cessation of smoking, and medications such as statins, blood thinners, aspirins, blood pressure meds, etc. When these are not sufficient, angioplasty or a variety of surgical procedures may be needed.

Angioplasty is Dr. Casas' speciality and involves inserting a thin tube (catheter) into the blocked or narrowed artery. A wire with a deflated balloon is passed through the catheter to the narrowed area. The balloon is then inflated, compressing the deposits against the artery wall. A mesh tube, or stent, may be left in the artery to help keep it open for better blood flow. Angioplasty may also be done with laser technology.

There were many good questions and comments from people who had experienced his great care or were considering a consultation for treatment. His manner was a delightful balance of playfulness and seriousness that engendered respect and trust from those present. And he is willing to speak to other neuropathy groups.

Thanks, Dr. Casas, for your most delightful and informative presentation! We hope you'll come to Davis later this year to share your expertise about PAD with many more in our communities.

“Vitamins, Toxins and Neuropathy”

**Marco Vespignani, ND, Institute for Restorative Health,
1460 Drew Avenue, Suite 300, Davis, CA 95618 530/758-4474**

Dr. Vespignani is Medical Director of the Restorative and Women’s Health and is part of the interdisciplinary treatment team that makes healthcare at the Institute particularly innovative and effective. His BS in biology was from the University of Hawaii and his Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine from the prestigious Bastyr University. He completed his family practice residency at the Bastyr Center for Natural Health. **Among his many specialties are nutrition and environmental medicine.**

His bio at the Institute web site (www.4irh.com) says this about him: “I believe that all individuals can lead happier and healthier lives through exercise, good nutrition, positive thinking, and a supportive environment. It is my mission to help create that environment for my patients.” Sounds like the kind of doctor we all need and many of us long for.....

PNers around the region have enjoyed Dr. Marco’s wit, charm and expertise on other occasions, but the long awaited April Davis presentation was to have been specifically on vitamins, toxins and neuropathy. As we had some new folks, we spent some time on introductions and sharing about the types of neuropathy we were dealing with, some with probable toxin involvements, including carbon monoxide. Questions asked led to some other fascinating areas as well.

Why is it that our symptoms develop in our extremities? Dr. Marco explained that our longest nerves off the spine reach all the way to our toes and fingers carrying electrical impulses to and from the spine. If the oxygen and nutrients needed for their cellular integrity become hampered in any way, whether from diabetes, toxins or other causes, the nerves become damaged, disrupting the messages. So we may develop a variety of sensory symptoms like tingling and numbness. Sometimes the damage is more proximal, like with the muscles in our legs or arms.

One newcomer reported that he’d had a very thorough work up by his neurologist but he was now waiting for a muscle biopsy hoping to find what was causing the great muscle weakness in his legs that become worse with activity, but lessened while resting. Dr. Marco said that some muscle weakness can be caused by **myasthenia gravis (MG)** an autoimmune neuromuscular disease, and mentioned the role of **acetylcholine**. One of the NINDS resource booklets available to us, explains MG this way:

Myasthenia gravis is caused by a defect in the transmission of nerve impulses to muscles. With normal communication, the nerve endings release a neurotransmitter substance called acetylcholine. This travels through the neuromuscular junction and binds to acetylcholine receptors which are then activated to generate a muscle contractions. But with MG, antibodies block, alter or destroy the nerve receptors, preventing the muscle contraction from occurring.

Some voiced complaints about their experiences of getting **EMG and NCV** tests and wondered why they were used and how they worked. Dr. Marco explained that the Institute’s expert on that was Dr. Kayvan Haddadan, but he understood that an Electromyogram measures the electrical activity of muscle, whereas a Nerve Conduction Velocity exam measures the speed of conduction of an electrical impulse through a nerve. These diagnostic procedures can help determine where the nerve damage is located and may help in determining the cause of the damage.

(For more information about these important studies for diagnosing neuropathy, go to this url resource: <http://www.stjohnmercy.org/healthinfo/test/neuro/TP012.asp>).

Regarding vitamins and special nutrients, Dr. Marco shared several points. He thinks systematically, zooming out AND going down to the cellular level, asking **what is needed to support or protect our nerves**. The omega 3 oils are important for combating inflammation and auto-immune diseases. He recommended mixing up several flavors of vinaigrettes using flax seed oils. Taking fish oil capsules is helpful but several are needed to equal a much smaller amount of flax seed oil. Toxic levels of B-6 can cause the neuropathic feelings of tight stockings and gloves, so we should take in no more than 25-50 mg/day. B-12 deficiencies, common with the malabsorption problems of aging and the use of metformin for diabetes, are a cause of neuropathy, but the methylmelanic acid test is essential to get a correct reading on this status. Magnesium is important for dilating our blood vessels. Absorption of heavy metals from a variety of sources are counteracted by substances that can pull the metals from the system to be evacuated through urination.

He uses the services of **Spectracell Laboratories** in diagnosing nutritional deficiencies, as they are leaders in “functional intracellular nutrient analysis.” One of their brochures: “Are you Getting the Nutrients You Need?” explains that balanced diets and multi-vitamin regimens may not be enough because of biochemical individuality, absorption differences, effects of chronic illnesses, aging and lifestyle. Their tests measure 11 vitamins, five minerals, four amino acids, and six other metabolism related components. Research has shown that 50% of those taking supplements are deficient in specific nutrients. From Spectracell’s results, Dr. Marco can recommend a highly specific treatment nutrient enhancement regimen.

Dr. Marco’s HEALTHIER seminars provide extensive information on a wide range of environmental toxins that are quite injurious to our health, some of which cause neuropathies.

Thanks, Dr. Marco, for spending time with us in April at the Davis PN group and the NCCNA leadership meeting in Sacramento. You’re terrific in adding to our understanding for better health. We look forward to learning more about these issues in an encore visit later in the year!

Massage Therapy for Neuropathy and Other Chronic Conditions

Warren Jones, CMT, Institute for Restorative Health
1460 Drew Avenue, Suite 300, Davis, CA 95618 530/758-4474

In addition to his wonderful services as a massage therapist at the Institute, Warren is also Director of Programs, coordinating the many workshops, seminars and other special events that comprise the Institute’s strong commitment to patient education services for the community. His sharing with us in West Sacramento included information from both roles.

This dear, gentle soul has been in private practice since 1994, having completed some 800 hours of training in a wide range of massage therapies and orthobionomy, as well as training others. He works very eclectically, tailoring components of his sizable repertoire to meet the highly individualized needs of his clients. As an athlete himself, he can also function as a personal trainer, guiding his massage clients into an exercise regimen to strengthen their overall health goals.

Conceding that massage can be a relatively expensive treatment modality that is generally not covered by health insurance programs, he commended one of his own self-care techniques for stimulating blood flow in his feet by using a softly “spiked” hard rubber ball (available at Fleet Feet) as a massage technique. Rolling our feet over a tennis ball will work as well and we can control the degree of pressure in the rolling movements. He also showed us how to use the tennis ball to work out tense knots by massaging our backs, shoulders or arms while standing against a wall or lying on the floor over the ball.

As with all movement and body work therapies, we must remember to breathe deeply, as we tend to “stop breathing” with pain, thus exacerbating our pain’s intensity. We need to understand the

pain cycles that can worsen our conditions. Pain, stress, fatigue, and anxiety all feed on each other, further worsening our pain reactions, often leaving us “paralyzed” emotionally and physically. Massage is one of the most effective means for breaking through the cycles, whether the preference is for gentle touches and gentle rocking or deep tissue kneading of muscles. Not only can massage be effective for acute periods of distress, but it can also be used for periodic maintenance treatments for relaxing releases of stress.

Warren very much likes working with the **Institute’s multi-disciplinary treatment team** of medical professionals, psychologists, other complementary medicine practitioners and the RN health educators, as well as the physical therapy colleagues next door at **Physical Edge**, as they can consult with and work together to maximize a patient’s healing experiences. Just as there is no “magic pill” for neuropathy, fibromyalgia, or muscles pain from over-exertion, he finds there is no one set of massage styles for everyone. He is free to draw on his broad repertoire for each person’s unique needs. Massage releases past traumas – whether physical or emotional – in which pain has been held. But a person’s positive beliefs and expectations are essential for desired outcomes.

Among the many programs available at the Institute is the weight loss program, **My True Body**, developed by John Leonard, Ph.D. While it uses the mind-body principles of the Neuro-Behavioral Program, (which teaches us how to turn off pain), **My True Body** also involves training in proper nutrition and exercise for a holistic approach for healthy weight loss programming.

Mother’s Day is coming up on the 13th and Warren and IRH are offering the ultimate gift certificate for mom, daughter, sister or aunt. Ranging from \$100-150, you can purchase a dozen roses and a massage; roses and a facial; or roses and massage and facial. Call 530/758-4474 for an purchasing the certificate or arranging for a massage by Warren otherwise.

Thanks, Warren Jones, for your inspiring message and demonstrations with right-on guidance on how to Improve our lives and health.

Odds and Ends of Note

Exercise Rx for Nerve Pain: The current issue of **Neurology Now** includes an article by Jennifer Haupt recalling our PNER friend John Senneff’s certainty that he could not give up exercise when the pain in his feet from running and brisk walking became unbearable. His answer was to invest in a recombinant bike and an elliptical trainer to maintain his commitment to aerobic activity, then made possible with the low impact equipment. The article outlines the kinds of exercise that is needed by anyone, but particularly those with neuropathy. Go to www.neurologynow.com and click on current issue to get to the article. The magazine is free to anyone with a neurological disorder. See the subscription form at the web site or you may call 800- 422-2681 to subscribe.

HealthiBetic Transdermal L-Arginine Foot Cream: One of our members remembered using HealthiBetic for foot care in years past but wondered how to find it now. The Davis Food Co-op used to carry the product, but no longer does so. HealthiBetic reportedly raises foot temperature 5-8 degrees and increases blood flow 33-35%. There are several web sites on the internet for mail orders. But you might want to check out the CVS Online Pharmacy Store (www.cvs.com). A 3.5 oz bottle with the convenient pump dispenser costs \$16.99 plus shipping and handling.

Stanford Diabetes Intervention Study Opportunity: If you have diabetic neuropathy, you may want to check out participating in a fascinating on-line health program and study that teaches you the skills needed in the day-to-day management of diabetes. We have long known that strong control of blood sugars can stop the progression and reversal of neuropathy and reduce neuropathic pain. Developing the discipline for such control can be difficult for some, but if you’re accepted for the study, you’ll be enrolled in a very empowering process to better manage your diabetes and neuropathy. Interested? Go to diabetes@med.stanford.edu or call 800-366-2624.

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Hope to see you at the Yolo meetings. Hope you'll register for the June 26th conference in San Francisco and join us on the bus trip over.

**Yolo Neuropathy Groups
c/o Martha Chandley
1399 Sacramento Avenue, Unit 108
West Sacramento, CA 95605**

TO:

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