The Younger You

Monthly newsletter about Wellness, Science, and a Physician-led Revolution

This Issue JULY–AUGUST 2020
Spine Care, Energy, Lifestyle, Diet, Thoughts on Medicine, Regenerative Medicine

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Dr. Clary has always had special interest in coaching, educating, and speaking about nutrition as well as lifestyle. He has a professional interest and training in both spine care and nutrition (receiving his Bachelor of Science in Applied Nutrition before medical school) and continues a lifelong journey of learning. He is always looking for ways to inspire, grow, and benefit others with even small daily changes.

Anthony Sterk, PA-C

Anthony Sterk is a hardworking, meticulous, and dedicated provider. He is Physician Assistant and has been working in orthopedic spine specialty the past 4 years. He has a drive to continue learning new and innovative ways to help patients achieve their goals. His passions include running, hiking outdoors, and spending time with his family.

WHAT IS MSG?

I thought it would be interesting to do a running column about a random ingredient commonly found in packaging for things we eat. You may know there's a big push to eat a whole-food (not processed), plant-based diet right now, but at least we can understand what we are eating. Even the "no high fructose corn syrup" name-brand maple syrup has these three as its top ingredients: corn syrup (still unbelievably processed), water, sugar. Bad example, maybe, but you get the picture—there are a lot of games being played by manufacturers to buy what they want you to buy.

This week I wanted to focus on MSG. Monosodium glutamate found its way into the American food stream more than 50 years ago. Since then it's been extensively studied and some negative AND positive health effects have been appreciated. Interestingly, MSG was initially accused of just elevating blood pressure (which, temporarily, it does), but also can perhaps increase the risk for obesity. (More than boxes and boxes of cheap noodles alone? Not sure.) This additive, though, actually improves the umami or savory flavor of foods and is helpful as we age. There is a high percentage of the elderly who lose significant sense of taste as they age. If MSG helps make simple foods taste better (a study even showed low-fat peanut butter tasted great with MSG), it becomes a complex problem. Either way, it's an additive with controversy and if you can go without, I recommend you do. A Chinese mentor of mine in fellowship always said: "if the sign outside says 'no MSG,' it means 'WITH MSG!'"

DOCTORS DURING THE PANDEMIC

This COVID-19 pandemic has really put the world on its knees in so many ways. Financial, psychological, and physical insults have taken a toll on our psyche. What I've learned through this so far is truly how vulnerable we still are as humans. We have Twitter and Facebook, but we will lose millions of lives still from a virus.

Unfortunately, doctors—just like other professions in the world—are significantly affected. One might think a virus or pandemic means doctors will have plenty of work. It turns out the opposite has been true. Emergency rooms are often empty (either from fear of infection, reliance on urgent cares, or lack of insurance given loss of benefits), entire specialties saw record drops in production, and uncertainty continues. People weren't coming to the hospital for strokes, heart attacks, or even emergent gallbladder attacks (cholecystitis) and that trend continues. My sister-in-law said her 40-person emergency room group is laying off 15 of their 40 ER physicians because there isn't enough work. Anesthesiologists who are well trained and highly capable are out of work because hospitals laid them off given minimal elective surgeries. Most VA hospitals have even yet to open. This is definitely a weird time and we are all working through the fog to improve the world around us.

SUMMIT ORTHOPEDICS

Dr. Clary's Team

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WHAT IS DRY NEEDLING?

Dry needling is a therapeutic procedure, performed by physical therapists, that involves inserting a monofilament needle in a tight and/or painful muscle. It is called dry needling because nothing is injected into the muscle. The needle itself is what stimulates the change in the muscle. Research has shown that dry needling can help increase blood flow, lengthen shortened muscle fibers, release endorphins (pain-relieving hormones), and promote healing. This treatment has proved to be effective for those tight muscles you have been trying to stretch, massage, or roll out without any relief. It not only helps the muscle to relax, it can also help the muscle to work more efficiently after the treatment. After a dry needling treatment, movement is encouraged and the physical therapist will provide you with exercises to help facilitate the muscle changes that occurred during that treatment session.

—Shayli Scaletta, DPT, TPS

REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

I am often asked if exosomes or synthetic (lab-grown) growth factors are so much better than those derived from the target patient. We use evidence-based methods to best use growth factors from a patient to areas that we are treating, knowing there are conditions that are hard to relieve. I do not pretend that the therapy is good for every diagnosis and every patient. I will argue, though, that I have never seen a randomized controlled trial comparing placebo to lab-grown products. You also may NEVER see that study done because what if a company (gasp) ever spent a billion dollars, studied it, and showed it was actually not more helpful than salt water? Basically, if we consider regenerative medicine, we most often use what is well researched: platelet-rich plasma and bone marrow aspirate concentrate. More to come.

SLEEP

The founding doctor and researcher of modern sleep medicine passed away this spring. Dr. William Dement left us on June 17, 2020. He was the pioneer on our current medical understanding of sleep. He coined the term REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM sleep states; essentially dream/deep sleep and quiescent sleep, respectively. His research has been pivotal in our understanding of sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, narcolepsy, and sleep deprivation. Dr. Dement's contribution to the medical society had me pondering sleep effects on the health of the spine. This is a fringe topic of physiology, but there have been a few important studies on this. Did you know that throughout an entire day, an average person can lose up to 26 mm in height? This height loss is a result of gravity on the intervertebral discs. Theories regarding intervertebral disc physiology and sleep propose that one of the main functions of sleep is to rehydrate the discs overnight during an antigravity state. Ultimately, if a person is deprived of restful sleep or sleeps less than 7 to 9 hours, this natural process can be compromised. In common practice, this comes into play when a person injures their disc (herniation, tear, etc.). Disc-mediated pain is awful in the mornings, because as a person wakes, they sit and eventually subject gravity to the injured disc. This painful process typically lessens throughout the day. One helpful technique for a person with a disc injury is that upon awakening, they should simply sit for 5 to 10 minutes and then immediately begin their stretches. In closing, sleep well and keep moving!

—Anthony