



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

August 2021
Issue 07
Volume 19

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**WESTERN
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Celebrating our 23rd Year!

Neuropathy Hope

Hope through caring, support, research, education, and empowerment

A newsletter for members of Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

EDITOR'S NOTE

By Katherine Stenzel, Acting Editor, WNA Board Director

Welcome to the August Issue of Neuropathy Hope! As our president and editor, Bev Anderson, is under the weather, I'm filling in as editor for this newsletter edition.

With this issue, we add two new writers to the newsletter who will be sharing their knowledge through monthly columns. For their inaugural contributions, Barbara Montgomery discusses how to partner with your doctor to ensure you are getting the best treatment for your neuropathy. She shares specific ways to work with your neurologist during the office visit and suggests starting a Health Notebook with questions to ask and notes from each visit. I love this idea! To help interrupt the pain cycle that we all suffer with our neuropathy symptoms, Julie Falligant discusses how diaphragmatic breathing encourages our body's calming response which in turn can interrupt the pain cycle. Step-by-step instructions follow to guide us through this process.

Dr. Donovan continues his monthly articles with a reader survey in this issue. This month he's asking us to let him know which neuropathy treatments we've read about or used as described in his abstracts. Each topic is listed in his column to help us readers remember his abstracts detailed for us in previous newsletters. Directions are provided how to contact him with this information.

Sonya Wells, PharmD MPH and WNA Board Director, writes about gabapentin, the most commonly prescribed medication for neuropathy symptoms, and how it will soon be a listed as a controlled substance in California. Further discussion on federal and state regulations plus the interaction of gabapentin with opioids make this interesting reading for all neuropathy patients.

This month we continue the practice started in July of combining teleconferences into virtual support group meetings. Zoom meetings can also be accessed via landline telephones for the same type of support group experience. And the Houston Support Group will be the first to transition to include in-person meetings each quarter with a meeting scheduled for September 11, while continuing with their twice-monthly virtual meetings via Zoom.

Check out the reviews on the recipes from the Annual Conferences as listed in the June issue. Members of the Houston Support Group cooked the three recipes and reviewed on ease of preparation and taste. Read about their exploratory results of healthy eating.

Our August Webinar highlights another treatment for neuropathy symptoms, the ReBuilder®. Join us on August 25 to learn how this machine can relieve pain from neuropathy. Emails will be sent with further information and registration instructions closer to the event date.

Please send your comments or suggestions to klstenzel@hotmail.com.

Happy Reading!
Katherine

5 WAYS TO PREVENT FALLS

On Health, Consumer Reports, June 2021 • Adapted by Katherine Stenzel

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for U.S. seniors. Falls can lead to head trauma, internal bleeding, and complications of a bone fracture. This in turn can lead to hospitalization, immobility in bed, and respiratory infections. With the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, many seniors have experienced loss of muscle strength, which increases the risk of falls. Plus the fear of falling can decrease ones willingness to move, be active, and independent. Having neuropathy in your feet increases the risk of fall due to balance issues, loss of sensation, and decreased strength.

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2021 WNA Board of Directors

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Please contact
your group leader or
check your group
page on the
WNA website –
www.WNAinfo.org
to find out about the
topic/speaker for the
upcoming meeting.

Bev Anderson
Editor

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WNA AUGUST TELECONFERENCES AND ONLINE ZOOM SCHEDULE

Everyone is welcome to join any support group meeting via telephone, smartphone, tablet, or computer. We urge you to take this opportunity to talk with other people that know about and experience neuropathy.

All meetings this month are listed as Zoom meetings, which also have access for telephones. Email the Group Leader to request the meeting information and provide your name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address. Instructions will be sent for connecting to the meeting via computer/tablet, smartphone, or telephone.

If you do not have email, select the group meeting you want to attend and call Lindsay Campoy-Jones, WNA Administration, 888-556-3356, for instructions to connect by telephone.

ZOOM MEETINGS

Zoom meeting participation is not limited to the physical location in the name. Anyone from any city is welcome to attend, listen, and/or share.

- **August 14 (Saturday)** 11:00am – 1:00pm PDT/ 1:00pm – 3:00pm CDT
Houston, TX Neuropathy Support Group
Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com
- **August 18 (Wednesday)** 10:30am – 11:30am PDT/12:30pm – 1:30pm CDT
Sign-in opens at 10:00am PDT/12:00pm CDT
Monterey, CA Neuropathy Support Group
Email Bill Donovan, MD at wbdpad@cal.berkeley.edu
- **August 19 (Thursday)** 1:00pm PDT/ 3:00pm CDT
Nevada Neuropathy Support Group
Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com
- **August 28 (Saturday)** 11:00am – 1:00pm PDT/ 1:00pm – 3:00pm CDT
Houston, TX Monthly Open Discussion on Neuropathy
Email Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com

Support groups are not meeting in person unless a leader notifies the group that they are. If in doubt, call your leader.

CALIFORNIA

Auburn

Sharlene McCord (530) 878-8392
Kathy Clemens (916) 580-9449

Castro Valley

Joy Rotz (510) 842-8440

Concord

Wayne Korsinen (925) 685-0953

Davis

Mary Sprifke (530) 756-5102

Elk Grove

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Folsom

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Fresno

Bonnie Zimmerman (559) 313-6140

Grass Valley

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Merced

Larry Frice (209) 358-2045

Modesto

Harkaman Ghag (209) 541-5404

Monterey*

Dr. William Donovan (831) 625-3407
wbdpad@gmail.com

Napa

Ron Patrick (707) 257-2343
bonjournapa@hotmail.com

Placerville

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Roseville

Stan Pashote (916) 409-5747

Sacramento

Sonya Wells (916) 627-0228

San Diego

Chhattar Kucheria (858) 774-1408

San Francisco

Merle (415) 346-9781

San Jose

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Santa Barbara

Nancy Kriech (805) 967-8886

Santa Cruz

Mary Ann Leer (831) 477-1239

Santa Rosa

Judy Leandro (707) 480-3740

South San Diego

Jacklyn (858) 228-7480

Walnut Creek

888-556-3356
admin@WNAinfo.org

Westlake Village - Thousand Oaks

Angie Becerra (805) 390-2999

NEVADA

Las Vegas

Barbara Montgomery
lvneuropathygroup@gmail.com

OREGON

Grants Pass

David Tally 541-218-4418

TEXAS

Austin

Marty Meraviglia RN, ACNS-BC
(512) 970-5454 • mgmeraviglia@gmail.com

Houston*

Katherine Stenzel
klstenzel@hotmail.com

* Leader of online Zoom Meeting(s)

Leader of Teleconference(s)

TREATMENTS THAT MAY HELP PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY – READER SURVEY

By William B. Donovan, M.D.

This month I reviewed all the columns I have written over the past 11 years. They are archived on the Western Neuropathy Association website. The abstracts can be viewed by going to www.pnhelp.org/resources/medical-literature-review.

This list of the various treatments for neuropathy as detailed in the abstracts are listed below. I am asking you, the reader, which treatments you have looked at or have tried yourself.

The results of this survey will determine how frequently these topics will appear in future columns. Along with any suggestions you may have, please send your list to me at wbdpad@cal.berkeley.edu or mail to William B. Donovan, MD, WNA, PO Box 276567, Sacramento, CA 95827-6567.

acetyl-L carnitine	epidural	Neurontin
adalimumab	etanercept	nigella sativa
acupoint injection	ethoxyquin	NMDA inhibitors
acupuncture	exercise	nortriptyline
agmatine	fasudil	Nuedexta
alpha lipoic acid	Fasulin	omega-3s
amantadine	fentanyl	opiates
Aricept	flecainide	oxycodone
Anodyne	gabapentin	Pamelor
balance training	gamma-linoleic acid	pentoxifylline
benfotiamine	hemopoitin	PEMF
bisphosphonates	hepatocyte growth factor	phenytoin
blood sugar reduction	herbs	phototherapy
Botox	H-wave	plasmapheresis
Botulinum	IVIG	prostaglandin
buprenorphine	intravenous	pregabalin
bupropion	Keltrican	pulsed radiofrequency
calcium	ketamine	pyridoxyl-6-phosphate
cannabis	Ketamine gel	rTMS
capsaicin	Kinesio taping	Scrambler
Carbamazepine	Lamictal	silicon orthotics
Cold laser	lamotrigine	SNRIs
corticosteroid	laser	spinal electrostimulation
Cymbalta	lidocaine	stem cell
DBS	Lyrica	Tai chi
decompression	magnesium	tapentadol
dexamethasone	Metanx	Tegretol
dextromethorphan	methadone	TENS
Dilantin	methyl cobalamin	tocainide
DMSO	methyl folate	traction
docosahexanoic acid	mexiletine	Tramadol
donepezil	mirror feedback	TTR gene silencing
duloxetine	nerve block	venlafaxine
Duragesic	nicotinic acetylcholine receptor	Vitamin B12
ear taping	ligands	vitamin D
Effexor	NitroSense	Voltaren
electroacupuncture	Neuragen PN	
epalrestat	Neuratin	

Help With Health Care Challenges

If the number is not in your area, call the one listed and ask for the right number.

Medicare

www.Medicare.gov

...

The Affordable Health Care Act

For current information go to www.HealthCare.gov

...

HICAP

Health Insurance Counseling

for seniors and people with disabilities. www.cahealthadvocates.org/HICAP/ Call (800) 434-0222 to ask a question or to make an appointment.

...

Health Rights Hotline

Serving Placer, El Dorado, Yolo, & Sacramento Counties, regardless where you receive your health coverage. Tollfree (888) 354-4474 or TDD (916) 551-2180. In Sacramento, (916) 551-2100. www.hrh.org.

...

HMO Help Center

Assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week. (888) HMO-2219 or (877) 688-9891 TDD

...

DRA's Health

Access Project Free publications about the health care, insurance rights and concerns of people with disabilities and serious health conditions. For more information, go to <http://dralegal.org/> and click on "Projects".

DISCOUNTS FOR WNA MEMBERS

The following companies or individuals have agreed to give WNA a discount to give WNA members. Give them a call or visit. If you choose to purchase the service or wares of any on this list, pull out your WNA Membership Card and claim the discount.

Anodyne Therapy

Infrared Light Therapy equipment - **12% off all home units.**
Contact: 800-521-6664 or www.anodynetherapy.com

Auburn

The Footpath

825 Lincoln Way
(530) 885-2091
www.footpathshoes.com
WNA Discount: 10% off the regular price shoes.

Elk Grove

Shoes That Fit

8649 Elk Grove Blvd.
(916) 686-1050
WNA Discount: 20% off the regular price shoes.

Fortuna

Strehl's Family Shoes & Repair

Corner of 12th & Main
1155 Main Street
(707) 725-2610
Marilyn Strehl, C.PED
is a Certified Pedorthic
WNA Discount: 10% off the regular price shoes.

West Sacramento

Beverly's Never Just

Haircuts and Lilly's Nails

2007 W. Capitol Ave
Hair - (916) 372-5606
Nails - (916) 346-8342
WNA discount: 10% off the regular price.

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DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATH AND PAIN RELIEF

By Julie Falligant, Yoga Instructor

How we breathe directly affects our body and mind. In James Nestor's book *Breath*, he says that breathing is a "power switch" to the autonomic nervous system.

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is a component of the peripheral nervous system that regulates involuntary physiologic processes including heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, digestion, and sexual arousal. Included in the ANS are the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS):

- The SNS regulates the body's "fight or flight" response. A stimulated SNS provokes the adrenal glands to infuse the body with adrenaline to energize the body. This results in an increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and slowed/stalled digestion as the body redirects blood flow to the muscles and brain and away from organs like the stomach and bladder.
- The PNS controls the body's "rest and digest" response. As our body's calming mechanism, the PNS triggers the brain to pump hormones that lower heart rate and blood pressure, and it prompts the digestive system to speed/restart.

Both SNS and PNS play important roles in our safety and well-being. When we perceive danger, our SNS propels us into action. When the danger subsides, our PNS soothes our autonomic nervous system back into balance.

With chronic pain, it is not unusual for our bodies to remain in a heightened state of stress for long periods of time. One culprit can be our breath pattern. When in pain, we tend to tighten our abdomen and use the muscles of the chest, neck, and upper back to breathe. This results in shallow, quick breaths that repeatedly stimulate the SNS-connected nerves located at the top of the lungs, which lead to increased muscle tension, more pain, and a prolonged stress response.

One way to interrupt the SNS-amplified pain cycle is to intentionally initiate the PNS response through diaphragmatic breathing, a fuller and slower breath that stimulates the PNS-activating nerves blanketing the lower part of the lungs. In diaphragmatic breathing, the inhalation travels to the bottom of the lungs causing the diaphragm to contract, to press down on the abdominal contents, and to expand the abdomen. On the exhalation, the diaphragm and lungs softly recoil, and the abdomen releases. Our lungs expand more completely on the inhalation, which means we take in more oxygen, oxygen to feed our many cells

and nourish our thirsty nerves. On the exhalation, the lungs empty more completely, expelling more carbon dioxide. Also, studies suggest that this breathing style can provide relief from pain and other stressors. Diaphragmatic breathing's gentle, deep inhales and slow, complete exhales stimulate the PNS's calming response and nurture our bodies, while providing opportunity to disrupt the pain cycle.

How we breathe matters.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Instructions

1. Find a comfortable position with a long spine: lying down, sitting, or standing.
2. Notice sensations in your body and thoughts in your mind. Observe your normal breath pattern. Is it fast or slow? Choppy or smooth? Shallow or deep?
3. If your mouth is open, close it (if possible) to breathe through your nose. Begin to relax your face, jaw, and abdomen.
4. Rest one or both hands on your belly, just below your navel.
5. As you take your next breath in, feel your diaphragm drop and your belly balloon into your hand(s). Focus on expanding the belly while minimizing rib and chest expansion. As you breathe out, allow your belly to sink towards your spine.
6. With each breath, allow further softening of your abdomen and deepening of your inhale, and pace your exhale to be as long or longer than your inhale.
7. When you're ready to finish, let your breath fall back into its natural rhythm. Observe the effects of the diaphragmatic breath exercise on the sensations in your body, thoughts in your mind and the rhythm of your breath.

Resources:

Carson, J., K. Carson, and C. Krucoff. 2019. *Relax into Yoga for Chronic Pain: An Eight Week Mindful Yoga Workbook for Finding Relief and Resilience.* Oakland, CA. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Long, R. 2021. Yoga U. "Yogic Deep Breathing - How the Diaphragm Works." <https://www.yogauonline.com/yogau-wellness-blog/yoga-anatomy-deep-breathing-how-diaphragm-works>.

Nestor, J. 2020. *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art.* New York. Riverhead Books.

HOW TO PARTNER WITH YOUR DOCTOR

By Barbara Montgomery, Certified Health Coach, Neuropathy Support Group Leader, Contributing Writer
Adapted from “5 Ways to Make Your Doctor Your Partner”, Leana Wen, M.D., February 22, 2013
<https://www.nextavenue.org/5-ways-make-your-doctor-your-partner/>

Peripheral neuropathy can be a mild annoyance or life threatening so it is especially important to learn all you can about your particular neuropathy. Then begin to work on a plan with your doctor.

It is difficult enough to find a good neuromuscular/neurologist, but once you do, how can you make sure you are getting the best treatment? One way is by becoming a partner with your doctor. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Find a physician who supports shared decision-making.** Physicians who believe in a partnership will actively solicit and welcome your suggestions.
- **State your intentions.** Doctors are not mind readers; many are used to patients who are passive participants in their health care. Whether you are seeing a new doctor or someone with whom you have had a long relationship, make it clear that you want to be involved as a partner in the diagnostic and treatment process.
- **Help your doctor help you.** Most diagnoses can be made from the history of your illness, alone. They are not mind readers. This history information is very important.

- **Understand each test.** Every test your doctor orders should be done for a specific reason — and you should know what it is. Doing “basic labs” or a “screening CT” can be like fingerprinting for your diagnosis. Stay connected and find out the results at your next visit. It is important to follow-up.
- **Make decisions together.** Perhaps you face two or three possible diagnoses. What is going to be done to try to narrow it down? What is the natural course of each possible illness? What can you do to start feeling better?
- **Start and keep a Health Notebook!** This will have all your notes/questions/answers for each doctor and doctor visit.
 - Make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor. Check them off as you ask them. Write the answers by each question. This will ensure that your appointment was meaningful.
 - Upon reflection, if you did not get the answers you need, ask your questions again at your next appointment.

ABILITIES EXPO RETURNING TO IN-PERSON EVENT www.abilities.com

Featured annually in eight North American cities, the Expos are free, three-day, all-access passports to the latest products, cutting edge technology, informative workshops, and adaptive activities for mobility and assistive driving, to name a couple of interest to neuropathy patients. Starting in Houston, the Abilities Expo returns to in-person

status for the three-day event scheduled for August 6-8, 2021 at NRG Center, Hall E.

Expos scheduled for the rest of the year include:

- Phoenix, September 10-12, 2021
- New York Metro, October 1-3, 2021
- Los Angeles, October 29-31, 2021
- Dallas, December 3-5, 2021

5 Ways To Prevent Falls – Continued from page 1

The following steps can help:

ATTEND TO YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Reduce fall risks at home by limiting throw rugs, ensure well lit hallways, train pets to not be underfoot
- Wear well-fitting, low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles.
 - Wearing slippers or being shoeless more than doubled the risk of being seriously injured in a fall

WORK ON YOUR STRENGTH

- Strengthen leg, hip, and calve muscles as they help you catch yourself if you start to fall
- Enroll in a strength program for older adults or work with a physical therapist

BETTER YOUR BALANCE

- Tai Chi mind-body exercises significantly reduce fall risk in older adults (British Medical Journal, 2017)
- Improve dynamic balance by walking in a serpentine

pattern, changing directions suddenly or walking backwards

WATCH YOUR MEDS

- Seniors typically take more than four medications, which increase drug interactions and side effects like dizziness, foggy thinking, and low blood pressure.
 - Seniors taking more than four medicines accounted for roughly 23% of falls that lead to hospitalization (BMC Public Health, 2020).

CHECK YOUR EYES AND EARS

- Continue vision and hearing screenings and wear prescribed glasses and hearing aids
 - Depth perception and color discrimination change with age, increasing fall risk
 - Mild hearing loss increases the risk of falling three-fold (Archives of Internal Medicine, 2012)

DISCOUNTS FOR WNA MEMBERS

Continued from page 4

Neuropathy Support Formula/Nerve Renew (1-888-840-7142) is a supplement that a number of people are taking and reporting it has helped them. The company gives members of WNA a discount and free shipping. The 30-day supply is \$40 (normally \$49.97). It can be auto-shipped monthly for the same. A 3-month supply via auto-ship is \$95.00. They also have a Nerve Repair Optimizer that is available for \$20 with free shipping. Marsha, the manager, said that if anyone wants more information about the product, they can call and ask for her. If she is not readily available, leave your number and she will call you back. They now have Nerve Renew Fast Acting Cream at \$20 for WNA members. It reportedly takes the edge off numbness.

Building Better Balance DVD, Developing Spine Health

– The DVDs are \$30 each. The price of a full set (4 DVDs) is \$100 (that's a 20% discount). You can order the DVDs by going to the website www.building-better-balance.com. Shipping is free. You can also order the DVDs over the phone using a credit card. Call (707) 318-4476 and leave a message“ Vanessa Kettler, Balance and Fall Prevention www.building-better-balance.com (707) 318-4476

Additional Discounts

Do you know a business that might offer our members a discount? Tell them that they will be listed each month in our newsletter and on our website so our members will know of their generosity and patronize their business. Call 888-556-3356 or email admin@WNAinfo.org.

We'll mail an agreement form to the business, and once we have it, we'll add them to this list.

MOST PRESCRIBED NEUROPATHY MEDICATION, GABAPENTIN, SOON TO BE CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE IN CALIFORNIA

By Sonya Wells, PharmD MPH

Although prescription opioids are some of the most commonly abused drugs in the United States, there are also rising concerns about drugs that are similar and sometimes mixed with opioids. One of these drugs is the anticonvulsant, Gabapentin, a prescription medication that is FDA-approved to treat nerve pain.

Brand names for gabapentin include:

- Neurontin
- Horizant
- Gralise
- Gabarone
- Fanatrex

Gabapentin has yet to be classified as a controlled substance at the federal level, despite its potential for misuse and increasing involvement in fatal opioid overdoses. Individual states, however, have responded to rising gabapentin abuse rates with their own legislative actions.

Many states, including California, have added gabapentin to the list of drugs to be monitored through the state's prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP). This tracks prescriptions for gabapentin and other abusable substances dispensed within the state. However, it has not yet joined the other five states in changing its official classification to reflect its potential for misuse.

A controlled substance is a drug that is regulated by federal agencies and can be further classified based on its safety and potential for misuse and dependence. Unlike non-controlled substances, controlled substances have restrictions on how they can be filled and refilled. Controlled substances are also illegal to possess without a prescription. Each controlled substance is put on a numbered schedule to help law enforcement officials and medical professionals know how it is supposed to be handled in legal and medical matters.

The following is a list of the schedules of controlled substances currently used by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA):

- **Schedule I Drugs:** These drugs have no medical purposes. They are highly addictive and frequently abused. Heroin, marijuana, and LSD are on this list.
- **Schedule II Drugs:** Drugs on this list are frequently abused, but they serve some medical purposes. Methadone and morphine are on this list.
- **Schedule III Drugs:** The drugs on this list have a reduced likelihood of being abused or causing physical dependence. There are still some dangers to using them, though. Ketamine, which is frequently misused as a date rape drug, is on this list.
- **Schedule IV Drugs:** Common medications with codeine are on this list, such as cough syrup, because there is a very low risk of them being abused. Some people may become dependent on these drugs.

- **Schedule V Drugs:** Any drugs that are listed on this last schedule have a very low risk of being abused. Gabapentin is now a Schedule V drug in five states.

Prescription medications that are not classified as controlled substances include some drugs to treat infections, insulin, blood pressure medications, antibiotics, and asthma inhalers.

Since its introduction to the drug market, gabapentin has remained a non-controlled substance at the federal level. This makes it an easier prescription to fill compared to addictive drugs such as opioids and benzodiazepines.

States that have passed legislation to classify gabapentin as a controlled substance do so in response to knowledge in recent years of its potential for abuse and addiction. Research on the effects of gabapentin abuse on its own is scarce. The primary danger of gabapentin abuse remains its likelihood to be mixed with opioids and lead to a fatal overdose.

Gabapentin is not an opioid but has become known as a drug capable of intensifying opioid effects, resulting in more intense high. Mixing gabapentin with opioids has become an increasing trend among people who abuse drugs like fentanyl or heroin.

Like prescription opioids, gabapentin slows activity in the brain, causing symptoms of drowsiness and sedation. It can also change how the body perceives pain, making it effective for people with chronic neuropathic (nerve) pain.

Unlike opioids, gabapentin does not pose a significant threat for overdose when abused on its own. As a low-cost, non-controlled substance, however, it can be easier for people to get a hold of gabapentin and abuse it for its effects. Gabapentin is also prescribed for several off-label uses, including depression, anxiety, or as an alternative to opioids. This increases its access to a wider range of people, depending on the prescriber.

Gabapentin can intensify the high experienced after taking high doses of depressants like opioids. Not all effects are pleasurable, however. Mixing gabapentin and opioids increases the risk of respiratory depression four-fold. Respiratory depression, which refers to slowed or stopped breathing, is the leading cause of death in fatal opioid overdoses.

In addition to respiratory depression, other side effects from mixing gabapentin and opioids can include:

- dizziness
- drowsiness
- confusion
- impaired thinking and judgment
- increased risk for overdose
- death

Understanding why gabapentin (Neurontin) is a controlled substance requires learning about the way that federal and state laws can vary regarding controlled substances. Currently, the federal government

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RECIPES FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE Reviews by Houston Neuropathy Support Group

Members of the Houston Support Group cooked, baked, and taste-tested the recipes from the Annual Conference as listed in the June issue of Neuropathy Hope. We gave them a try so you would too!

HERB CRUSTED ASPARAGUS SPEARS Nancy Welch, Austin, TX

The nutritional yeast used in the Herb Crusted Asparagus Spears gave it an interesting and unusual flavor. When making this recipe, be sure to use thicker asparagus spears. It might be helpful to spray the spears with olive oil before rolling them in the crumb mixture. The crumbs would stick better and the oil might add some moisture. I used chia seeds as the base of the herb crust because I didn't have to grind them. As I like my roasted vegetables very crispy, I cooked the asparagus spears hotter at 400-425 degrees. In fact, this could be a good recipe for an air fryer. And a squeeze of lemon juice really adds to the flavor. Don't skip it! For unusually flavored asparagus, give it a try!

SMASHED BRUSSEL SPROUTS John Phillips, Houston, TX

The Smashed Brussel Sprouts turned out to be an amazing recipe that the whole family enjoyed with little difficulty to prepare. I found that I most enjoyed the version with the grated parmesan

with lemon and my wife cannot decide which variation she liked the best. The kids were even willing to take a taste but could not get over that fact they were still Brussel sprouts. In preparing this dish I thought about ways to make this a bit simpler to prepare and I tried the recipe with frozen steamable brussel sprouts. This did not alter the taste and made the smashing of the sprouts a bit easier on the hands. If you would like to take the smash out altogether to save on the hands and arms, softened half sprouts tossed with the oil, salt, and pepper will give you the same flavor once roasted; just don't forget to add the parmesan and lemon.

BAKED OATMEAL CUPS - Katherine Stenzel, Houston, TX

Baking these oatmeal cups was a simple process of measuring and mixing. I had never baked with ripe bananas and underestimated the amount needed plus the time to really ripen! Having a full two cups of banana instead of my one and barely half would have made them moister and tastier. My husband and I did enjoy these with a cup of tea at night as a substitute for our typical caloric and unhealthy (delicious) chocolate chip cookies knowing these were full of good things for our body. I do caution on buying the dairy-free chocolate chips from Amazon during the summer heat as mine arrived a melted mess!

HOUSTON SUPPORT GROUP TO START IN-PERSON MEETINGS

By Katherine Stenzel, Houston Support Group Leader, WNA Board Director

Each month, the Houston Support Group sponsors two virtual meetings that attract attendees from Houston, Austin, and Dallas in Texas, plus neuropathy sufferers from California, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. The original meeting is a typical support group format with attendees sharing experiences and occasionally having an informative presentation. The second meeting is an open discussion on matters relating to neuropathy with conversations sometimes having a mind of their own.

To supplement the virtual meetings, members residing in Houston

will start in-person meetings on a quarterly basis with the first meeting on September 11 at 1pm CDT at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church. Houston residents, or Houstonians, last saw each other in February 2020, but many more have joined the group during the pandemic. Our first meeting will be a meet-and-greet as old and new attendees see each other outside of a computer screen plus an invited speaker will discuss and demonstrate Tai Chi. Of interest will be a lending library with books on neuropathy for more individual knowledge.

Most Prescribed Neuropathy Medication, Gabapentin, Soon To Be Controlled Substance In California – Continued from page 6

is not listing gabapentin as a controlled substance.

This means that states have the option of changing their individual laws if they have concerns about the drug being misused. The first two states to pass laws about the regulation of gabapentin were Kentucky and Michigan. West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee came next.

Kentucky first declared gabapentin to be a controlled substance after more than one-third of their drug overdose deaths in 2016 involved the medication. Michigan listed it as a Schedule V drug to help fight the opioid epidemic in the state. Later on, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Virginia changed the classification of the drug, too. Ohio and California may soon be following suit.

Understanding why gabapentin is a controlled substance isn't easy because the medication doesn't affect the same receptors in the brain that opioids do. While it has a high potential for abuse, it isn't considered to be a dangerous substance yet, since it still has medicinal properties.

This might change soon, because many states have been passing their own laws to try to bring more public awareness to the potential for

abuse of gabapentin, especially in individuals who struggle with abuse of other drugs.

If this medication becomes classified as a controlled substance, it affects patients and medical professionals in different ways. Patients will have to have a paper prescription to take to the pharmacy since electronic prescriptions won't be usable. They will also be limited to the amount of the medication they can get and how many prescriptions for it they can receive.

Doctors who are registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration will be the only ones to be able to give the prescriptions out. Any other medical professional with a patient who needs the medication will have to give them a referral to see someone else.

References:

Is Gabapentin (Neurontin) A Controlled Substance? Posted September 5, 2019, www.vertavahealthohio.com/blog/gabapentin-controlled-substance/

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HELP FOR NEUROPATHY WEBINAR – PART 3

“Stopping Neuropathy at Home with the ReBuilder®”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2021 1PM PDT / 3PM CDT

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Our mission is to provide support, information and referral to people with neuropathy and to those who care about them, to inform and connect with the health care community, and to support research.

Dues - \$30 a year

All contributions and dues are tax-deductible.

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