



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

December 2016

Issue 12

Volume 14

- Cedars-Sinai Testing Virtual Reality For Pain Management
- Neuropathy Self Care
- WNA Support Groups
- President's Message
- Fear, Depression, And Anxiety
- PN Literature Review
- Peripheral Neuropathy (PN) Prescription Choices III
- Watch For A Bright Colored Card In The Mail
- Giving And Online Shopping

# Neuropathy Hope

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

A newsletter for members of Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

## ■ CEDARS-SINAI TESTING VIRTUAL REALITY FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

Study looks at pain intensity, other outcomes

By Brian Chau, MD • November 11, 2016

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center has recently announced a new study in the works using virtual reality (VR) for pain management in hospitalized medical and surgical patients.

Virtual reality -- using, in most cases, consumer headsets like Google Cardboard, Oculus Rift, or Gear VR -- is being tested in many areas of medicine, from treating psychiatric conditions to helping train medical students.

Designed to be a randomized controlled trial (RCT), this study aims to compare the use of actual VR to a non-VR sham intervention (a televised health and wellness channel). Both medical and surgical patients are to be included in the study, and measured outcomes are reportedly pain intensity ratings, amounts of morphine equivalents needed, and time between medication requests, as well as a variety of secondary outcome measurements (length of stay, quality of life, function, and patient satisfaction).

Cedars-Sinai is no stranger to the use of VR in the healthcare environment, with a very recent study in JMIR Mental Health exploring the use of immersive virtual reality among inpatients. That study, also directed by Dr. Brennan Spiegel, explored the acceptability and feasibility of VR use among 30

admitted patients with a Samsung Gear VR headset. Designed as a feasibility analysis, findings included a positive experience for most users (although the headset comfort was noted to be lacking), and reports of decreasing both pain and anxiety. A marked age difference in willingness to utilize the VR devices was reported, with the majority of patients willing to utilize the Gear VR being younger (mean age 49.1 versus mean age of 60.2 for those refusing headset use).

While the Clinical Trials registration for this upcoming RCT at Cedars doesn't reference the specific headset utilized, it's likely to be either the previously studied Gear VR or another mobile platform such as Google Cardboard. This is further evidenced by the recent press release regarding the hospital's partnership with AppliedVR and its Pain RelieVR product. VR represents a new frontier in healthcare with the potential to offer therapy benefits in a wide range of clinical settings. Having a strong evidence basis behind it is key for the continued development of such mobile technology, and we'll be following the outcome of this upcoming RCT closely.

This post appeared on iMedicalApps.com. Used by the permission of MedPage Today

## ■ NEUROPATHY SELF CARE

Hints from The Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy

The following suggestions can help you manage peripheral neuropathy:

**Take care of your feet,** especially if you have diabetes. Check your feet daily for signs of blisters, cuts, or calluses. Tight shoes and socks can worsen pain and tingling and may lead to sores that won't heal. Wear soft, loose cotton socks and padded shoes. You can use a semicircular hoop, which is available in medical supply stores, to keep bed covers off hot or sensitive feet.

**Quit smoking.** Cigarette smoking can affect circulation, increasing the risk of foot problems and possibly amputation.

**Eat healthy meals.** If you're at high risk of neuropathy or have a chronic medical condition, healthy eating is especially important. Emphasize low-fat meats and dairy products and include lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet. Drink alcohol in moderation.

**Massage.** Massage your hands and feet, or have someone massage them for you. Massage helps improve circulation, stimulates nerves, and may temporarily relieve pain.

**Avoid prolonged pressure.** Don't keep your knees crossed or lean on your elbows for long

- *Continued on page 6*

## **2016 WNA Board of Directors**

**Bev Anderson**  
President

**Karen C. Polastri, IOM**  
Vice President

**Anne Trim**  
Secretary

**Darrell O'Sullivan**  
Treasurer

**Sandra Grafrath**  
Director

**Brad Livingood**  
Director

**Pam Hart**  
Director

**Sonya Wells, PharmD, MPH**  
Director

### **Emeritus Council**

**Michael Green**  
Emeritus

**Johnathan Istilart**  
Emeritus

**Arvin Magusara**  
Emeritus

**Casimir Sammanasu**  
Emeritus

**Sandra Vinson**  
Emeritus

**Dick Ward**  
Emeritus

**Please contact  
your group leader  
or check your  
local paper to  
find out about  
the topic/speaker  
for the upcoming  
meeting.**

**Bev Anderson**  
Editor

Newsletter Design by

 Diane Blakley  
Designs

## **Roster of Our WNA Information and Support Groups**

**Most groups don't meet in December. Please check with your Group Leader if in doubt.**

### **CALIFORNIA**

#### **Alturas**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Antioch-Brentwood**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 2 PM- odd numbered months  
Antioch-Kaiser  
AMC-1H2 (from hospital lobby)  
Sandra (925) 443-6655

#### **Auburn**

1<sup>st</sup> Monday, 11 AM  
Woodside Village MH Park  
12155 Luther Road  
Sharlene McCord (530) 878-8392

#### **Bakersfield**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson 877-622-6298

#### **Berkeley-Oakland**

3rd Wed., 3-4 PM  
North Berkeley Senior Center  
1901 Hearst Ave.  
Kathleen Nagel (510) 653-8625

#### **Carmichael - Eskaton**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 1:30 PM  
Eskaton, 3939 Walnut Ave.  
Karen Robison (916) 972-1632  
*Call Karen before coming as it is a gated  
community and sometimes the day/time  
changes. She welcomes newcomers!*

#### **Carmichael - Atria**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 3:30 PM  
Atria - Carmichael Oaks  
8350 Fair Oaks Boulevard  
Tanysha (916) 944-2323  
Community members welcome

#### **Castro Valley**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, 1:30 PM  
First Presbyterian Church  
2490 Grove Way (next to Trader Joe)  
Joy Rotz (510) 842-8440

#### **Clearlake**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Concord**

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, 1:30 PM  
First Christian Church  
3039 Willow Pass Road  
Wayne Korsinen (925)685-0953

#### **Costa Mesa**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 10:00 AM  
Call Martha Woodside  
949-573-0056 for the location

#### **Crescent City**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Davis**

2nd Tuesday, 3:30-5:00 PM  
Davis Senior Center  
646 A Street  
Mary Sprifke (530) 756-5102

#### **Elk Grove**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 1 PM  
Elk Grove Senior Center  
8830 Sharkey Avenue  
Roger White (916) 686-4719

#### **Eureka**

For information, call:  
Earlene (707) 496-3625

#### **Folsom**

1st Thursday, 12:30 PM  
Berger Rehabilitation  
1301 E. Bidwell St., Folsom  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298  
<http://folsom.neuropathysupportgroup.org/>

#### **Fort Bragg**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson ((707) 964-3327

#### **Fresno**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 11:00 AM  
Denny's Restaurant  
1110 East Shaw  
Bonnie Zimmerman (559) 313-6140

#### **Garberville**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Grass Valley**

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday, 1:30 PM  
GV United Methodist Church  
236 S. Church Street  
Bev Anderson 877-622-6298

#### **Jackson**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Lakeport**

Meeting day and time, call Mito.  
Lakeport Senior Center  
507 Konociti Ave.  
Mito Shiraki (707) 245-7605

#### **Lincoln**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Livermore**

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, 10 AM  
Heritage Estates  
900 E. Stanley Blvd.  
Sandra Grafrath (925) 443-6655

#### **Madera**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Merced**

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday, 1 PM  
Central Presbyterian Church  
1920 Canal Street  
(The Hoffmeiser Center across the  
street from the church)  
Larry Frice (209) 358-2045

#### **Modesto**

3rd Monday, 10:30 AM  
Trinity United Presbyterian Church  
1600 Carver Rd., Rm. 503  
Ray (209) 634-4373

#### **Monterey**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wed.,10:30 AM-odd numbered months  
First Presbyterian Church  
501 El Dorado Street  
Dr. William Donovan (831) 625-3407

#### **Napa**

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, 2 PM  
Napa Senior Center  
1500 Jefferson Street  
Ron Patrick (707) 257-2343  
[bonjournapa@hotmail.com](mailto:bonjournapa@hotmail.com)

#### **Oxnard**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Placerville**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Quincy**

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday, 1 PM  
Our Savior Lutheran Church  
298 High St.  
Stacey Harrison (530) 283-3702

#### **Redding**

For information, call:  
Tiger Michiels (530) 246-4933

#### **Redwood City**

4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, 1 PM  
Sequoia Hospital Health and  
Wellness Center  
749 Brewster Avenue  
Danielle LaFlash (415) 297-1815

#### **Roseville**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, 1PM - odd numbered months  
Sierra Point Sr. Res.  
5161 Foothills Blvd.  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

#### **Sacramento**

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, 1:30 PM  
Northminster Presby. Church  
3235 Pope Street  
Charles Moore (916) 485-7723  
<http://sacramento.neuropathysupportgroup.org/>

#### **Salinas**

Contact Bill Donovan (831) 625-3407

#### **San Francisco**

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, 10 AM  
UC-San Francisco Med Ctr.  
400 Parnassus Avenue  
Amb. Care Ctr. 8th Flr., Rm A888  
Y-Nhy (e nee) Duong  
Nhy-y.duong@ucsf.edu

#### **San Jose**

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 10:30 AM  
O'Conner Hospital  
2105 Forest Avenue  
SJ DePaul Conf. Rm.  
Danielle LaFlash (415) 297-1815

#### **San Rafael**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 1 PM  
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection  
1100 Las Galinas Avenue  
Scott Stokes (415) 246-9156

# President's Message

By Bev Anderson

Here we are at the end of another year with all kinds of activities going on in families and in the community. It is a busy time. I hope and trust that yours will be a good time with family and friends in peace and safety. One bright spot we all can note on our calendars is December 21, which is the shortest day and the longest night. It is the earliest date for the sun to set -- from then on there are minutes more of daylight each day. It is called the first day of winter but it is the start of the move toward spring. I always breathe a sigh of relief that it won't get dark any earlier and even though the winter will be cold, each day is brighter. People with neuropathy are more limited in the darkness. I have flashlights and battery powered lamps within reach in any room of the house as walking in complete darkness is not in my skillset.

Thank you to all of you who responded to the letter you received in October. It was a little late so the end of the year letter is getting to you rather soon after. This letter is critical because so many of you have dues due in December and January. It is also a reminder that income tax season comes along with New Year's Day. Any donation to a nonprofit organization that will count for this year must be in by December 31. So, we alert you so you can take advantage of that as can your family and friends with a gift to the Western Neuropathy Association.

This year, we will be continuing our project to get Dr. Said's book on neuropathy into the hands of each resident in neuropathy in California, Nevada, and Oregon. The first set of books will be presented to U.C. Davis Medical Center, Neurology Department very soon. The next batch of books will be distributed



Photo by Bev Anderson

Continued on page 7

- Continued on page 7

## WNA Information and Support Groups – continued from page 2

### **Santa Barbara**

4<sup>th</sup> Saturday, 10AM - odd numbered months  
The First Methodist Church  
Garden & Anapamu  
Shirley Hopper (805) 689-5939

### **Santa Cruz**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 1PM- odd numbered months  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
420 Melrose Avenue  
For information call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Santa Maria**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622- 6298  
or Mary (805) 344-6845

### **Santa Rosa**

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday, 10:30 AM  
Meeting on Dec. 7  
Santa Rosa Senior Center  
704 Bennett Valley Road  
Larry Metzger (707) 541-6776

### **Sonoma**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Sonora**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Stockton**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Susanville**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Thousand Oaks Region**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-62988

### **Truckee**

For information, call:  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Tulare-Visalia**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Turlock**

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, 1 PM- odd numbered months  
Covenant Village Adm. Bldg. Classroom  
2125 N. Olive St.  
Joanne Waters (209) 634-0683

### **Ukiah**

Last Tuesday, 5:30 PM  
Next meeting, Sept. 27  
North Coast Opportunities (NCO)  
413 N. State St.  
Carole Hester (707) 972-2795

### **Walnut Creek**

4<sup>th</sup> Friday, 10 AM  
Rossmoor, Hillside Clubhouse  
Vista Room  
Karen Hewitt (925) 932-2248

### **West Sacramento**

No meeting until new leader is found  
Sandra Vinson (916) 372-6093  
slvins11@gmail.com

### **Woodland**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Yreka**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Yuba City-Marysville**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **NEVADA**

#### **Reno-Sparks**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **OREGON**

#### **Brookings**

For information, call  
Robert Levine (541) 469-4075

#### **Grants Pass**

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 2:00 PM  
Club Northwest  
2160 N.W. Vine St.  
Carol Smith (541) 955-4995  
[www.grantspass.neuropathysupportgroup.org](http://www.grantspass.neuropathysupportgroup.org)

### **Medford**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-62988

### **Portland**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

### **Salem**

For information, call  
Bev Anderson (877) 622-6298

**Most groups don't meet in December. You will likely get a notice of a meeting if there is one. Please check with your Group Leader if in doubt.**

Start a support group in your area:  
Contact Bev Anderson at (877) 622-6298 or [info@pnhelp.org](mailto:info@pnhelp.org)

## **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](http://www.Medicare.gov)

...

### **The Affordable Health Care Act**

For current information go to [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.HealthCare.gov)

...

### **HICAP**

**Health Insurance Counseling**  
for seniors and people with disabilities.  
[www.cahealthadvocates.org /HICAP/](http://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](http://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 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 PCNA/WNA Membership Card and claim the discount.

### Anodyne Therapy

Infrared Light Therapy equipment - \$50 off Model Freedom 300 (single leg at a time) and \$50 discount on Model 120 that does both legs at the same time. Contact: 800-521-6664 or [www.anodynetherapy.com](http://www.anodynetherapy.com)

**HealthLight** Infrared Light Therapy equipment - 10% off Single Boot System and Dual boot system.  
Contact: 888-395-3040 or [www.healthlight.us](http://www.healthlight.us)

### Auburn

**The Footpath**  
825 Lincoln Way  
(530) 885-2091  
[www.footpathshoes.com](http://www.footpathshoes.com)  
PCNA Discount: 10% off the regular price shoes.

### Elk Grove

**Shoes That Fit**  
8649 Elk Grove Blvd.  
(916) 686-1050  
PCNA 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  
PCNA Discount: 10% off the regular price shoes.

### Sacramento

**Midtown Comfort Shoes**  
3400 Folsom Blvd.  
(916) 731-4400  
PCNA discount: 15% on the regular price.

- Continued on page 5

## FEAR, DEPRESSION, AND ANXIETY

By Vanessa Kettler • [www.building-better-balance.com](http://www.building-better-balance.com)

We are all affected by fear, depression, and anxiety, but seniors are particularly vulnerable. These feelings can impact our lives in lasting ways. Choices we make based on fear, for example, can change our health. Certainly, all three of these reactions significantly impact balance, making us more likely to fall.

### Words of Wisdom

- Fear is incendiary and very contagious. Depression weighs us down so that it is hard to move. Anxiety extends fear into a constant aggravating internal tension.
- Do not let overwhelming fear drive your choices in life. Do not make decisions based on fear or panic.
- The difference between fear and anxiety: Fear is often in response to something sudden. We are afraid during an earthquake. Anxiety results when we worry about it happening again.
- If you are feeling anxious or fearful, stop following the news.

Fear, anxiety, and depression rule our internal world too much and steal life from us. They deplete our energy and our emotions and affect our well-being adversely. Sometimes these feelings are a healthy reaction to the conditions at hand. There is nothing like performance anxiety to propel a performer to practice. It is a good motivating force. Being afraid of an earthquake inspires us to make basic preparations. But when the feelings begin to feed upon themselves is when these natural human reactions become self-destructive.

Medications are prescribed extensively, often using drugs with significant side effects. Much more effective "medication" might come from practicing Mindfulness Meditation, deep breathing techniques or balance improvement.

"...there is always something we can do. We can take a walk until the feeling passes. We can find someone else suffering and help them, taking the attention off our own. Or, finally, we can learn to muster our courage and simply sit still with what we are thinking are insoluble problems, becoming as intimate with them as we can, facing them until we get over our fear." Peter Coyote

One of the best things you can do if you are experiencing any of these feelings is to improve your physical abilities, especially your balance. If you improve your balance, you will accomplish two things:

1) You will fall less.

2) Your self-confidence will improve, which will decrease these negative feelings, often substantially.

### Fear

- **Characteristics:** When we are afraid, we hold our breath, hunching forward into a protective possession.
- **How fear affects balance:** The tension raises our center of gravity making it harder to balance. It rolls our shoulders forward and pushes our head out. That in turn makes our legs stiffen with an increase in fall risk as a consequence.
- **Solutions:** Breathe. Do not hold your breath. Instead pull your abdomen in. Practice hand and foot exercises to ground yourself. Instead of focusing on the unknown, improve your upper back posture. (bring your head back)
- **Fear...of Falling:** When we have a fall, we often become afraid that we will fall again. The fear itself increases that likelihood. Fear causes us to limit our activities which in turn decreases our strength, makes us stiffer, and reduces our ability to balance. Instead, do something about the source of your fear. Take balance classes to improve instead of staying more in your apartment. The classes reduce the possibility of having a fall. The fear of falling subsides and your quality of life improves.

- **Fear forms a dreadful basis for making decisions:** For instance, a stock market plunge scares us into selling our stocks. We make the decision in the height of emotion and we make the wrong decision.

### Depression

- **Characteristics:** An overwhelming feeling of heavy weight compresses all our physical and emotional processes. It becomes hard to do anything. Life is colorless.
- **How depression affects balance:** Doing nothing makes our physical abilities deteriorate significantly. Increased sitting weakens the core muscles while exacerbating spinal compression and we stiffen, increasing fall risk substantially.
- **What builds depression?** Negative thoughts. Anger directed inward. Messages like "No one understands me.", "I'm a failure.", "Life is just downhill." Messages we may have heard from others (especially parents or loved ones) come back to haunt us. We suppress ourselves.
- **Solutions:** Move. Stand up and walk around. When you are depressed, it is often really

## PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY LITERATURE REVIEW

By William B. Donovan, MD

We can access the National Library of Medicine (**NLM**) to obtain information on peripheral neuropathy (**PN**). There are over 100 medical articles a month written on PN.

I review these references and select articles that would appear to be most interesting to us neuropathy sufferers. This is the link to **PubMed** that will take us to the **NLM**: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez)

If you are reading this article on the computer, just click on the above link to go there. If you are reading the print edition of the newsletter, type this link into the address bar of the browser on a computer. If you don't know how, get a librarian or friend to help you.

After you get to **PubMed**, you will see a line that says "**Search PubMed**" followed by "**for**" and a space. Every article in the **NLM** is given a **PMID**, an eight digit identification number. I will give you **PMID** numbers of the selected articles. Type the **PMID** into the space after the "**for**" and click on "**Go**" at the end of the space, or press the **ENTER** key on your keyboard. You will then see a one paragraph abstract of the article appear, as well as links to related articles.

This month's PMIDs:

- 25955980 This randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blinded crossover trial at the Massachusetts General Hospital evaluated

the effect of 1.5% topical diclofenac (Voltaren®) on the neuropathic pain of postherpetic neuralgia and complex regional pain syndrome. It was effective in reducing pain scores at the level of p=0.04.

- 26266421 This is a case study reporting decreased pain in the buttock, hip and lower extremity following injection of botulinum toxin type A into the piriformis muscle. Piriformis Muscle Syndrome involves the sciatic nerve being pinched by the piriformis muscle located deep in the buttocks, and is often mistaken for lumbar disc disease.
- 26561790 This Colombia University chart review of 373 patients referred with the diagnosis of idiopathic neuropathy. The following were the final diagnoses at completion of their evaluations: 32.7% remained idiopathic; 25.3% were diabetic or prediabetic; 20% chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy; 7% monoclonal gammopathy. The remaining 15% included the following etiologies: toxic, Sjogren's, celiac disease, other immune-mediated diseases, B1, B12 and B6 deficiencies, vasculitis, hypothyroidism, hereditary neuropathy, Lyme Disease and anti-sulfatide antibody.
- 26581442 This study found, among patients with peripheral neuropathy pain, greater satisfaction from a single application of an 8% capsaicin patch compared to an optimized dose of pregabalin (Lyrica®): 52.1% vs. 44.8%.

### DISCOUNTS FOR

#### WNA MEMBERS

*Continued from page 4*

#### West Sacramento

##### Beverly's Never Just

Haircuts and Lilly' Nails  
2007 W. Capitol Ave, West  
Hair-(916) 372-5606  
Nails-(916) 346-8342  
**PCNA discount: 10% off**  
the regular price.

#### Neuropathy Support

##### Formula

(1-888-840-7142) is a supplement that a sizable 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.

#### Free DVD on "Coping with Chronic Neuropathy"

introduced by Dominick Spatafora of the NAF and endorsed by major university neurologists, is available by contacting the Neuropathy Support Network at [www.neuropathysupportnetwork.org/order-neuropathy-dvd.html](http://www.neuropathysupportnetwork.org/order-neuropathy-dvd.html)

#### 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 (877) 622-6298 or e-mail [info@pnhelp.org](mailto:info@pnhelp.org).

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

## PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY (PN) PRESCRIPTION CHOICES III

By William B. Donovan, MD

*(This is a continued article by Dr. Donovan providing a record of prescriptions he has found helpful for neuropathy. It could be helpful in giving you ideas about treatments that you haven't yet discussed with your physician. Dr. Peter Skaff says, in his video that each WNA group leader has, that there is probably no end to possible assistance for people with neuropathy.)*

As you may recall, my last article had my neurologist switching me from duloxetine (Cymbalta®) 20 mg daily to venlafaxine ER (Effexor ER®) 37.5 mg daily, in an effort to reduce lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS), while treating my neuropathic pain. LUTS are common side effects of the antidepressant drugs used to decrease neuropathic pain, and include the following: incontinence, difficulty voiding, diminished stream, urinary retention, and difficulty with erection and ejaculation.

My pain and insomnia as well as LUTS were improved on the venlafaxine. However, due to increasing the vigor of my swimming kick, I ruptured my third disc, L5-S1. As usual, that injury, aside from left buttock and left lower extremity pain, made my bilateral neuropathy symptoms worse. After about six to eight months

with the help of trazodone (Desyrel®) and zolpidem (Ambien®) for sleep, hydrocodone (Vicodin®) for pain, persistent physical therapy prescribed stretching and strengthening exercises—plus patience—I regained my ability to walk.

The LUTS, although better, were getting worse. I went to see a urologist, who changed my prescription from tamsulosin (Flomax®) to alfuzosin (Uroxatral®), which helped somewhat. He advised that I consider changing my peripheral neuropathy antidepressant to one with fewer LUTS side effects.

I returned to reviewing the medical literature, and narrowed my search to the only available antidepressant with little or no LUTS side effects—bupropion SR (Wellbutrin SR®). This drug is unique in that it blocks the uptake mainly of norepinephrine and mildly that of dopamine. Incidentally, its patent had expired and it is now available inexpensively as the generic. I found articles claiming anecdotal improvement in back pain and trigeminal neuralgia (painful tic of the face). But only two formal studies of bupropion SR were found.

A preliminary open-label, uncontrolled study by Semenchuk and Davis (10741812) appeared in 2000 regarding the treatment of neuropathic pain with

## **Neuropathy Self Care – Continued from page 1**

periods of time. Doing so may cause new nerve damage.

### **Skills for Coping With Peripheral Neuropathy**

Living with chronic pain or disability presents daily challenges. Some of these suggestions may make it easier for you to cope:

**Set priorities.** Decide which tasks you need to do on a given day, such as paying bills or shopping for groceries, and which can wait until another time. Stay active, but don't overdo.

**Get out of the house.** When you have severe pain, it's natural to want to be alone. But this only makes it easier to focus on your pain. Instead, visit a friend, go to a movie, or take a walk.

**Seek and accept support.** It isn't a sign of weakness to ask for or accept help when you need it. In addition to support from family and friends, consider joining a chronic pain support group. Although support groups aren't for everyone, they can be good places to hear about coping techniques or treatments that have worked for others. You'll also meet people who understand what you're going through. To find a support group in your community, check with your doctor, a nurse, or the county health department.

**Prepare for challenging situations.** If something especially stressful is coming up in your life, such as a move or a new job, knowing what you have to do ahead of time can help you cope.

**Talk to a counselor or therapist.** Insomnia, depression, and impotence are possible complications of peripheral neuropathy. If you experience any of these, you may find it helpful to talk to a counselor or therapist in addition to your primary care doctor. There are treatments that can help.

### **How to Sleep With Neuropathy**

Sleep is an essential part of living—sleep helps us avoid major health problems and it is essential to our mental and physical performance. It affects our mood and stress and anxiety levels. Unfortunately, sleep disturbance or insomnia is often a side effect of neuropathy pain. It is a common complaint among people living with chronic pain.

It's no surprise that about 70 percent of pain patients, including those suffering from peripheral neuropathy, back pain, headaches, arthritis, and fibromyalgia, report they have trouble sleeping according to the Journal of Pain Medicine.

Pain can interfere with sleep due to a combination of issues. The list includes discomfort, reduced activity levels, anxiety, worry, depression, and use of medications such as codeine that relieve pain but disturb sleep.

Most experts recommend a range of seven to nine hours of sleep per night for adults, regardless of age or gender. This may seem impossible to people with chronic pain, but there are steps you can take to improve your sleep, which may lead to less pain and lower levels of depression and anxiety. First, talk with your doctor to see if there are medications that may lessen your sleep disturbance. You should also check with your doctor

to make sure your current medications aren't causing some of your sleep disturbance.

Beyond medication, there are several things you can do yourself to improve your sleep. Here are some methods to try and help you fall asleep more quickly, help you sleep more deeply, help you stay asleep, and ultimately help keep you healthy.

#### **Following are tips for improving your sleep:**

- Reduce your caffeine intake, especially in the afternoons
- Quit smoking
- Limit and/or omit alcohol consumption
- Limit naps to less than one hour, preferably less
- Don't stay in bed too long—spending time in bed without sleeping leads to more shallow sleep
- Adhere to a regular daily schedule including going to bed and getting up at the same time
- Maintain a regular exercise program. Be sure to complete exercise several hours before bedtime
- Make sure your bed is comfortable. You should have enough room to stretch and turn comfortably. Experiment with different levels of mattress firmness, foam or egg crate toppers, and pillows that provide more support
- Keep your room cool. The temperature of your bedroom also affects sleep. Most people sleep best in a slightly cool room (around 65° F or 18° C) with adequate ventilation. A bedroom that is too hot or too cold can interfere with quality sleep.
- Turn off your TV and computer, many people use the television to fall asleep or relax at the end of the day. Not only does the light suppress melatonin production, but television can actually stimulate the mind, rather than relaxing it.
- Don't watch the clock – turn your alarm clock around so that it is not facing you
- Keep a note pad and pencil by your bed to write down any thoughts that may wake you up at night so you can put them to rest
- Refrain from taking a hot bath or shower right before bed; the body needs to cool a degree before getting into deep sleep
- Try listening to relaxing soft music or audio books instead, or practicing relaxation exercises.

Visualizing a peaceful, restful place. Close your eyes and imagine a place or activity that is calming and peaceful for you. Concentrate on how relaxed this place or activity makes you feel.

Some patients find comfort from a pillow between their legs that keeps their knees from touching. And there's an added benefit: A pillow between your legs at night will prevent your upper leg from pulling your spine out of alignment and reduces stress on your hips and lower back.

It may take three to four weeks of trying these techniques before you begin to see an improvement in your sleep. During the first two weeks, your sleep may actually worsen before it improves, but improved sleep may lead to less pain intensity and improved mood. Used by permission.

## Advice from Roger White, Elk Grove Group Leader

Saw some ads for hemp oil with all their false claims. I did some research on this supplement made from hemp seed and found it is worthless to treat pain. Only concentrated hemp CBD (Cannabidiol) oil made from hemp flowers, leaves, and stems has any possible benefit for pain. CBD oil made from marijuana is the best and should be purchased from a medical marijuana dispensary to assure quality and instructions on dosing for safety. Hemp oil is only good for low temperature cooking, salad oil, or maybe chapped skin and does contain omega 3 oil that must not be overheated.

## Fear, Depression, And Anxiety – Continued From Page 4

hard to do this. We feel an overwhelming pressure to keep ourselves pushed down and immovable. The very best solution to our problem is exercise. But we won't want to. We have to use mind over matter. Research has confirmed that exercise improves depression symptoms. For example, every additional exercise class you add to your schedule each week reduces the risk of depression by 50%.

### Anxiety

- **Characteristics:** We worry, especially about things we can do nothing about. Our eyes move a lot. Our abdomen tenses. Rushing is a significant cause, especially if we are late.

Distraction can mask anxiety. Anxiety can be free floating and generalized.

- **How anxiety affects balance:** Increased eye motion makes balance more precarious. Our center of gravity is raised, making us "tipsy." Rushing causes us to make mistakes that often result in falls.
- **Solutions:** Practice focusing your eyes to keep them from rapidly shifting. Breathe, stretch, meditate. Slow down. Learn to relax. Stop watching the news for a while. Think of opening an imaginary door or window to release the sense of feeling cornered.

## Peripheral Neuropathy (PN) Prescription Choices III – Continued From Page 5

bupropion SR. The 22 patients receiving 150 mg twice a day decreased their pain scores on the average from 6.7 to 5.3 at the end of eight weeks, and had only mild side effects.

The second article by Semenchuk, Sherman and Davis (11706096) published in 2001 was a more definitive double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled, crossover study of 41 patients with neuropathic pain. They again received bupropion SR 150mg, daily, increased to twice daily after a week and continued for another five weeks. The pain score decreased from 5.7 to 4 from weeks two through 6 ( $p<0.05$ ). Side effects were not dose-limiting, but included

dry mouth, insomnia, headache, gastrointestinal upset, tremor, constipation, and dizziness.

I will forward this report to my neurologist and let you know what happens.

### REFERENCES

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=10741812>  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=11706096>

## President's Message – Continued from page 3

to U.C. San Francisco as soon as the funds are available. We are contacting organizations we hope will be willing to support the associated expenses of this campaign to educate new neurology residents. If you would like to sponsor a book, \$30 will buy the book and pay for shipping it to a doctor. We will send a special receipt indicating you are a donor of a book. You are encouraged to join us in this effort to help encourage new neurologists in taking an interest in learning about neuropathy and treating neuropathy patients effectively.

This month I had an attack of sciatica and had difficulty walking after trying a randomly dreamed up exercise. I'm just getting to where I can walk in the house without a cane again. It was a time that I was so thankful for my wonderful hand controls in my car. I didn't have to be concerned that my feet were rather inoperable. It was the time for the annual check-up to see if all was OK with the hand controls, and it was. I purchased mine at Driving Specialties in Rancho Cordova near Sacramento. They work with a driving school to provide you with instruction

until you are comfortable in using them. It took me longer than some to reach the level of training needed as I had gotten so nervous driving with the condition of my feet -- I had to regain my confidence. People ask me how much it costs. To compare Driving Specialties' costs against another's, call Jill at (916) 635-2765.

BIG NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR – The 2017 Annual Neuropathy Conference will be April 18, 2017, at The Mind Institute on the campus of the U.C. Davis Medical Center, Sacramento, CA. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW. Details will be coming as they are finalized. If you have a computer, you might like to look at The U.C. Davis Mind Institute website to have an idea of the type of facility it is. Amazing research is being done at The Mind Institute because families of children on the autism spectrum came together to make it happen.

Happy Holidays,

*Bern*



## WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

A California public benefit, nonprofit,  
tax exempt corporation

P.O. Box 276567, Sacramento, CA 95827-6567

Call WNA using our toll free phone numbers:

- (877) 622-6298** ■ Email: [info@WNAinfo.org](mailto:info@WNAinfo.org)  
■ PN Information/Advice ■ Support Group Inquiries  
**(888) 556-3356** • Email: [admin@WNAinfo.org](mailto:admin@WNAinfo.org)  
■ Membership Information/Inquiries ■ Sponsorships  
■ General Organizational Inquiries ■ [www.WNAinfo.org](http://www.WNAinfo.org)

## BIG NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR

### The 2017 Annual Neuropathy Conference

April 18, 2017

The Mind Institute • U.C. Davis Medical Center Campus

Sacramento, CA.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**

## WATCH FOR A BRIGHT COLORED CARD IN THE MAIL

You may open your mail box and find a bright colored postcard asking you to contribute usable items to a good cause with pick up on a certain day. Look carefully as you may see it is from us. If it has Western Neuropathy Association (WNA) on it with our website [www.pnhelp.org](http://www.pnhelp.org), it is us, it is your organization. Please encourage your neighbors to participate too. A long-time member has a thrift shop in Chico where he sells the items or sells to other thrift shops. We receive a certain amount for a specific measurement of volume of each load before it is evaluated for value. An additional benefit to WNA is that through this effort we are able to disseminate information about neuropathy and our organization to thousands of people each month. In addition, the effort provides jobs and low income people can purchase usable merchandise at a more affordable price.

## GIVING AND ONLINE HOLIDAY SHOPPING

**Planning on doing some online shopping? We recommend AmazonSmile.**

AmazonSmile is an easy and automatic way for you to support WNA every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that AmazonSmile will donate a portion of the purchase price to the Western Neuropathy Association!!! Make sure you type in our organization.



### Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

A California public benefit, nonprofit,  
tax-exempt corporation.

Bev Anderson, Editor

P.O. Box 276567  
Sacramento, CA 95827-6567  
(877) 622-6298 ■ (888) 556-3356  
[info@WNAinfo.org](mailto:info@WNAinfo.org) ■ [www.WNAinfo.org](http://www.WNAinfo.org)  
WNA Headquarters: [admin@WNAinfo.org](mailto:admin@WNAinfo.org)

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.

We are supported by dues-paying members, contributions by members and friends, and occasionally, small grants and fundraisers.

*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. Western Neuropathy Association (WNA) does not endorse any treatments, medications, articles, abstracts or products discussed herein. You are strongly encouraged to consult a neurologist with any questions or comments you may have regarding your condition. The best care can only be given by a qualified provider who knows you personally.*