

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Summer 2024

## CHIEF'S NOTE



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

Welcome to the summer issue of our newsletter, where warmth meets wellness in a season of renewal and vitality. As the sun's rays brighten our days, we offer insights and inspiration to cultivate resilience and well-being in the midst of the summer season. Through research, herbal medicine, fitness and mind-body classes, we illuminate pathways to holistic healing, infusing the season with hope and joy.

In this issue, we recap a special one-day conference that marked 25 years of integrative medicine at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) and hear from patient advocate Dr. Joan Rodman Smoller about the importance of holistic care in her cancer journey. Integrative Medicine at Home (IM@Home) fitness instructor and yoga therapist Tina Paul shares how yoga can increase bone strength, and we explore the evidence for a traditional Chinese medicine herbal formula, Xiao Yao San, for the treatment of anxiety, depression, and stress.

Be well,  
Jun

## Celebrating 25 Years of Innovation in Integrative Oncology

By Anthony Bradfield

On May 17, 2024, the Integrative Medicine Service (IMS) at MSK hosted a symposium commemorating 25 years of patient-focused care. Healthcare professionals who diagnose, manage, and treat side effects of cancer treatments came together with patient advocates for Innovation in Integrative Oncology: Recent Advances and Future Opportunities to learn about advancements in the field of integrative medicine.



Dr. Nirupa Raghunathan, Assemblymember Patricia Fahy, Mayor Eric Adams, Dr. Lisa DeAngelis, Dr. Jun Mao, Dr. Gary Deng

This one-day event offered a full agenda of lectures, discussions, and experiences from experts in the field. The morning began with opening remarks from Dr. Jun J. Mao, Chief of IMS and Laurance S. Rockefeller Chair in Integrative Medicine; Dr. Lisa DeAngelis, Chief Physician Executive; and Dr. Nirupa Raghunathan, Symposium Director and Director of Pediatric Integrative Medicine.

We then welcomed special guest Mayor Eric Adams, who shared his personal experience of how lifestyle medicine positively impacted his health. We were also pleased to hear from Assemblymember Patricia Fahy, whose strong support of integrative medicine developed as her son, Brendan Fahy Bequette, underwent treatment at MSK. Then, as part of the Department of Medicine grand rounds, Dr. Dawn Hershman of Columbia University delivered the keynote address on Clinical Trials to Inform Evidence-Based Integrative Oncology.

The day's presentations were organized using four themes important to the growth of integrative medicine: Awareness,

Collaboration, Innovation, and Access. Our expert speakers explored evidence-based methods for managing symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment, such as pain, anxiety, and fatigue, using integrative strategies including exercise, nutrition, acupuncture, massage, meditation, yoga, and music therapy. Speakers also discussed strategies for collaborating with diverse communities to offer equitable access to integrative

therapies for all patients. The day's menu offered nutritious plant-based foods, supporting our message of healthy lifestyle choices.

Dr. Raghunathan said, "The conference allowed for a wonderful opportunity to learn from one another, connect with colleagues, and support future advancements in integrative oncology research and evidence-informed patient-centered care."

## Lifeline: MSK's Integrative Medicine Service

By Joan Rodman Smoller, PhD



*Dr. Joan Rodman Smoller has a PhD in English Literature from Columbia University. A former Associate Professor and Director of the Writing Program at New York University, she is currently a writer, editor, and writing coach, as well as a passionate patient advocate.*

At 85 years old, I was diagnosed with advanced cutaneous squamous carcinoma by my nose and eye, and have been undergoing months of immunotherapy, with side effects, such as extreme fatigue, elevated

liver enzymes, itchiness, and bleeding. How do I manage that? Fortunately, a friend, previously treated at MSK, told me to check out IMS. Once I sat down with Dr. Jun J. Mao I knew I was in the right place and in the presence of someone who was passionate about supporting my healing and quality of life.

Dr. Mao is not only a highly knowledgeable clinician, but a respected researcher, who is conducting cutting-edge studies on practices they offer, such as acupuncture, massage, meditation, and music and dance/movement therapy. He and his team of integrative medicine experts care deeply about how evidence-based practices can support the well-being of patients at MSK.

For me, their offerings have been a lifeline. Every week, while I wait to see the results of the immunotherapy, I go for massage and acupuncture. Every week, my stress levels go down thanks to these therapies, and I personally believe other healings may occur. I am also a member and active participant in the IM@Home program of more than 20

weekly live, online fitness and mind-body classes. Exercise offerings like Fitness for Strong Bones, led by MSK fitness instructor Christine Trastevere, are geared perfectly for those going through or having completed treatment. MSK mind-body instructor, Malik Cadwell teaches Qigong for Balance and Strength. With his kind, uplifting explanations, he gives me energy even when I am experiencing extreme fatigue. An on-demand [meditation library](#) is also available via their website. In fact, Dr. Mao himself has an online meditation we all can access when we need it. His soothing wise words comfort us even at home!

Whether you are 85, 65, or 35 years of age, a patient at MSK, or a caregiver, relative, or friend, IMS has something to offer. You will find, as I did, proven modalities, ancient and new, that will lift your spirit, calm your mind, and help you to heal.

## Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program



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

### MEMBERSHIP FEES

Monthly membership: **\$25**  
Three-month membership: **\$60**  
Six-month membership: **\$120**  
(plus one free workshop)

### AS A MEMBER, YOU CAN ENJOY:

- › Connecting with your cancer community
- › Staying active, with guidance from MSK experts
- › Learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress
- › Unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes
- › Dedicated website with on-demand videos to help keep you moving on your schedule
- › Discounts on our small group workshops and mind-body series

## Yoga for Bone Strength



By Tina Paul, MS, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

*Tina Paul is a yoga therapist in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service (MSK's IMS), where she teaches in the IM@Home membership program and in research studies, supports pediatric and young adults, and sees patients privately.*

### Why is bone health important?

The body contains 206 bones which offer structural support and carry us through our lives. Healthy bones support physical strength, movement, balance, coordination, and provide protection for our vital organs, among many other duties. Bone health supports long term health and independence.

### How can yoga help strengthen my bones?

Through yoga, we use our physical body, breath, mind, and emotions for an integrated practice that supports balance, posture, and stability. Together, these elements help increase bone strength and reduce the possibility of fractures. A combination of weight-bearing postures, breathing practices, and mindfulness offers an opportunity to notice our relationship to the floor beneath us, our relationship with gravity, and the space around us. Slowing down, drawing the senses inward, and noticing our breath and heart rate can help increase body awareness.

### What are some simple postures that increase bone strength?

Whether you are a beginner or have more experience with yoga, holding each of these postures for about 30 seconds is a great start to strengthen your bones.

#### Mountain pose (Tadasana):

1. While standing, bring the feet hip distance apart, feel the length of the body.
2. Spread, lift, and drop the toes, root through the corners of the feet.
3. Sense the space between the shoulders and broadness of the back.
4. Notice how gravity is falling through the body.
5. Breathe in and out of the nostrils 3 to 5 times.

#### Tree pose (Vrksasana):

1. While standing, bring the feet hip distance apart (you can use the support of a chair or wall).
2. Bring the right toes onto the floor and rest the right heel against the left ankle.
3. Extend the arms up alongside the ears.
4. Bring the hands together and place them at the center of the chest.
5. Gaze softly at one point in front of you, breathe in and out of the nose 3 to 5 times.
6. Release the arms and foot and come to stand. Repeat on the left side.

#### Locust pose (Salambhasana):

1. Place a blanket on the mat to support the body and lie on the belly.
2. Extend the arms alongside the body and bring the legs close together.
3. Peel up the head, chest, arms, and legs as if taking flight. The neck is long, the gaze is at the edge of the mat. Breathe slowly in and out of the nose 3 to 5 times.
4. Slowly release the body to the floor.

Join Tina for her weekly Yoga for Stronger Bones class through IM@Home. To learn more and become a member, visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome).





## Xiao Yao San

By Jyothirmai Gubili, MS



Xiao Yao San (XYS) is a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) formula made up of eight different herbs. It has a long history of use as a treatment for depression, anxiety, and stress.

Current evidence suggests that YYS is effective against depression. It also has fewer, less severe side effects compared to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), medications that are commonly used to treat depression.

A modified version of YYS, Jia Wei YYS, may also be useful against

depression and anxiety with durable effects and lower adverse event rate compared to SSRIs. In addition, this formula was found to improve symptoms of sleep disorder. More research is needed to increase the evidence base of these formulas.

*For more details about YYS, see our [full write-up](#) on the About Herbs website or download the About Herbs app (available for Android via [Google Play](#) and iOS via the [App Store](#)<sup>SM</sup>).*

### Upcoming Online Programming

[Register online today](#) to join an upcoming wellness program. Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call [646-449-1010](tel:646-449-1010).

**Workshops:** \$20 members; \$25 non-members

**Regular series:** \$100 members; \$125 non-members

**Meditation series:** \$125 members; \$155 non-members



#### SEPTEMBER

› **Series:** Meeting the Challenge of Cancer With Mindful Self-Compassion  
Sundays, September 9 to October 13  
7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.

› **Workshop:** Mechanics of Breathing: Perfect Exchange  
Wednesday, September 11  
1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

