

Vital Statistics

April, 2009 Issue 4

TO ILLUMINATE AND UNITE

More Than a Feeling:

How Stress Affects You and What to Do About It

by **Laura Carlson**

The mind and body do not act separately; they are equal partners, each influencing the function of the other. Growing evidence suggests that many illnesses are influenced and sometimes even caused by our emotions, especially stress. Some physical reactions associated with stress are incredibly harmful to the body, so experiencing excessive stress or repetitive worrying can damage a person's mental *and* physical well-being. Because of this, healthcare providers should closely consider clients' stress levels while performing assessments and planning interventions.

During an emergency or when we are physically threatened, our body activates a response commonly known as "fight-or-flight." Emotional stressors such as anxiety, fear, and anger can also trigger this physical response, even though there is no apparent physical danger. Although the "fight-or-flight" response is helpful during a brief emergency, it can damage the body if stress hormone levels remain elevated. Unfortunately, psychological and emotional stressors can endure for long periods of time, causing the physical stress response to endure as well.

Excessive stress can cause a number of harmful changes in the body, including decreased immune response and impaired function of the blood-brain barrier. Overabundant stress hormones can also affect the hippocampus, which controls memory and learning. Stress contributes to minor physical ailments, such as migraines and tension headaches, as well as more serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is one of the most common disorders exacerbated by stress. Chronic hypertension increases the heart's workload, contributing to cardiovascular disease.

(Continued on page 2)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 30: Softball Game
 April 30: El Dia del Nino
 (Children's Day)
 April 30: Ping Pong Tournament
 Sign-up Deadline
 April 30: Massages
 May 1: Massages
 May 1: Free Brunch
 May 2: Cancer Walk
 May 4: Movie Tickets for Sale
 May 4: Ping Pong Tournament
 May 4: HHIG meeting
 May 4: Bishop Tutu @ U of P
 May 6: KGW "Live at 7" for
 National Nurses' Week

for event details, see page 2

Please note that there will be an e-mail alias for the newsletter, but until it is set up, please e-mail all suggestions to Gina Drew at gdrew@linfield.edu



Not only does stress *produce* physical ailments, but it can also be a *symptom* of a serious illness. Stress, along with anxiety and depression, are common symptoms of physical illnesses including multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and cancer.

Since stress is a major contributor to and symptom of many health problems, why isn't stress relief a more common consideration in healthcare? Treatments that cater to stress relief are still not widely taught in medical schools and are rarely used in conventional medical practice. However, research shows that treatments such as biofeedback and positive imagery are effective in reducing stress, which can improve physical health. Regular exercise, yoga, and meditation are other methods of relaxation that can be used to decrease the harmful effects of stress.



Anxiety and stress are not just feelings. They affect our health just as clearly as genetics, lifestyle choices, and environmental factors. Because physical health is heavily influenced by the mind, treatment that benefits both the body and the mind is ultimately more effective than treating physical symptoms alone. Interventions focusing on stress relief and relaxation can provide many physical benefits. Although we cannot completely control our health, maintaining a positive mindset and low levels of stress can improve our physical condition as well as our quality of life.

Campus and Community Events

APRIL 30

- The Wildcatheters have their first game. Wildcatheters vs. Krackerz ~ **6:15 p.m.** @ William V. Owen Softball Field.
- The Office of Student Affairs and Multicultural Programs would like to invite you to celebrate El Dia del Nino (Children's Day), a popular Mexican holiday. This event is open to all, so feel free to bring the children in your family. We will be promoting healthy habits through fun activities. This is a great opportunity for faculty, staff, students, and community members to introduce children to the academic environment while encouraging health. For more information, contact Claudia Garcia at cgarcia@linfield.edu.

(Continued on page 3)

APRIL 30 (Continued from page 2)

- It's that time again! Time to dust off that ping pong paddle and bring your best game to the annual ping pong tournament! Notify Jeremy Jasnoch by April 30th if you are interested in playing. Bracket placements will be drawn on May 1st in the blue room at **12:30 p.m.** The tournament will be held on **Monday, May 4th at noon.** If weather permits, we may play in the courtyard. There will be prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. Nicknames are not a must, **BUT** definitely add to the fun! Refreshments will be provided, so come cheer on your favorite ping pong players! Contact Jeremy Jasnoch: jjasnoc@linfield.edu.
- Free ten-minute massages in the blue room. Tips are encouraged. Sign-up sheet posted on the ASLC-PC door.

MAY 1

- Free ten-minute massages in the blue room. Tips are encouraged. Sign-up sheet posted on the ASLC-PC door.
- Free brunch in the photo gallery from **10-12.**

MAY 2

- Climb to Conquer Cancer 5/10k walk/run from 7-12 at Warner Pacific College. Contact Phillis Annoh for more information.

MAY 4

- The 40th annual Collins Lecture, presented by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), is scheduled for **6:30** on Monday, May 4, 2009, at the University of Portland, Chiles Center. The theme is "The Transformative Power of Reconciliation in Society." Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus from Cape Town, South Africa, will be the featured keynote speaker. E-mail Michael Leahy at mleahy@linfield.edu if interested.
- Holistic Health Interest Group is having a meeting in the piano room from **12:10-12:50.** New leadership for the coming year will be discussed and tea will be provided.
- Movie tickets are for sale for \$5 per pair in the photo gallery at **noon.**
- Ping Pong Tournament in the blue room at **noon.**

MAY 6

- Join fellow students from **6:30- 7:25** in Pioneer Courthouse Square in front of KGW's Studio on the Square to represent Linfield and celebrate National Nurses' Week. The cohort with the biggest percentage of members there will get \$200 for their class party. **PLUS** there will be raffle prizes during the event. We will get some air time with Stephanie Strickland on her show, "Live @ 7". We have a designated student speaker so don't worry about talking on camera. We just need your enthusiasm and a good showing of Linfield students in their Linfield gear or scrub tops. Contact Lisa Burch for more information.