

PFCA

Wellness Update

PRINCETON FAMILY CARE ASSOCIATES, LLC

SPRING 2024



Message from Dr. Fernandez

Another Spring, another year, another opportunity to start a fresh with whatever difficulties life presents you. Remember “*Wellness is a state of mind*”: Your recovery starts with a proper mindful mindset.

Two areas that highly contribute to your well-being is your sleep and your nutrition. Read on to gain

some tips in these vital areas.

Finally, congratulations to Marisa Fernandez on graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) this May. We look forward to her joining our clinical staff. (More details elsewhere in newsletter.)

Dr. Fernandez

PART #1 Are You Sleeping?

By Raquel Rahim, APN

We often think of sleep as an idle state, that our brain is at rest, but research is showing that our brains are active when we sleep, going through various stages, each with distinct purposes. We can view sleep as an adversary that deprives us of productivity and play. (National Geographic, 2016).

According to the National Sleep Foundation, “During sleep, the body and mind go through various restorative processes, including repairing and rejuvenating cells, consolidating memories, processing emotions, and cleansing toxins from the brain. Good sleep can help you regulate your emotions better as well as improve cognitive skills like learning and attention.” The CDC reports that “Not getting enough sleep is linked with many chronic diseases and conditions—such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obe-

sity, and depression...” Sep 7, 2022.

Mental Health & Sleep

Sleep disturbances not only effect us physically, lack of energy and motivation, lack of sleep can effect our mental health. Mood states can disrupt sleep and lack of sleep can impact on mood.

2023 Sleep in America Poll : Almost 7 in 10 Americans (65%) who are dissatisfied with their sleep also experience mild or greater levels of depressive symptoms.

Experiencing depression can result in us sleeping poorly, spending more time lying awake in bed for longer hours, being less physically active and getting less exposure to bright daylight—all of which can result in disrupted sleep.

“Without sleep humans have trouble remembering what they’ve learned.

How Food May Improve Your Mood

Edited by Marisa Fernandez, Psych Tech

Many of us turn to sugar-laden, high fat “comfort” foods when we are feeling stressed, or depressed, however, these types of food are not likely to improve mental health. Recent findings from the field of *nutritional psychiatry* suggest that certain foods, like vegetables, fruit, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, beans, legumes, and fermented foods, can promote brain health, much like they can promote heart health.

In 2017, the first major study to investigate the connection between food and mood was conducted; researchers wanted to know if dietary changes would help alleviate depression in a sample of 67 clinically depressed individuals. The experimental group received advice from a dietician, while the control group lacked any dietary advice. Those in the control group continued to eat sugary foods, processed meats, and salty snacks, while the experimental group transitioned to a diet of nuts, fruits, legumes, whole grain bread, oatmeal, vegetables, seafood, and lean, red meat. After 12 weeks, depression scores from the experimental group improved significantly more than those of the control group. Indeed, our diet impacts microbes within our gut and their production of neurotransmitters, like dopamine and serotonin, are used to regulate our mood and emotions.

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HOW FOOD MAY IMPROVE YOUR MOOD...

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The results of this study were particularly promising; not only did the dietary changes improve the individuals' mental health, but the individuals were able to maintain their weight, and actually save money by switching to a healthier diet. The recommended foods were relatively inexpensive and available at most grocery stores (lentils, canned salmon, tuna and sardines, frozen and conventional produce). Several randomized trials have had similar results; one in particular suggests a Mediterranean diet supplemented with fish oil may help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Feeling stressed? Thinking about having a Krispy Kreme donut to give yourself some relief? That may not be the best idea...

Although recent research highlights the influence of our diet on our mental health, most psychiatric professionals have not adapted dietary recommendations into their treatment plans. However, individual clinicians are already incorporating nutrition into their work, including our practice. Notably, Dr. Drew Ramsey, a psychiatrist and clinical professor at Columbia University, begins his new patient

sessions by taking their psychiatric history and then exploring their diet. Dr. Ramsey encourages his patients to include "seafood, greens, nuts, and beans" in their diets, as these foods help promote brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that stimulates the growth of new neurons and helps protect existing neurons. BDNF also contains a large amount of omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients that have been shown to improve gut and metabolic health.

It is important to note that although dietary changes can make a significant impact on one's mental health, food is not the only factor involved in brain health. Participants in each of the studies mentioned above were treated with a combination of medication management and dietary changes. That being said, food is a useful, empowering tool for improving our health, and more psychiatric professionals should consider a patient's diet when recommending treatment for mental illness.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, click on this link to be directed to the original New York Times article.

From The Reception Desk...

■ **Medicare Private Contract Renewals:** Medicare patients look for your Private Contract renewal forms in your upcoming appointment emails. We are required by the Centers for Medicare Services (CMS) to have a signed private contract renewal every 2 years (4/2024). Thank you for your attention in completing this requirement.

■ **Forensic Services** PFCA does NOT provide legal services such as reports for legal purposes or letters for firearms licensure. Our primary focus is treating our patient's clinical psychiatric needs. We can refer you to a psychiatrist who specializes in the forensic aspect of mental health.

CONGRATULATIONS

to our Psych Tech, **Marisa Fernandez** on graduating this May from Thomas Jefferson University, Jefferson College of Nursing. Marisa will be obtaining her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. She graduates with honors at this school which is considered among the top 10% of nursing education programs in the United States.

We look forward to welcoming her to our treatment team.

■ **CDC Resource** The CDC website is a resource for many illnesses including mental health. Visit www.cdc.gov/ and search topics to access articles, videos, journals, and podcasts.

NEED A REFILLED?

Please contact the office **before 3:00pm Monday - Friday**. Requests received after 3:00pm will be completed the next business day. Refills should be made during the week, NOT ON WEEKENDS.

Thank you!

ARE YOU SLEEPING?

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They experience emotional upheavals and make poor decisions." (National Geographic, Your Brain: A User's Guide, pg 82).

Sleep Hygiene:

Sleep changes with age, according to the CDC these are the hours of sleep needed according to age group.

Infant 4-12 months	12-16 hrs per 24 hrs (including naps)
Toddler 1-2 years	11-14 hrs per 24 hrs (including naps)
Pre-School 3-5 years	10-13 hrs per 24 hrs (including naps)
School Age 6-12 years	9-12 hrs per 24 hrs
Teen 13-18 years	8-10 hrs per 24 hrs
Adult 18-60 years	7 or more hrs per night

Tips for improving your sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time everyday, including the weekend.
- Make sure the bedroom is quiet, dark and relaxing.
- Bedroom should be at a comfortable temperature, 60 F to 68 F.
- Remove electronics from the bedroom - Exposure to light suppresses the secretion of melatonin, a hormone that influences circadian rhythms.
- Avoid large meals, alcohol and caffeine before bedtime.
- Don't use tobacco.
- Be active during the day, exercise.

Look for PART #2 in the next issue.