Director's Letter

This summer, I attended several days of the 2019 Alzheimer's Association International Conference, which was held in Los Angeles. In addition to the opportunity to network with Alzheimer’s specialists from around the world, attendees were able to hear about the latest research focused on this devastating illness, which afflicts 10 percent of people age 65 and older.

Unfortunately, there were no breakthroughs reported on novel drugs that might have a disease-modifying effect although several medicines are in development for treating the behavioral problems associated with the illness, such as hallucinations, delusions, and agitation. What became clear, however, is the impact of healthy lifestyle on lowering risk and mitigating symptoms. Each year, the evidence gets more and more compelling that physical exercise, a balanced diet, stress management and mental stimulation have an important impact on brain health as people age.

Many people assume that, for the most part, their genes determine their ultimate risk for dementia. However, Investigators from the University of Exeter Medical School used a large database of 196,383 European adults to show that lifestyle factors may counteract genetic risk for dementia. The investigators determined genetic risk based on a risk score derived from previous Alzheimer’s disease genetic studies. In their analysis, they considered the following lifestyle habits: regular physical activity levels, not smoking, moderate alcohol use, and healthy diet. Volunteers with poor lifestyle habits and high genetic risk were three times as likely to develop dementia compared to those with healthy habits and low genetic risk.

(Continued on page 2)
Another study confirmed previous findings that combining a greater number of healthy lifestyle habits provides better brain protection than engaging in fewer ones. Dr. Klodian Dhana of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and colleagues reported on a longitudinal study of 2,351 research volunteers who did not have dementia at the outset of the study. They found that those volunteers who engaged in four or five healthy lifestyle habits (good diet, recommended level of exercise, not smoking, light to moderate alcohol use, or cognitive stimulation) enjoyed a 60 percent lower risk for Alzheimer's dementia. The results point to an opportunity for public health interventions because most people engage in unhealthy behaviors. For example, only about one out of four U.S. adults gets the recommended 150 minutes of exercise each week, and more than 34 million adults smoke cigarettes.

Several earlier studies have shown that exposure to air pollution—especially fine particulate matter or tiny droplets—increases an individual's risk for developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Cognitive reserve is a person's ability to maintain normal cognitive function despite brain damage or pathology and is determined by education, age, culture, genetics, and other factors. Dr. Diana Youngman and associates at the University of Southern California reported that individuals with high cognitive reserve are less subject to the brain damaging effects of air pollution. In their study of more than 6,000 women aged 65 to 79, subjects were categorized according to their level of cognitive reserve, based on cognitive test scores, years of education, physical activity levels, and employment status.

After 14 years of follow-up, the scientists found that women who were categorized as having lower cognitive reserve had a significantly greater pollutant-exposure risk for dementia compared with those with higher cognitive reserve.

Smoking is thought to increase dementia risk because it causes oxidative stress and cerebrovascular disease, which leads to mini-strokes and hardening of the arteries that supply oxygen and nutrients to brain cells. In new research from investigators at the University of California, San Francisco, investigators followed 3,364 adults (mean age 50) for 25 years and found that heavy smokers had a 1.5 to 2.2 greater likelihood of cognitive impairment compared with non-smokers. By contrast, volunteers who quit smoking had no increased risk for cognitive decline. These new findings showed cognitive impairment linked to smoking in people as young as in their forties.

Gary Small, M.D.
Director, UCLA Longevity Center
Loss of Smell Could Be Marker Of Neurodegenerative Disease

By Emily Gold-Mears, UCLA Longevity Center Board Member

There have been several clinical studies focused on participants and their olfactory function over a prolonged period of time. The medical term for decreased sense of smell is “anosmia”. The term “aMCI” is defined as amnestic mild cognitive impairment and indicates memory problems more severe than normal for one’s age but not serious enough to affect daily life. aMCI is distinguishable from “naMCI” which is nonamnestic mild cognitive impairment and affects thinking skills other than memory. These skills include executive functioning, planning and organizing, and judgment. My understanding is that mental skills affected by naMCI are located primarily in the prefrontal regions of the frontal lobe of the brain and are distinct from the area of the brain responsible for the processing of memory.

There are many different types of memories and many are reliant upon the medial temporal lobe or the hippocampus and entorhinal cortex

regions. Other types of memories are reliant upon other areas of the brain including the neocortex, amygdala, basal ganglia, cerebellum and prefrontal cortex. It appears as if different areas of the brain decline at different rates, depending on the type of brain dysfunction, which leads to impairments of varied mental abilities.

Several clinical studies have shown a link between declining abilities to recognize odors and cognitive decline. Many of these investigations use a standardized measure of odor recognitions called the UPSIT (University of Pennsylvania Smell Identification Test). The volunteer attempts to correctly identify different odors and receives a score for accuracy. The studies include cognitively normal individuals and track the association between declining olfaction and declining cognitive performance. Several of these studies indicate a significant association of impaired olfaction with progression from aMCI to Alzheimer’s dementia.

ABOUT EMILY GOLD-MEARS

Emily Gold-Mears was born and raised in Los Angeles. She has a B.A. and a J.D. and practiced Real Estate Transactional Law before focusing exclusively on philanthropic causes. She is a board member of KCRW and the UCLA Longevity Center and serves on the Society of Fellows Advisory Committee for the Aspen Institute. As a result of her father suffering and ultimately succumbing to dementia, she embarked on an odyssey of scientific research to understand the causes and potential solutions to neurological disorders. One of the results of this extensive research is her blog called "Discussing Dementia" and the accompanying website on dementia research. The objective of this blog is to share the information she has gathered about dementia with others, particularly those similarly situated.

To subscribe to Emily’s blog, please visit her website at: www.dementia-research.com
Spotlight on Community Partners

Collin and Katz Family YMCA

The YMCA is known for youth development, but new collaborations are turning their space into a welcome environment for senior citizens as well. The UCLA Longevity Center is pleased to partner with the Collin & Katz Family YMCA to extend our reach to those in need in the metropolitan Los Angeles area. The program coordinators share their experiences stating, “Here at the Collins and Katz Family YMCA, we are making a difference in our community by offering memory workshops through UCLA programs developed by Dr. Gary Small. By bringing our members together in a safe and supportive environment, we are able to add clarity and independence to a population in need, by boosting brain function and cognitive ability that can enhance all areas of daily living.”

Jodi Kolada, Greensboro, North Carolina

Jodi Kolada is a community partner of the UCLA Longevity Center Memory Fitness Program. Jodi has a master’s degree in Gerontological Studies from Miami University of Ohio. She is a certified co-leader of Powerful Tools for Caregivers, a six-week educational series. She presents to various community organizations about caregiving issues. Currently, she is the Director of Business and Caregiver Outreach with Well-Spring Solutions, an organization that strives to exceed the needs of an evolving and diverse population of older adults through exceptional home and community-based services.

Judi Welsh, MS, CDP, Uppperco, Maryland

Judi Welsh is a community partner of the UCLA Longevity Center Memory Training Program. Judi completed her undergraduate studies at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. She then obtained her Master of Science in Human Services from Capella University. She is a Certified Dementia Practitioner with a commitment to quality care and a focus on integrity and compassion. With over twenty-five years of service to seniors across the continuum of care, Judi’s experience includes psychosocial and cognitive assessment, care management, therapeutic activity programming, and memory health instruction. Judi is also the founder of Bumblebee Brain Training, which offers UCLA’s Memory Training Program, consultations for age-related memory concerns, caregiver coaching, cognitive programming for senior communities, and individual companionship and cognitive stimulation for seniors with dementia.

"What a privilege it was to attend this class. You introduced us to a whole new way of remembering “stuff.” Now my project is to practice what we learned!” ~ Julie Christensen
Research Studies & Support Groups

**Optimize Your Treatment for Depression**

**OPTIMUM** is a research study for participants 60 and older with difficult to treat depression.

- Eligible participants are randomized to medication options:
  - **STEP 1:** (for 10 weeks) Adding aripiprazole or bupropion to current antidepressant or switch to bupropion
  - **STEP 2:** (for 10 weeks) Adding lithium to current antidepressant or switch to nortriptyline
- The study team will assess your side effects and mood for up to 12 months.
- Study psychiatrists will provide medication recommendations to your primary care physician.
- You will provide an optional saliva sample for DNA.

You may be eligible if you are:
- 60 years or older
- Depressed
- Taking an antidepressant, but not feeling better.

Ask your doctor if you qualify.
For more information:
310-206-5240
Latec.lifeWellness@mednet.ucla.edu

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**Tai Chi Chih or Health Education and Wellness for Older Adults**

The UCLA Late-Life Mood, Stress and Wellness Program in the Geriatric Psychiatry Division is conducting a 12-month research study involving 12 weekly 60-minute sessions of either a health and wellness class or a Tai Chi class. Participants will undergo three functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans. A complete psychiatric evaluation will be provided. Subjects will not be charged for participation and will be compensated.

You must be at least 60 years old. If you or anyone you know is interested in participating, call for an appointment to see if you qualify or for more information at (310) 794-5533.

The study will be conducted by Helen Lavretsky, M.D.

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**Yoga and Memory Training for Women**

The UCLA Late Life Mood, Stress and Wellness Program is conducting a year-long research study involving 12 weekly 60-minute sessions of yoga or memory training. Participants will undergo 2 functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans. A complete psychiatric evaluation will be provided. Participants will be compensated up to $250 and reimbursed for parking.

For more information please call (310) 825-2655.

This study is being conducted by Helen Lavretsky, M.D.
The Next Chapter: These Seniors See Retirement as a Challenge to Try Something New

By Andy Talajkowski, Senior Scholars Coordinator

In the bustling student café on the outskirts of the UCLA campus, Tom Jacobson and Robert Blaunstein are a bit older than the other patrons hunched over notepads, textbooks and laptops, but they are hardly outsiders to the undergraduate grind. Bob and Tom participate in the Longevity Center’s Senior Scholars program, a program that allows individuals 50 years and older to audit lectures at UCLA. A few times a week, you can find the two friends in the same lecture halls as the students around them. Bob and Tom have taken enough courses through the program to receive a degree from UCLA – not that they are in need of educational accolades.

Before retiring, Bob was a physicist serving in the U.S. Department of Energy and lectured at the University of Tennessee. Tom was a civil rights attorney who helped integrate Milwaukee public schools and represented activists such as Dick Gregory.

In class, the pair has a goal that does not involve a diploma. For them, Senior Scholars is an opportunity to engage in topics entirely different from what they had studied before. Physics and law have been replaced with film, art and history. Bob puts it simply: “There’s a lot to learn,” and with retirement comes the time to do so. The idea of trying something new – whether it be in or outside of the classroom – is not daunting to Bob and Tom; in fact, it is how they built their friendship. When they first met, Bob and Tom began a tradition now known as “LA Fridays.” Every Friday morning, the pair explores a Los Angeles attraction and discusses it over lunch.

The friends are Los Angeles transplants at a late age with their adult children, although as time passes they admit they were fleeing the bitter winters in the East – and the outings have allowed them to discover the new city they now call home. Their trips have covered the cultural mosaic of Los Angeles, from the Nethercut Museum, to the graffiti murals of Venice, to the Cao Dai Temple. Within three years, Bob and Tom had seen over 100 L.A. destinations. They started a blog of their adventures, LA Fridays with Bob and Tom, which is published every month on the UCLA Longevity Center website, in order to inspire others to start their own meetups in Los Angeles and beyond.

Involvement in Senior Scholars and LA Fridays came at a time when Bob and Tom most needed it. Tom remarks, “When you retire, there’s always trepidation when you leave the work force. What am I going to do with myself? If you were really active when you were working, there’s a fear in retirement.”

(Continued on page 7)
The Next Chapter Continued

After successful careers, Bob and Tom faced a challenge, but their involvement in the communities at UCLA and the surrounding city has provided experiences and surprises that they both have come to cherish. When asked about their favorite courses and outings, their excitement seeps into the conversation as memories of their friendship snowball—they come up with no less than a dozen options for each question. It is important, according to Bob, “to see things and keep yourself grounded in what’s going on.” With this attitude, the two have turned retirement into a chapter that has expanded their knowledge and their perspectives. As their friendship shows, it is always easier to do things with someone by your side. “Go with a friend,” says Bob. “It really makes a difference.”

Bob and Tom hope you are inspired to start your own “Fridays” activities with friends and acquaintances. Contact Bob and Tom at: lafridayswithbobandtom@gmail.com with questions, comments, or suggestions.

Senior Scholars Open House Highlights Program’s Growing Success

Over a hundred Senior Scholars—some seasoned veterans of the program, others registering for the first time—came together in the UCLA Semel Auditorium on August 21, 2019 for the program’s annual Open House. The event was an opportunity for scholars to meet one another, learn more about the program and understand the brain benefits of lifelong learning.

Dr. Gary Small welcomed the scholars and gave a lecture on the effects of continued education on health and longevity. Returning to the classroom at an older age provides more than just the joy of learning. As Dr. Small explained, mental stimulation and challenge is correlated with improved memory abilities and a lower risk for developing dementia. Lifelong learning also fosters creativity and lifts mood, and the interactive aspect of the classroom experience provides social opportunities for isolated seniors. Scholars had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Small about his research findings after his lecture.

Andy Talajkowski, the new Senior Scholars Coordinator, provided an overview of the program and the application process. New opportunities for Senior Scholars in the Fall Quarter were also presented. Enrolled participants now receive a weekly newsletter with public events on campus, updates on the program and profiles on fellow scholars. In October 2019, the program launches Bookmarked, a book club for scholars, featuring publications from UCLA professors. The first novel selection is Blame by Professor Michelle Huneven, who will be joining scholars for an exclusive Q&A session.

After the presentations, scholars were invited to mingle and enjoy refreshments. The event received excellent feedback from participants, and the strong attendance translated into increased enrollment for the Fall Quarter. The Longevity Center staff members extend their gratitude to all of the attendees who made this year’s Open House a success.

Are you interested in enrolling in the Senior Scholars Program? Visit https://www.semel.ucla.edu/longevity/senior-scholars-program-longevity-center or call (310) 794-0679 for more information.
Boosting Resilience to Stress and Aging Related Diseases

By Helen Lavretsky, M.D.

How do people deal with difficult events that change their lives? The death of a loved one, retirement, serious illness, terrorist attacks, natural disasters: these are all examples of very challenging life experiences that occur in our daily lives with great frequency. Many people become overwhelmed with strong emotions and fears of the unknown. When older adults struggle with social isolation, financial instability, or the difficult work of caring for a spouse with a chronic illness, their levels of stress can become enormous. But many older adults are living longer and are trying to make the best of their later years, despite being more vulnerable to stress. What enables them to do so? It involves resilience, a process of adapting to the life challenges.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, or stress. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. Being resilient does not protect from experiencing distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common in people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. Resilience can be learned by changing thoughts and behaviors to counter stress and negative thinking by promoting gratitude and positive view of the world and life’s experiences.

Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is maintaining caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance help to bolster a person’s resilience. Several additional factors are associated with resilience, including:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.

Strategies For Building Resilience

Developing resilience is a personal journey. Some variation may reflect cultural differences. Below are some examples of known resilience-building strategies.

Make social connections. Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you will strengthen resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope.

Avoid viewing stressful events as undesirable. You can’t change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better.

Accept that change is a part of living and an opportunity to learn and grow as a person. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter. Develop some realistic goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What’s one thing I know I can accomplish today that will help me move in the direction I want to go?"

(Continued on page 9)
Getting help when you need it is crucial in building your resilience. Beyond caring family members and friends, people often find it helpful to turn to self-help books or groups. At times, however, a licensed mental health professional can assist in developing effective coping strategies. Health care practice and research can be redirected toward helping people maintain their biological and psychological equilibrium. Novel mind-body interventions—including yoga, tai-chi, meditation, and allopathic techniques—can help older adults improve their coping with stress, but also improve cognition and quality of life. Mind-body interventions also allow aging adults to remain healthy and active while simultaneously reducing the cost of chronic disease to families and society.

**Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can and give yourself credit for doing so.

**Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life.

**Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly.

**Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.** For example, some people keep a journal about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their lives. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

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**ABOUT DR. HELEN LAVRETSKY**

Dr. Helen Lavretsky is a Professor In-Residence in the Department of Psychiatry at UCLA, a geriatric psychiatrist with research interest in depression and cognitive decline in older adults, as well as complementary and integrative medicine and mind-body approaches to treatment and prevention of mood and cognitive disorders in older adults. She directs the Late-life Mood, Stress, and Wellness Research program and the Integrative Mental Health and Wellbeing program at UCLA. She has received three research career development awards from the National Institute of Mental health and the National center for Complementary and Integrative Health, and other prestigious research awards. Her current research studies include a multi-site trial funded by Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), for optimizing treatment options in older adults with treatment resistant depression (OPTIMUM); a study of Tai-Chi for geriatric depression, and yoga for women 50 years old and older with cardiovascular risk factors and mild cognitive decline.
Welcome Our New Staff!

Patricia Ramos, Administrative Assistant

The Longevity Center warmly welcomes Patricia Ramos as the new administrative assistant. Patricia recently graduated from UCLA with a bachelor’s degree in Psychology. She has previous experience in the psychiatry field as she was formerly a program intern at the UCLA Early Childhood Partial Hospitalization Program and a volunteer at the inpatient geriatric unit at Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital. Patricia is excited to be here with us today because she feels like she can use the most out of what she learned throughout her undergraduate career and at the same time learn and be inspired from the wonderful faculty and staff at the Longevity Center. When Patricia is not in the office she is either trying new food places or exploring LA. However, her favorite thing to do after a long day at work is watch Netflix.

Andy Talajkowski, Senior Scholars Coordinator

The Longevity Center welcomes Andy Talajkowski as the new coordinator for the Senior Scholars Program. Andy recently graduated from UCLA with a bachelor’s degree in English and a minor in Education Studies. Andy has a background in youth and LGBT nonprofit work with organizations such as The Trevor Project, enGender, and the UCLA LGBT Campus Resource Center. If Andy had to choose two courses all UCLA students should take, it would be Race and Education with Professor Walter Allen and Shakespeare with Professor Robert Watson. Andy believes in education as a means of better understanding not only the world around us, but also our potential within it.
UCLA Longevity Center Donations & Tributes
(February 2019 – September 2019)

Donations

Director's Circle
- Ken Ruby
- Beverly Tiffany
- Murray Pepper
- Anne Keshen
- Barbara Shuler
- Gerald Oppenheimer
- Jaclyn Rosenberg
- Bob Feldman
- Tom Marsh
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- David Friedland

In Honor of Mary Anna Keshen, Leonard Keshen, Sigourney Keshen
- Anne Keshen

In Honor of Nancy Levitt
- Stephanie Stern

Tributes

In Honor of Nancy Levitt
- Lorelei Levy

In Honor of Nancy Levitt
- David Friedland

To donate to the UCLA Longevity Center, please visit:
https://giving.ucla.edu/LongevityCenter

OR

Make a check out to:
UCLA Foundation Fund #601070
Mailing Address: UCLA Longevity Center
10945 Le Conte Ave. Suite 3119
Los Angeles, CA 90095
Longevity Center Programs

Brain Boot Camp
An intensive, three-hour course that includes individualized healthy lifestyle programs, tips for a healthy heart and brain diet, and advanced memory techniques for learning and recalling names and faces. For more information, contact (310) 206-1675.

Brain Booster
Boost your brain with our 90 minute cognitive sessions. Led by our team of experts, presenters will provide information on healthy aging research and exercises to enhance overall cognitive function. For more information, contact (310) 794-0680.

Memory Lifestyle Program
The Memory Lifestyle Program is designed to benefit a range of clients, from those who are looking for ways to reduce their risk for developing memory problems to those who have more serious concerns about their memory. The program is tailored to each client’s needs and lifestyle, empowering and educating them to optimize their brain health as they age. This comprehensive program addresses medical as well as lifestyle factors (e.g., diet, exercise, stress) that impacts brain health. For more information, contact (310) 206-1675.

Memory Care
A weekly, 3-hour program for memory-challenged, middle-aged people (ages 65 and younger) and their loved ones. It teaches memory techniques and strategies to lower stress and stimulate the mind and the body and offers support for people with memory challenges and their caregivers. For more information, contact (310) 794-0680.

Memory Training
A course for people with mild memory concerns. Memory Training presents effective memory-enhancing techniques and is taught by certified volunteer trainers. For more information, contact (310) 794-0680.