

PFCA

Wellness Update

PRINCETON FAMILY CARE ASSOCIATES, LLC

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Achieving Healthy Weight Loss: The Three-Legged Stool

By: Dr. Ricardo Fernandez

Many of us struggle with maintaining healthy weight. This becomes even more difficult for those of us with a mental illness. Not only can mental illness encourage unhealthy eating habits such as bingeing and purging, but sometimes the medicines we used to restore mental health can cause increase in appetite, carbohydrate craving and weight gain. This often poses the dilemma of mental health at the potential cost of physical health.

Our previous newsletter highlighted the new use of GLP-1 agonists to help with weight reduction in patients who had significant weight gained associated with their use of certain psychiatric medications. Although weight loss can certainly be aided by the prescribing of medicines such as the GLP-1 agonists, long-lasting weight loss requires more than reliance on a medication.

Imagine weight loss as a three-legged stool. One leg is a medicine that causes weight loss. If you try to sit on a one legged stool, it can only be stable for so long. That stool will not be effective for long unless the other two legs are present and sturdy. Those other two legs are mindful eating and mindful exercise.

Mindful eating is a powerful practice that promotes a healthier relationship with food and enhances overall well-being. It is not “dieting” which has been found ineffective in keeping weight down in the long term in most

people. It is thinking properly about your eating habits and your food.

Mindful eating is, at its core, being aware of the entire eating experience, not only for that meal but for each of your meals in the day. It encompasses a non-judgmental attitude towards the food choices of your day, embracing and not denying the pleasure of eating, recognizing hunger and fullness cues while responding with more awareness to unhealthy food urges. It means that you don’t have to “eat like a rabbit” or go on a fad diet or avoid a treat. It means you mindfully think about your food and meals for the day.

We think it is best to start with a visit to a Registered Dietician to help you understand your unhealthy eating habits, find pleasing alternative choices, and ultimately permit you a different and healthier view of your daily diet. You can then mindfully develop an eating plan that you can live with for the rest of your life.

Just like mindful eating, mindfulness applies to exercise, an essential component of a healthy lifestyle. We all know that regular physical activity has numerous benefits. Not only weight management, but improved cardiovascular health, and enhanced mood. People either do not exercise or join a gym or buy a home machine that they then use compulsively and arduously for short periods of time with most people just giving up. Start small: A thirty minute walk every day,

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Anxiety in Older Adults

*By Marisa Fernandez,
Psychiatric Technician*

According to a 2017 study, anxiety is the most common mental health disorder among older adults, with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) being the most common type. Recently, an independent expert panel from the United States Preventative Services Task Force was established to research the effect of preventative measures on anxiety across different age groups. Interestingly, the task force found that seniors are either not being screened for anxiety or are being screened with tools which are not effective enough for a proper diagnosis. Researchers speculate several reasons for why this may be.

Unfortunately, many primary care doctors lack the training to recognize symptoms of anxiety as a mental health disorder. Symptoms of anxiety in seniors, which present differently when compared to younger adults, often manifest as severe worry, insomnia, irritability, fear of falling, hoarding, muscle tension, dizziness, and shakiness. Additionally, older patients are often reluctant to ascribe their problems to psychological issues and consider anxiety symptoms as a “normal state.”

Unrecognized anxiety unfortunately has other consequences besides the symptoms of anxiety themselves. Studies suggest there is a strong relationship between

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Congrats to Amy Derrick, APN



Amy Derrick, APN began her career as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner after completing her practicum coursework at PFCA, where she has had the opportunity to work with many of our patients under Dr. Fernandez's and Raquel Rahim's supervision.

Ms. Derrick will continue to work closely with Dr. Fernandez in implementing GLP-1 agonist treatment,

and facilitating direct patient care, assessments, medical recommendations, orders and education.

Amy has a particular interest in Geriatric Psychiatry and her strong background in Medicine which makes her particularly capable in handling the complicated medication regimens and health conditions that geriatric patients will present with. She welcomes the opportunity to continue working with patients at Princeton Family Care Associates in her APN role and hopes to be a contributing part of your clinical care.

The Effects of Menopause & Andropause on Psychiatric Care

By Marisa Fernandez, Psychiatric Technician

Menopause in women is a normal and natural event, occurring in women in their fourth and fifth decades of life. At this point in a woman's life, hormonal levels begin to diminish more rapidly, first progesterone, and later estradiol. These hormones play a significant role in almost all cells and tissues in the human body, affecting everything from liver metabolism to brain function, including the cardiovascular system.

Women experiencing perimenopause or menopause on psychiatric medications may experience worsening of their symptoms, as well as worsening of PMS symptoms, and may require dosage adjustment or new medications to help achieve the same therapeutic benefits. Additionally, women with a history of mood symptoms related to pregnancy or menstruation may have their symptoms worsen as they approach menopause, which is medically defined as no menstruation for at least 12 months.

Andropause, sometimes referred to as "male menopause", is a less well-recognized syndrome in aging men. In Andropause, bioavailable testosterone decreases progressively after the age of 40. Though the physical and emotional effects of declining hormone secretion in men are less dramatic than those experienced by women, they still play an important role in the many areas of the body where testosterone can have a physiologic effect, including the brain. Andropause will usually manifest psychiatrically as worsening of depressive symptoms, as the male hormones decline.

Talk to your clinician about any medication and mental health changes you may experience during the menopause/andropause years. Depending on where you are in the aging process, not only can psychiatric medication changes be made, but you may be a candidate for laboratory testing and potential hormonal interventions as well.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Psychiatric Medications & Summer Heat

Now that Summer is here, we want to remind our patients to protect themselves from heat related illnesses while taking certain psychiatric medications.

Visit this link to review a previous PFCA Wellness Update article outlining the risks and preventative measures. Enjoy the warmer weather and be safe!

HEALTHY WEIGHT LOSS

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walk up a flight of stairs instead of using the elevator, walk your dog daily, play pickleball once a week and work up from there. Engaging in pleasurable activities supports physical fitness and weight loss while contributing to mental well-being. If you can, consider working with a personal trainer to get you started.

The synergy among mindful eating, exercise, and GLP-1 agonists creates a strong foundation for that stool, for optimal health. Mindful eating helps us make informed food choices, exercise improves physical fitness and mental well-being, while GLP-1 agonists provide additional support in managing weight and blood sugar levels. The combination of these three pillars empowers individuals to develop sustainable habits, leading to lifelong health improvements and less long-term reliance on pharmacologic agents.

In summary, just as you would not sit on a one-legged stool, you should not rely on medication to be the sole means of losing all that weight. Mindful eating, exercise, and GLP-1 agonists form a powerful triad in promoting a balanced and holistic approach to healthy weight loss. If needed, we can provide guidance in seeking assistance from Registered Dietitians and Physical Trainers. Just ask your clinician at the next visit.

Carpe Diem. Seize the day and start today.

Anxiety in Old Adults

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anxiety and cardiovascular disease, with "greatly increased risks of coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, and death." Similarly, evidence suggests a strong link between anxiety and cognitive decline. To avoid the serious consequence of unaddressed anxiety in seniors, accurate screening is essential. The findings mentioned above indicate a need for further research on preventative anxiety measures in seniors is essential to their overall health.