Mary’s Message

Did you know that the Fibromyalgia Association of Houston was founded in 1990 by Toby Robbins and our former long-time medical director, Richard Rubin, M.D.? FMAH was incorporated in 1992 and became a nonprofit organization with bylaws and a board of directors. Toby and a small group of volunteers worked hard to achieve their goal of providing support and information. At that time, there was little written about fibromyalgia, and finding support from doctors was difficult.

Toby resigned as president in January 2001 and asked me to lead the group. It’s been my pleasure to serve as your president for more than 15 years, but it’s time for me to let someone else take over with new ideas and energy. I’m announcing my resignation effective January 1, 2017.

The board of directors is looking for new leadership. Besides my position, we have an additional opening on the board. Both are part-time positions with flexible hours. No commuting necessary, since we work out of our homes. The pay is low ($0) but the rewards are great. When someone comes up to me and says how much FMAH has helped them, it makes me proud of the work that we’ve done. Helping others has helped my own healing process.

You don’t have to have fibromyalgia to be the FMAH president, but it is essential to understand how FM affects people’s lives. Our organization is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people affected by fibromyalgia. We strive to make a positive difference in the lives of people who are struggling with FM by providing ongoing support and education.

Please consider helping this great organization. I’ll be happy to train you and stay on the board to help with the transition. For more information, email me at info@fmah.org or call the Information Line at 713-664-0180. We’re looking forward to hearing from you.

Gentle Hugs,
Mary Harper
President

News and Research

The Alzheimer’s Connection

Research confirms it. Fibrofog isn’t related to Alzheimer’s.

In a study conducted at Rush Medical College in Chicago, researchers found no connection between the cognitive dysfunction found in fibromyalgia patients and the development of Alzheimer’s disease.

Fibrofog, short for fibromyalgia fog, is also known as brain fog. According to the Arthritis Foundation, fibrofog is characterized by the following:

- Short-term memory loss
- Concentration problems
- Difficulty retaining new information, finding words and/or holding conversations
- Not feeling alert

Some researchers believe that fibrofog is related to poor sleep, which is a classic fibromyalgia symptom. The study entitled, “Cross-sectional Neurocognitive Data Do Not Support a Transition From Fibrofog to Alzheimer Disease in Fibromyalgia Patients,” was published in JCR: Journal of Clinical Rheumatology.

Fibromyalgia Blood Test Now Covered by Some Insurers

The FM/a test, first introduced in 2013, is now covered by Medicare and some private insurers, according to the bioresearch company, EpicGenetics, that developed the test. According to
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 up-to-date 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: Third Saturday every OTHER month

TIME: 1:30–3:30 p.m. unless otherwise posted. Come early to peruse the free handouts and to meet others coping with fibromyalgia.

July 16 Dealing with Chronic Pain
Wendy Lai, Chronic Pain Anonymous

Sept. 17 Treatment of Orofacial Pain and TMJ Disorders
Nathan Pettit, D.M.D., M.S.D.

Dec. 3 Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange
The company’s CEO, Bruce Gillis, M.D., fibromyalgia patients have fewer chemokines and cytokines in their blood than healthy people. The FM/a test looks for these proteins and claims to detect fibromyalgia with 93 percent accuracy.

Critics of the test note that the same biomarkers can be found in people with other illness, such as rheumatoid arthritis, which is why the blood test is still considered controversial.

Researchers at Ohio State University identified a unique pattern of molecules in the blood of fibromyalgia patients. In a blind study using blood samples from 14 fibromyalgia patients, 15 patients with rheumatoid arthritis, and 12 with osteoarthritis, the test confirmed which patients had fibromyalgia with 100 percent accuracy.

One criticism is that the test did not compare blood samples from normal subjects. The study was published in a 2013 article in the journal Analyst.

Meetings
July: Dealing with Chronic Pain
Wendy Lai of Chronic Pain Anonymous (CPA). She’s a coach who helps those with chronic pain deal with the emotional side of pain. CPA is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous and helps patients to manage pain without drugs. Wendy will explain what CPA does and how it provides tools to feeling more in control of your life. Join us on Saturday, July 16 for a fascinating discussion on this important topic that affects many chronic pain sufferers.

September: Treatment of Orofacial Pain and TMJ Disorders
Nathan Pettit, D.M.D., M.S.D., with MedCenter TMJ, who specializes in treating orofacial pain and TMJ disorder, will speak to us about treatment options. Dr. Pettit is committed to a life-time pursuit of knowledge and excellence in treating and managing craniomandibular disorders and temporomandibular dysfunction. Join us on Saturday, Sept. 17.

December: Holiday Potluck and Gift Exchange
Join us for a potluck lunch and white elephant gift exchange for the last meeting of the year. Please bring whatever food you like, and FMAH will provide drinks. After lunch, we’ll have the gift exchange.

Support FMAH While You Search
You can raise money every time you search the Web, at iSearchiGive.com. Make it your home page. Use it to find everything from news on the economy to mood-lifting jokes. FMAH gets a penny or more every time you search. Believe it or not, it adds up quickly. And best of all, it costs you nothing! Start iGiving at iSearchiGive.com.

Donations
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.

Arthur Burke* in honor of Geralyn Burke
Lynda Daniel*
Fortuna Esquenazi*
Fran Guest
Halliburton*
Larry Jacobson*
Kroger*
Maria Leija*
Gayle Moses*
Randalls*
Renate Reibel*
C. Jo Shannon*
Sara Wilkinson*
* Indicates donations of $50 or more. Thanks to all of you!
Tips for getting your prescriptions – cheap!

Whether you're insured, on Medicare or paying out of pocket, prescription medications can put a major dent into your wallet; and, there doesn't seem to be any relief coming our way. Since late December, pharmaceutical companies have hiked up their prices between 9-10 percent for dozens of brand-named prescription drugs, according to the Wall Street Journal.

#1 Ask your doctor for a prescription savings card.

Many drug companies offer discounts for brand name prescription drugs and your doctor's office may have the discount card for it. Whenever you are prescribed a new medication, ask if your doctor has the manufacturer's savings card. If not, you can often get one on the company's website. And see if you can get some of those free samples from your doctor while you are at it.

#2 Uninsured? Sign up for the drug company’s patient assistance program.

There are programs for those who are uninsured called patient assistance programs. Individual drug companies offer free or low cost drugs to uninsured patients who cannot afford their medication. Each company has its own guidelines including those for income. Visit rxassist.org to learn more and search the directory of programs.

#3 Ask about generics drugs.

Almost 80 percent of the FDA-approved drugs have a generic. Ask you doctor if a generic drug will work for you. According to the FDA, "a generic drug is identical to a brand name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics and intended use."

#4 Here are two words that will save you money – split it.

If you are taking 50 mg of a medication, you may be able to save by getting it in 100 mg and splitting it in half. Before trying this, it is important to talk to your doctor and pharmacist about safety.

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Sources: WebMD, FDA.gov
Where Can I Find Reliable Health Information Online?

Sometimes, it’s hard to know where to begin to look for trustworthy health information. Government agencies, voluntary health organizations, health care organizations, such as hospitals, are good places to start for reliable information. Here are a few other helpful websites:

- **Arthritis Foundation**, arthritis.org, is the leading national organization focused on preventing, treating and curing arthritis.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, cdc.gov, consists of departments that focus on occupational safety and heath.
- **National Fibromyalgia Association**, fmaware.org, provides information and updates regarding fibromyalgia and related topics.
- **National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association**, fmcpaware.org, provides support, education, research and advocacy for people with fibromyalgia and chronic pain conditions.
- **National Institutes of Health** website, nih.gov, the nation’s biomedical research agency, which comprises 27 separate institutes and centers.

Some information is reprinted from nia.nih.gov/health/publication/online-health-information.

Questions to Ask Before Trusting a Website

The internet is a great tool for learning about your health and any conditions that impact it such as fibromyalgia. But not all information online is created equal.

As you search online, you are likely to find websites for many health agencies and organizations that are not well-known. By answering the following questions you should be able to find more information about these websites. A lot of these details might be found under the heading “About Us.”

**Who sponsors/hosts the website? Is that information easy to find?**

Websites cost money. Is the source of funding (sponsor) clear? Sometimes the website address is helpful. For example:

- .gov identifies a U.S. government agency
- .edu identifies an educational institution, like a school, college, or university
- .org usually identifies nonprofit organizations (such as professional groups; scientific, medical, or research societies; advocacy groups)
- .com identifies commercial websites (such as businesses, pharmaceutical companies, and sometimes hospitals)

Is it clear how you can reach the sponsor? Trustworthy websites will have contact information for you to use to reach the site’s sponsor or authors.

**Who wrote the information?**

Authors and contributors are often but not always identified. For example, most government sites have many authors and contributors and, rather than list the names of the people, they will often credit a department. A contributor’s connection to the website, and any financial interest he or she has in the information on the website, should be clear. Be careful about testimonials. Personal stories may be helpful and comforting, but not everyone experiences health problems the same way. Also, there is a big difference between a website developed by a single person interested in a topic and a website developed using information gathered from research. No information should replace seeing a doctor or other health professional.

**When was the information written?** Look for websites that stay current on their health information. You don’t want to make decisions about your care based on out-of-date information. Often the bottom of the page will have a date. Pages on the same site may be updated at different times. Some may be updated more often than others. Many websites provide older articles as historical background.

**Does the website offer quick and easy solutions to your health problems? Are miracle cures promised?** Be careful of websites or companies that claim any one remedy will cure a lot of different illnesses. Question dramatic writing or amazing cures. Make sure you can find other websites with the same information. Even if the website links to a trustworthy source, it doesn’t mean that the site has the other organization’s endorsement or support.

Visit Fibromyalgia Association of Houston’s Resource Links page, fmah.org/resource-links, for more online resources.
The FMAH Store

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

DVDs

“Strength through Movement,” narrated by Leslee A. Cross, who holds a Master’s in Exercise Science from the University of Houston. Ms. Cross designed easy-to-do exercises especially targeted for fibromyalgia patients, with a focus on increasing flexibility and relaxation.

MEETING DVDs

“A Fibro Overview from a Neurology Perspective,” Randall J. Wright, M.D. Dr. Wright, neurologist and author, discusses fibromyalgia from a neurological perspective.

“Fibromyalgia and Depression,” Vera Gonzales, Ph.D. Dr. Gonzales, psychologist and author, discusses the role of depression in chronic pain.

“Fibromyalgia and Pain,” Phillip Phan, M.D., former director of neuromodulation and pain management, Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Phan shares current theories about why FM patients suffer pain and discusses available pain management therapy.

“Medical Massage and You,” Mike O’Quin, medical massage practitioner. Learn how medical massage can help you feel better. Mr. O’Quin provides a demonstration of active isolated stretching with FMAH president Mary Harper.

“Sleep and Fibromyalgia,” Shyam Subramanian, M.D., former medical director, Baylor College of Medicine Sleep Center. Dr. Subramanian shares methods to improve sleep for people suffering from fibromyalgia symptoms.

“Using Exercise and Physical Therapy to Treat Fibromyalgia,” Helen Schilling, M.D., board-certified specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation. Dr. Schilling discusses fibromyalgia and pain management using exercise and physical therapy.

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 website or send $10/year for three issues.
# FMAH Store Order Form

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*Shipping cost per item.

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, email info@fmah.org or call the Information Line at 713-664-0180.

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Email ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
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.

Honoree’s Name: ___________________________________________ Gift Amount $________

Gift made by: ______________________________________________

Name: _____________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________

Remembrance is honoring: □ Birthday □ Memorial □ Other __________________________

Send notice of this remembrance to:

Name: _____________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________

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