

Mary's Message

A new year is the perfect time to make changes, and we're about to make some big ones in FMAH. As announced in the last newsletter, we are moving both our meeting time and place. Our next meeting will be Saturday, January 10, 2009, beginning at 1 p.m. We'll be meeting on the second Saturday of each month, so mark your calendars now!

We will meet in the Assembly Room at the First Congregational Church of Houston. The church is located just off Voss Road, at 10840 Beinhorn Road, Houston, TX 77024. Now that the construction of I-10 is finished, it's a very easy drive. Take the Bingle/Voss exit and go south to the first stop light, which is Beinhorn. Turn right and go two blocks to the parking lot entrance. We'll have signs pointing to the parking lot and the Assembly Room.

While this location may seem less centrally located, Beltway 8 provides easy access from all of the Houston Metro area. For those of you coming from Clear Lake and Pearland, hop on the Beltway and exit East on I-10. If you're coming from the north, such as Spring or The Woodlands, you'll also exit East on I-10, toward downtown. Simply go three exits and turn right on Voss. This will be much easier than fighting the Galleria-area traffic on 610, and since we're meeting on Saturdays, traffic will be even lighter.

I'm excited to make these changes, and I hope that you'll join us. May you have a happy and healthy New Year.

Take care,
Mary Harper, President

January: "Fibro Facts"

Come and be a part of FMAH history! This will be our first meeting at our new facility. To celebrate, we'll have a presentation from the National Fibromyalgia Association given by a local doctor.

The program includes information on living with and managing fibromyalgia. There will be an overview of FM, including causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. Tips to proactively manage the condition, along with a question, and, answer session will complete the presentation.

Please note the special time for this meeting only: 12:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Pfizer, Inc., the meeting includes a complimentary lunch. We are now meeting on the **second Saturday, January 10**, at 12:30 p.m.

Please R.S.V.P. by January 5, 2009, by calling the Information Line at 713-664-0180, or e-mail us at FMAHouston@yahoo.com. Please R.S.V.P. now while you're thinking of it.

We're looking forward to seeing you at the First Congregational Church, 10840 Beinhorn

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Fibromyalgia Association of Houston

the FIBROMYALGIA Connection

The *Fibromyalgia Connection* is published three times a year by The Fibromyalgia Association of Houston, Inc. (FMAH), a 501(c)(3) charity, and its volunteers.

Materials and opinions presented in the newsletter are for information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of FMAH, its officers, directors, or medical advisory board. Fibromyalgia (FM) patients should consult their physicians or other health care professionals for diagnosis and prior to initiating any form of treatment or exercise.

The *Fibromyalgia Connection* is not responsible for typographical errors or omissions in its printed matter. FMAH and *The Fibromyalgia Connection* are not affiliated with any other fibromyalgia organization.

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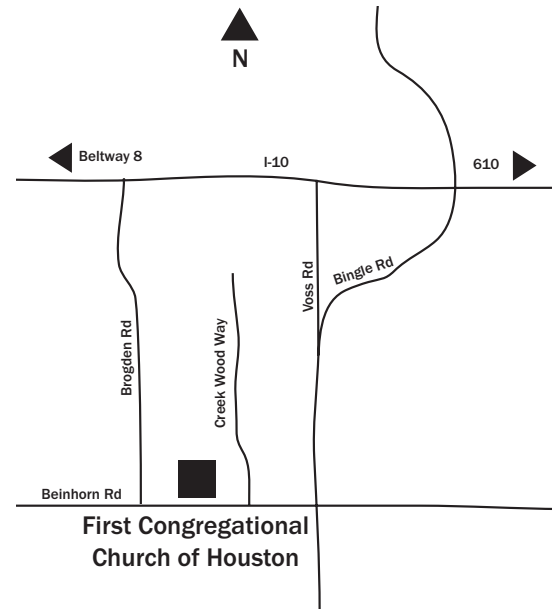
For more information about fibromyalgia, call the FMAH Information Line at 713-664-0180. A volunteer will return your call.

Support Group Meeting Schedule

We meet at the First Congregational Church of Houston and greatly appreciate the space they provide for our meetings; however, FMAH is not affiliated with any church.

All meetings are free and open to the public. Friends and relatives are always welcome.

FMAH reserves the right to substitute speakers if necessary, so for more current information, please call the Information Line at 713-664-0180, or visit us online at www.fmah.org. Parking is free in the church lot.



LOCATION:

The First Congregational Church of Houston
10840 Beinhorn Road (Just south of I-10 at the Voss/Bingle exit)

ROOM:

Assembly Room: Follow the covered walkway. Signs will be posted.

DAY:

Second Saturday of the month

TIME:

1-3 p.m. New members are encouraged to come early.

January 10, 2009:
12:30 p.m. on this day only

“Fibro Facts”

A program of the National Fibromyalgia Association, sponsored by Pfizer, Inc.

February 14, 2009:

“Couples Facing Illness Together”

William July, PhD, and Jamey July

March 14, 2009:

“Natural Relief from Fibromyalgia”

Brenda Hasslebrock, D.C.

April 11, 2009:

“Water Exercise”

Lisa Miller

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Rd. Look for maps elsewhere in this newsletter. We'll also have a sign posted on Beinhorn to the church parking lot. Take the covered walkway to the Assembly Room and enjoy a free lunch and a great program.

February: "In Sickness & In Health: How to Keep Your Love Alive in the Midst of Illness"

What better day than Valentine's Day to focus on relationships and chronic illness! We are thrilled to have authors **Dr. William July** and his wife, **Jamey Lacy**, speak to us. They have written a fabulous book, *A Husband, a Wife, and an Illness: Living Life Beyond Chronic Illness*, which will be available for sale after the meeting.

Dr. July has appeared many times on national radio and on *Great Day Houston!* His Web site, www.couplesfacingillness.com, sums up their story:

"I'm Dr. William July, nationally bestselling relationship author. I have written four books on relationships and I'm frequently on national television and radio shows discussing relationships and news stories. My wife, Jamey Lacy, is a former athlete, wellness expert, and speaker. We were living the American dream when she was struck with a devastating illness. As we forge our path to healing and recovery, we've discovered vital ways to live our lives beyond

illness and we want to help you do the same thing."

Anyone who is in any kind of relationship, including spouses, parents, or friends, can benefit from this talk. Whether you're the caregiver or the patient, the Julys will have important information that could enhance your relationships.

Please join us on **Saturday, February 14, 2009**, at 1 p.m. for this very informative talk. Caregivers, family, and friends are all welcome.

March: Natural Relief

Have you ever wondered how a chiropractor can help fibromyalgia pain? We are pleased to have **Brenda Hassebrock, D.C.**, as our speaker on **Saturday, March 14**. Dr. Hassebrock will discuss diet and nutritional considerations, exercise/massage, acupuncture, and what role chiropractic plays in the pain suffered by those with fibromyalgia.

We'll meet in the Assembly Room at the First Congregational Church on Beinhorn. The meeting begins at 1 p.m.

April: Water Exercise

One of the best things that you can do to help your fibromyalgia is to get in warm water. Our speaker for the **April 11** meeting, **Lisa Miller**, will discuss the many benefits of water exercise. Lisa is a certified aquatic exercise specialist who teaches classes at The Dad's Club Aquatic & Fitness Center.

She has offered to give us all a free class at The Dad's Club the Saturday following her talk, on April 18. The Dad's Club is located very close to our new meeting place, just across I-10 at N. Voss and the feeder. Come learn how water exercises can help you and try out a class for free!

Please join us at 1 p.m. **Saturday, April 11**, at the church and on Saturday, April 18, for the class. We'll decide at the meeting a convenient time for the following Saturday's class.

Donors

The following generous donors contributed by check. Unfortunately, there is no way to acknowledge those who made cash contributions, but we do appreciate every donation.

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Together We Can Change the World, Inc. (My Power Mall)

* Indicates donations of \$50 or more. Thanks to all of you!

Seven Helpful Tips for Dealing with the Pain of Fibromyalgia

By Dr. Michael Verdolin

According to the National Institutes of Health, nearly 10 million Americans suffer from fibromyalgia. Sadly, many go through months and years of pain, frustration, and confusion before receiving treatment because there is no diagnostic for this chronic illness.

Medical tests such as X-rays, blood tests, and muscle biopsies can rule out other medical conditions (lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, Lyme disease) but can't confirm fibromyalgia. Meanwhile, fibromyalgia sufferers endure multiple symptoms, including global aching pain, fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, sleep disturbances, heightened sensitivity to any sensation, and depression.

The intensity of the symptoms can vary based on a variety of factors, including stress, weather, physical activity, and time of the day. Even with all these symptoms, it can take up to five years for a fibromyalgia patient to get an accurate diagnosis. The rigors of the process weigh heavily on anyone with the disease. According to the American College of Rheumatology classification guidelines, for patients to be diagnosed with

fibromyalgia, they must have widespread pain for at least three months and have a minimum of 11 specific locations on their body where they are experiencing pain.

Meanwhile, patients face a depressing and frightening time while waiting for their primary care physician to rule out other diseases. Family and friends sometimes think they are hypochondriacs and tell them to just "toughen up" or have a more positive attitude. This external pressure or lack of support can actually increase the severity of symptoms. The downward plunge in functionality can be dramatic, too, where activities of daily living, including shopping, exercising, and other pursuits become nearly impossible.

If you think you may have fibromyalgia and are going through a battery of tests to rule out other diseases or if you have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia, you can take seven positive steps to manage your pain.

1. Work with your physician to try different medications that are approved by the FDA for treating fibromyalgia and also to ease the physical pain and other symptoms, such as anxiety and insomnia.

2. Understand your symptoms. Analyze when they occur, the intensity, duration, extenuating circumstances, and other factors as well as when the symptoms seem to diminish. From this foundation, you can become more proactive in establishing a program to manage your pain (for one approach, see *Managing Your Pain Before It Manages You*, by Margaret Caudill, M.D., Ph.D.).

3. Develop an exercise regimen, physical therapy program, or both. This is counterintuitive. When something hurts, the tendency is to avoid movement, but better muscle conditioning can help manage pain.

With fibromyalgia, everything may hurt but there is no actual tissue damage (the cause is largely believed to be linked to the central nervous system). Set a schedule of daily exercise and stick to it. Better yet, if you enjoy the water, pool therapy in warm water, such as pool aerobics and swimming, will reduce the impact of gravity on joints while allowing for a good cardiovascular and muscular workout.

4. Adjust your diet if your analysis indicates any pattern based on food and beverage consumption.

5. Try acupuncture and holistic approaches.

6. Join a support group: National Fibromyalgia Association (www.fmaware.org), or American Chronic Pain Association: www.theacpa.org, or others in your community. Beyond the basic guidance offered here, the support groups have created large communities of fibromyalgia sufferers who are quick to share their personal experiences, frustrations, success stories, and helpful hints.

7. Establish a routine and stick to it, adjusting as you learn more about your body and analyze the results of your pain management program.

Since no cure exists, management is key. Know that pain is a part of your life and focus on something other than your physical complaints. Celebrate the success you have in reducing discomfort and you can enjoy a better quality of life.

Reprinted with permission from Dr. Michael Verdolin. Dr. Verdolin is a board certified physician who has specialized in pain management since 2003.

American College of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine will provide at least one free treatment to FMAH members. To register for a coupon, visit www.acaom.edu/registration, or call 713-780-9777 for more information.

Water Exercise: A Gentle Way to Relax and Reduce Pain

By Lisa Miller

Exercise, of all the “alternative therapies,” has proven to be the most beneficial.

Appropriate exercise makes you feel better, look better, and physically perform better. As long as you avoid exercise during flare-ups and don’t overdo it, there should be no negative side effects.

It takes dedication and determination but is an important part of the treatment for fibromyalgia (FM) if you want to live an active, independent life.

The more that you reduce the pain and problems it causes, the better able you will be to sleep well at night and have the energy to work and play productively.

Establishing an exercise program helps people with FM and their families become better educated about the condition and how fibromyalgia affects the body.

Exercise can reduce the symptoms caused by a sedentary lifestyle and help to increase muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, as well as improve your outlook on life.

So, let’s get in the water!

As an aquatic exercise professional specializing in chronic pain issues, and an FM sufferer myself, I believe there is nothing better

than getting into warm water and being able to move freely and without pain. Water exercise was the first of many discoveries that have led me to reversing my pain issues significantly, and I am thrilled to share it with you.

My name is Lisa Miller, certified aquatic exercise specialist. I teach classes at The Dad’s Club Aquatic & Fitness Center, which offers classes every morning and evening and maintains a pool temperature of 88 degrees year round. Centrally located on I-10 and Bingle/Voss, Dad’s Club is very affordable and not intimidating like most upscale clubs. I offer personal training, group exercise, and massage in the water.

You can contact me for further information at 281-217-8432 or e-mail me at aquatictouch@yahoo.com.

Lisa Miller will discuss the benefits of water exercise at the April 11, 2009, FMAH meeting. The following Saturday, on April 18, all are invited to a special free water exercise class in the pool at the Dad’s Club.

Visit www.fmah.org or call the Information Line at 713-664-0180 in April for details.

New Low Prices!

The FMAH Store

All information is presented for informational purposes only and reflects the views of the authors.

BOOKS

The Art of Body Maintenance: Winners' Guide to Pain Relief, by Hal Blatman, MD, and Berad Ekvall, illustrator. Use this guide to better understand your body and manage your pain. Includes exercise ball.

The FM Help Book, by Jenny Fransen, RN, and I. Jon Russell, MD, PhD. Provides many practical ways to cope with FM, including how to improve sleep, develop an exercise program, and manage flare-ups. It is an excellent resource for patients and professionals.

DVDs

Strength Through Movement – Get moving with FMAH's latest movement video featuring real fibromyalgia patients. This DVD focuses on increasing flexibility and relaxation while reducing stress. Narrated by fitness professional Leslee A. Cross, this video will get you moving!

Show Me Where It Hurts – Features two of our 2006 conference speakers, Patrick Wood, MD, and Lynne Matallana, president of the National Fibromyalgia Association. The video discusses cutting-edge research and interviews patients who tell their stories. It provides a great introduction to fibromyalgia and will help friends and families understand what you're going through.

MEETING DVDs

Weird Celiac Disease – It Could Be You, Janet Rinehart, chairman of the Houston Celiac Support Group. Many FM patients have irritable bowel syndrome, but could it really be celiac sprue disease? January 2006.

Changes in Social Security Disability, Robert Hardy, attorney. Hardy is an expert in Social Security Disability law. He explains the current procedure for applying for disability and discusses upcoming changes.

Acupuncture Basics, John Paul Liang, president of the American College of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine, explains the theory and use of acupuncture. July 2008.

Maintaining Healthy Relationships, Mary Jo Rapini, LPC. Being chronically ill and in pain makes keeping healthy relationships a real challenge. Mary Jo is open, frank, and quite an entertaining speaker. February 2008.

Reasons for Foot and Ankle Pain, Justin Jex, DPM. Many of us with FM also have foot and ankle pain. Dr. Jex explains the basics of FM and explains common problems that can add to our pain. He gives practical advice and gives coping tips. March 2008.

MISCELLANEOUS

Lapel Pin. Our logo is now a lapel pin. In full color, it reads "Piecing Together a World with Hope" and shows the puzzle pieces of research, education, support, and vision. It's a great way to spread the word about FMAH and fibromyalgia.

The Fibromyalgia Connection. Newsletter published by The Fibromyalgia Association of Houston. Free to Texas residents; others may view it free of charge on our Web site or send \$10/year for three issues.

FMAH Store Order Form

New Low Prices!

	Quantity	Price	Total
BOOKS:			
<i>The Art of Body Maintenance: Winners' Guide to Pain Relief</i>	_____	\$25.00	\$ _____
<i>The FM Help Book (Closeout Sale!)</i>	_____	\$12.00	\$ _____
DVDs:			
<i>Strength Through Movement</i>	_____	\$11.00	\$ _____
<i>Show Me Where It Hurts</i>	_____	\$25.00	\$ _____
MEETING DVDS:			
<i>Weird Celiac Disease – It Could Be You</i>	_____	\$5.00	\$ _____
<i>Changes in Social Security Disability</i>	_____	\$5.00	\$ _____
<i>Acupuncture Basics</i>	_____	\$5.00	\$ _____
<i>Maintaining Healthy Relationships</i>	_____	\$5.00	\$ _____
<i>Reasons for Foot and Ankle Pain</i>	_____	\$5.00	\$ _____

MISCELLANEOUS:

Lapel Pin _____ \$3.00 \$ _____



The Fibromyalgia Connection _____ \$10.00 \$ _____

Free to Texas residents. Out-of-state subscriptions: \$10/three issues.

FMAH T-Shirts

Help raise FM awareness! The front of the T-shirt tells who we are, and the back shows the main symptoms of FM. A picture is worth a thousand words, and this T-shirt can help explain FM for you.

(circle size): S, M, L, XL, 2XL



_____ \$12.00 \$ _____
 Donation: \$ _____
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PRICES INCLUDE TAX AND SHIPPING.

Method of Payment (please check one): MasterCard () Visa () Check or Money Order (). Make payable to: FMAH, P.O. Box 541742, Houston, TX 77254-1742. For questions, e-mail FMAHouston@yahoo.com or call the Information Line at 713-664-0180.

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Remembering a Special Occasion

FMAH gratefully accepts donations in memory or in honor of a loved one. Please remember us for birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions. We will send a card to the honoree advising him or her of your donation. Thank you for thinking of us.

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