Director's Letter

The tag line of the UCLA Longevity Center is “living better longer.” Most of us endorse this goal: we’d like to live a long life as long as we maintain quality and meaning throughout. Thanks to advances in medical technology and healthier lifestyles, people are living longer today than ever before. Anyone born in 1900 would be fortunate to reach their fifties. By contrast, today’s seniors often celebrate their 80th and 90th birthdays. Despite such gains in life expectancy, quality of life is not necessarily maintained as people age into their 80s and older. They suffer from common age-related diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and Alzheimer’s disease, which limit mobility and independence and impair physical and mental health.

Research aimed at improving health as we age continues to move forward, and scientists have identified a common mechanism—heightened inflammation—which appears to contribute to several diseases associated with aging. Inflammation is a physiological process that allows our bodies to repair tissue injury or fight infection. When our cells become damaged from injury (e.g., sprained ankle or wrist) or are under attack from viruses or bacteria (e.g., a cold, flu, or pneumonia), our inflammatory system stimulates specialized cells, which are designed to repair the damage, fight off the body’s intruders, and bring us back to health. Several decades of compelling scientific evidence, however, indicate that as people age, our bodies as well as our brains undergo a chronic state of heightened inflammation, which has a negative impact on health.

A new term known as “inflammaging” refers to this chronic inflammatory processes that is linked to aging not only in humans but in all mammals. If the Longevity Center is to achieve its main goal of helping people to live better longer, then we need to equip them with anti-inflammatory strategies that can prevent or delay the onset of such common age-related diseases.

(Continued on page 2)
Aging researchers have found that for the average individual, the genes they inherit from their parents have less of an impact on health span than non-genetic factors. As a consequence, their everyday behaviors have an important impact on how long and well they live. We can make sensible choices each day to opt for lifestyle habits that have been shown to combat chronic inflammation and extend healthspan by engaging in regular physical exercise, maintaining a healthy body weight, getting enough restful sleep, reducing stress, eating a healthy diet, and not smoking.

When you exercise, your heart pumps oxygen and nutrients to your brain and other major body organs. Exercise elevates levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which stimulates brain cells to communicate more effectively. Aerobic exercise also has a strong anti-inflammatory effect: you may even notice fewer aches and pains after a brisk cardiovascular workout.

It is also possible to reduce inflammation levels by consuming omega-3 fats from fish or nuts. These healthy fats lower the inflammatory reaction throughout the body, and many studies have shown a connection between a diet rich in anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats and a lower risk for cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer’s disease. Central obesity also elevates the risk for diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. This form of obesity refers to the excess fat cells that accumulate around abdominal organs particularly in midlife and promote inflammation throughout the body and the brain. Patients who undergo bariatric surgery for obesity experience reduced body weight and better cognitive functioning, which may be due to the anti-inflammatory effects of reducing the impact of pro-inflammatory fat cells.

Other studies indicate that anti-inflammatory medicines may improve cognitive functioning and reduce the risk for Alzheimer’s disease. Our research team found that in people with mild cognitive complaints, such medicines could benefit cognition but other studies of people with more advanced neurodegeneration indicate that they do not benefit from these medicines. Our research team and others have been studying safer ways to reduce inflammation and protect brain health. Our recent study suggests that a bioavailable form of the spice curcumin reduces inflammation and appears to benefit memory performance in people with mild age-related forgetfulness.

As investigators search for better and safer ways to fight inflammation, I recommend that we all live a healthy, anti-inflammatory lifestyle: get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, reduce stress, exercise regularly, and don’t smoke.

Gary Small, M.D.
Director, UCLA Longevity Center
Senior Scholars Program Update

In the 2019/2020 academic year, the Senior Scholars Program has aspired to grow from a learning opportunity into a community. We have introduced new initiatives to provide social spaces for Senior Scholars outside of the classroom. Participants now receive a weekly newsletter highlighting guest lectures, concerts and other events happening at UCLA so Senior Scholars can fully immerse themselves in the culture of the campus. We also launched Bookmarked, a quarterly book club highlighting publications by UCLA professors. Bookmarked includes discussion meetings for scholars to review the chosen book in small groups and an exclusive Q&A session with the author. Members have responded very positively to the group; one scholar said they “really liked it - stimulating, democratic and instructive,” while another considered it an “excellent addition to the program.” With the success of these new projects, we will continue to introduce new opportunities for Senior Scholars.

In the Spring 2020 Quarter, we will be collaborating with The Dialogue Society, an undergraduate student organization at UCLA that does outreach work with the elderly. The Dialogue Society joined the Senior Scholars for Bookmarked meetings during Winter quarter and hopes to organize their own social events starting in Spring. Our investment in the Senior Scholars Program has been successful with an increase in enrollment. In Fall 2019, the number of program participants increased by 19% compared with the previous year, while in Winter 2020, enrollment increased by 12%. Both enrollment figures are record highs for the program. We are pleased to see Senior Scholars continue to be active and engaged with the culture of UCLA and the objectives of lifelong learning, and we look forward to seeing further expansion and success in the coming years.

Spotlight on Community Partner

Heather Blair is a community partner of the UCLA Longevity Center Brain Boot Camp Program. Heather completed two undergraduate studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Exercise & Sport Science and Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Since 2001 she has specialized in geriatric health, fitness, and wellness and works with individuals and groups. Her clients' issues range from chronic injury, illness, stroke, post-surgical rehab and dementia. Heather implements a wide range of techniques that work to help people heal physically and mentally, relieve pain, increase balance and stamina, improve memory and mental acuity, and achieve overall vitality. Heather is also certified in Proper Body Exercise, Anti-Gravity Yoga, American Council on Exercise Personal Trainer, Kickboxing, Master’s Swim, Aqua Aerobics, Pole Fitness, Resistance Training Specialist, and Movement Meditation Instructor.

Contact Heather Blair at uclabraintrainer@gmail.com or 424-366-1094.

Heather J. Blair
Los Angeles, CA
Dr. Helen Lavretsky, Professor of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences, has received the 2020 distinguished research awards from the American College of Psychiatrists, American Psychiatric Association, and the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry. This is unprecedented in the field of geriatric psychiatry.

The American College of Psychiatrists honored Dr. Lavretsky with the Award for Research in Geriatric Psychiatry. The award is given to an individual who has contributed to advances in geriatric psychiatry.

The American Psychiatric Association gave Dr. Lavretsky the Weinberg Award for Research in Geriatric Psychiatry. The award honors a psychiatrist who has demonstrated special leadership or has done outstanding work in clinical practice, training, or research into geriatric psychiatry.

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry’s Distinguished Scientist Award recognized Dr. Lavretsky’s research in resilience in depression and aging.

Dr. Lavretsky is a geriatric integrative psychiatrist with a federally funded research program in geriatric depression and integrative mental health using mind-body interventions. Her current research studies include investigations of psychopharmacological treatment of geriatric depression, mild cognitive impairment and the use of Tai Chi and yoga for treatment and prevention of late-life mood and cognitive disorders.

In the past, she has received a Career Development award from the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. She is also a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and a Fellow of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Read more about Dr. Lavretsky’s Integrative Psychiatry Clinic on Page 9
Research Studies & Support Groups

Optimize Your Treatment for Depression

OPTIMUM is a research study for participants 60 and older with difficulty treating depression.

- Eligible participants are randomized to medication options:
  - STEP 1: (for 10 weeks) Adding amoxicillin or bupropion to current antidepressant, or switch to bupropion
  - STEP 2: (for 10 weeks) Adding lithium to current antidepressant, or switch to lithium

- 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
LateliLifeWellness@mednet.ucla.edu

Coping with Dementia Research Study

Subjects will be compensated for their participation.

- Feasibility study of an intervention to improve quality of life for patients and reduce caregiver stress.
- Total participation will be for 5 weeks.
- Provides education and support to understand the diagnosis and adjust to life changes.
- Patients must be able to participate in group discussions.

Group Education & Counseling for Patients and Their Adult Children Caregivers

Topics Discussed

- Understanding the diagnosis
- Improving communication
- Resources for help with memory loss and caregiving
- Preparing for the future: advanced directives, changes in care needs
- Improving quality of life and adapting to limitations

For more information please contact:
(310) 267-5414

Are You a Super-Ager?

HELP US UNCOVER THE SECRETS TO HEALTHY AGING!

If you are interested, please call us at 310-794-0077 or email us at hcp@ucla.edu.

Participation includes:
- Questionnaires
- Memory and attention games
- Two 1-hour MRI scans
- A fasting blood draw
- Study completed in 2-3 days (totaling 8-10 hours)

Who can participate?
- Ages 75+
- In good health
- No history of neurological or major psychiatric disorders

Participants receive:
- A picture of their brain
- Up to $400 for participating
- Mileage reimbursement for travelling to and from UCLA
- Complimentary valet parking

Brain Health in Breast Cancer Survivorship Study

Are you taking a hormone therapy for breast cancer? (i.e., Tamoxifen, Aromatase) or are you a woman interested in being a healthy control for a breast cancer study?

Purpose of the study
We are interested in understanding if common estrogen-related treatments for breast cancer alter cognitive or brain function, and whether there may be different effects in pre-menopausal or post-menopausal women.

What is involved?
This study will involve a one-day visit, ~4.5 hours:
- An MRI scan of the brain
- A cognitive assessment and other questionnaires
- A blood draw to examine some signs of aging

Project Highlights
- You will receive $200 for participating as well as a parking pass.
- You will receive a research summary of your cognitive test results and a picture of your brain.
- About 120 women from Southern California will participate in this study.
- Funding has provided by the National Cancer Institute

To find out more about the study:
(310) 825-8761
bbhcs@mednet.ucla.edu
www.brainhealthbcs.info

UCLA LONGEVITY CENTER • WWW.LONGEVITY.UCLA.EDU
The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease

Dr. Gary Small’s New Book:
\textit{The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease}

Approximately 5.7 million people in the U.S. suffer from Alzheimer’s disease, and that number is expected to triple by 2050. The disease not only robs victims of their minds but causes an overwhelming emotional and financial burden to families. In his new book, The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease, Dr. Gary Small describes how doctors assess, diagnose, and treat the disease; provides guidance for caregivers; highlights the latest research; and shares stories of how people come face-to-face with Alzheimer’s in their families—the challenges they face, the choices they make, and how they can better understand and manage this often overwhelming condition.

Advanced Praise for
\textit{The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease}

“Millions of people are impacted every day by Alzheimer’s. Those who get this mind-blowing disease and those who care for them deserve this guide.”
- Maria Shriver

“This practical field guide deciphers the complex diagnosis and treatment tools that everyone must understand to combat this epidemic.”
- Dr. Mehmet Oz

“The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease is a concise, comprehensive guide that provides answers to the questions that people with dementia and their caregivers commonly ask.”
- Peter Rabins, MD, MPH, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Co-author of The 36 Hour Day

Dr. Gary Small is who we all turn to with our questions about Alzheimer’s disease. No surprise given that he has been researching dementia and caring for patients for more than three decades. Now, in The Small Guide to Alzheimer’s Disease, we all get to benefit from Dr. Small’s tremendous wisdom and experience. No question it is a frightening diagnosis, but whether you are a patient, family member or caregiver, you can’t help feel empowered and optimistic after reading this book. This small guide will leave a big impression.”
- Sanjay Gupta, MD, Emory University, Chief Medical, Correspondent, CNN

“Small and Vorgan provide clear answers to the big questions people ask about Alzheimer’s disease. An accessible, practical, and essential guide for millions of patients and caregivers who must cope with this dreaded disease.”
- P. Murali Doraiswamy, MD, Duke University, Co-author of The Alzheimer’s Action Plan
Brain Health in Breast Cancer Survivors: Interaction of Menopause and Endocrine Therapy

By Kathleen Van Dyk, PhD

Supporting brain health is a priority for the aging population in the U.S., especially among women who have a longer life expectancy and higher risk for cognitive impairment. A key to women’s cognitive health is estrogen function. Emerging evidence suggests that estrogen has widespread function in the brain and may have neuroprotective and anti-aging properties. Further, research has shown that cognitive and brain changes are associated with menopause, and women with premature estrogen decline (e.g., from removal of the ovaries due to a medical condition) may be at higher risk for cognitive impairment and other serious problems. The link between estrogen and women’s brain health is highly relevant for millions of breast cancer survivors in the U.S. Cancer is a disease of aging, and 75% of breast cancer patients are treated with anti-estrogen medications for 5-10 years to help prevent cancer recurrence (e.g., tamoxifen, aromatase inhibitor). While this is the standard of care and a very important treatment, its risk to cognitive health in women is uncertain and there remains concern about the potential effects of these therapies on cognitive function. In cancer survivorship more broadly, several people may experience some cognitive changes or “fogginess” during treatment (e.g., chemotherapy), but for some these changes don’t fully improve after cancer treatment is completed. These cognitive difficulties can be disruptive and distressing, and several research studies are ongoing to better understand why this happens and what treatment or prevention strategies might be effective.

At UCLA, we are studying these problems and working to identify ways to treat these symptoms in cancer patients and survivors, including studying the effects of anti-estrogen cancer treatments and clinical trials of therapies to improve cognitive difficulties. Studies are in development and underway and are led by Dr. Patricia Ganz, a medical oncologist and Professor in the David Geffen School of Medicine and the Fielding School of Public Health. She is a leader in the field of cancer survivorship and has been my mentor in this area. Her expertise complements my background as a neuropsychologist and new faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry. For more information about these research studies at UCLA or information about clinical services available for those experiencing cognitive problems in cancer survivorship, please contact me at kvandyk@mednet.ucla.edu.

Dr. Kathleen Van Dyk is a neuropsychologist and Health Sciences Assistant Clinical Professor in Psychiatry at UCLA’s Semel Institute, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry. Dr. Van Dyk earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology, with a specialty in neuropsychology, from the City University of New York – Graduate Center, with both a predoctoral internship and post-doctoral training in geropsychology and neuropsychology at UCLA. Her research and clinical interests focus on cognitive health in cancer survivorship in adults with and without brain tumors. Dr. Van Dyk recently received a K08 Career Development Award from the National Cancer Institute to develop her research program at UCLA in brain health in cancer survivorship, incorporating neuroimaging and neuropsychological outcomes.
Avoiding Junk Food Could Improve Sleep
According to a new study published in the American Journal of Human Nutrition, people who opt for white bread and cake instead of whole wheat and fresh fruit may have a harder time sleeping at night. The study included more than 50,000 women who participated in the Women’s Health Initiative and involved an analysis of the subjects’ glycemic index (GI), which ranks a carbohydrate’s effect on blood sugar levels. When people consume healthier carbohydrates (e.g., fresh fruits and vegetables, dietary fibers, whole grains), their GI ratings are lower, which means that their blood glucose (sugar) rise is lower and slower than when they consume carbs with higher GI ratings (e.g., added sugars, starches, refined grains). The investigators found that higher dietary GI rankings were significantly linked to increased symptoms of insomnia. Getting a good night’s sleep is important for both physical and mental health and reduces levels of stress.

Think Positive to Live Longer
A new study focused on the association between positive thinking and life expectancy. The scientists reviewed 10 investigations that included nearly 200,000 participants with longitudinal data on mental outlook, mortality and heart health. Study volunteers with more optimistic outlooks had a 35 percent lower rate of experiencing a cardiovascular problem after more than a decade. Participants who were positive thinkers had a 14 percent lower risk of dying early compared with the pessimistic research participants. Seeing the cup half full (i.e., having a positive outlook on life) rather than half empty also helps people live better longer since optimism is linked to lower rates of depression and anxiety.

Alcohol Consumption and Risk for Dementia
Several earlier studies have shown that modest alcohol consumption is associated with a lower risk for cognitive decline as people age. Recently, investigators reported in JAMA Open Network on findings from a study of 3,021 older adults, which showed that the effect of the amount of alcohol consumption on cognitive health will vary depending on an individual’s baseline cognitive abilities. The researchers confirmed that volunteers without cognitive impairment who consumed one to two alcoholic beverages per day had a lower dementia risk than those who consumed fewer than one drink each day. Volunteers with mild cognitive impairment, however, had an increased dementia risk if they drank more than two drinks per day. Mild cognitive impairment is a risk state for dementia: 10 percent of people with this condition develop dementia each year. It may be that in people with pre-existing cognitive challenges, alcohol disrupts their already-compromised mental abilities. However, in people without such impairment, moderate alcohol consumption may lower stress levels and thus protect cognitive abilities.

Mind Health Effects of Air Pollution
Living in an urban area with high levels of pollution has been shown to contribute to physical health problems, such as lung cancer and heart disease. A new study published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives now indicates an association between air pollution and mental illness. The researchers reviewed epidemiological studies focusing on links between air pollution levels and mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and suicide. They found that air pollution exposure increased the risk for depression, suicide, and anxiety. The findings suggest that improving air quality by promoting urban green spaces and reducing toxic emissions could benefit both physical and mental health.
Integrative psychiatry is a holistic, patient-focused approach to health and wellness that aims to improve well-being of the whole person by emphasizing mind-body-spirit connections.

This clinic uses integrative and complementary treatments for psychiatric disorders. The goals of the clinic are to promote wellness and patient engagement and improve overall psychiatric outcomes.

The clinic provides:

- Initial evaluation by a physician with expertise in integrative and complementary approaches to psychiatric disorders;
- Recommendations for mind-body therapies, nutrition, and supplement use based on National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health/National Institute of Health (NCCIH/NIH) guidelines;
- Interventions to help patients improve their well-being, develop self-awareness, and commit to self-exploration and taking charge of their mental health.

For Referring Physicians:

- The clinic accepts patients ages 18 and older who have a primary psychiatric diagnosis;
- Diagnoses may include but are not limited to: anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, chronic pain, memory loss, adult ADHD, and stress-related disorders.

About Us

**Dr. Helen Lavretsky** is a Professor of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA and an internationally renowned expert on complementary and integrative medicine and mind-body approaches to treatment and prevention of mood and cognitive disorders. She has received many prestigious research awards throughout her career, including ones from the National Institute of Mental Health and National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health.

**Dr. Sarah Nguyen** is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA. Her research focuses on pharmacological treatments and combining strategies using complementary and behavioral interventions for mood and cognitive disorders in adults of all ages. She has received a Clinical Attending Teaching Award for her work with residents and a Kindness Award for her work with veterans. She was also selected for the Research Career Institute in Mental Health of Aging/Summer Research Institute program in 2019.

For more information, contact us at IntegrativePsych@mednet.ucla.edu or visit: https://www.semel.ucla.edu/service/ucla-integrative-psychiatry-clinic
Try some of these brain teasers to keep your neural circuits limber. The visual puzzles strengthen your brain’s right hemisphere (if you are right-handed); verbal teasers fortify the left hemisphere; and logic puzzles give your frontal lobe (the thinking brain) a workout.

IT’S ABOUT TIME
Timepieces such as watches and clocks come in all sizes and shapes. A sundial has the fewest moving parts of any timepiece. Can you think of which timepiece has the most moving parts?

WORD FUN
See if you can figure out what these three words have in common: Herb, China, Polish.

MASKED MEN AT HOME
A guy decides to run from home for about 30 yards. He then turns left to run the same distance and again turns left to run 30 yards. He decides to do this once more and finds himself at home where there are two masked men. Who are they?

NUMBER PATTERNS
See if you can determine the numerical pattern in the grid in order to replace the question mark with the correct number.

See page 12 of the newsletter for the answers.
UCLA Longevity Center Donations & Tributes
(Sepetember 2019 – February 2020)

Donations

Director’s Circle
Sandy Climan
David Hawkins
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Mailing Address: UCLA Longevity Center
10945 Le Conte Ave., Suite 3119
Los Angeles, CA 90095
It’s About Time: An hourglass.
Word Fun: All these words are known as capitonyms, which means that when the first letter is lower case, the words have different meanings. When not capitalized, herb refers to a plant that flavors food, china refers to porcelain tableware, and polish means to make something shiny.
Masked Men at Home: An umpire and a catcher.
Number Patterns: The correct number is 3 since each of the rows and columns add up to 16.

Longevity Center Programs

Brain Boot Camp
A three-hour course that offers individualized healthy-aging lifestyle programs, tips for a healthy heart and brain diet, and advanced memory techniques for learning and recalling names and other common memory challenges. For more information, contact (310) 794-0676.

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

Memory Lifestyle Program
A program designed to benefit a range of participants, from those who are looking for ways to reduce their risk for developing memory problems to others who have more serious concerns about their memory. The program is tailored to each participant’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 impact brain health. For more information, contact (310) 206-1675.

Senior Scholars
A program for adults 50 years of age or older. Participants audit undergraduate UCLA classes, and the Longevity Center staff assists with the enrollment and administrative details. The registration deadlines for the two summer sessions are May 29th (for the 1st session starting June 22, 2020) and July 3rd (for the 2nd session beginning August 3, 2020). For more information, contact (310) 794-0679.

Memory Care
A weekly, 3-hour program for memory-challenged, middle-aged people (ages 65 and younger) and their loved ones. Instructors teach memory techniques and strategies to lower stress and stimulate the mind and the body, and offer 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. Certified volunteer trainers teach proven memory-enhancing techniques that address common everyday memory concerns. For more information, contact (310) 794-0680.

UCLA Longevity Center Newsletter
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