

# HEALTH WISE

A quarterly community service publication of Sutter/CHS - Sacramento County

September 1996 Volume 10, No. 3

## The Power of the Whole

### Exploring New Ways to Heal

Step into Room 106 at San Francisco's California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) and you may find a circle of women swaying to the eerie but beautiful tones of ancient folk music. The lights may be dimmed and a candle lit.

As the women dance, eyes closed, graceful and relaxed, one might never guess they are in the midst of battle. Yet this group of women has breast cancer, and they are fighting for their lives in a 12-week Arts Medicine support

*See Healing, Page 6*



## BE AWARE OF BRAIN ATTACK

### Early Detection is Key to Successful Treatment

You're in the midst of a busy work day when you begin to feel a little disoriented. Your left leg feels numb, your vision is blurred and you are speaking with a slight slur. Would you rush to the emergency room? Or would you rest a while, hoping to get better later?

Many folks would feel silly bolting for the hospital and might, instead, wait for their symptoms to diminish. But this could be a dangerous mistake. The combination of disorientation, numbness, blurred vision and slurred speech could be signs of a brain attack — commonly known as a stroke. The sooner a person gets help, the greater the chance of preventing disability and even death.

To this day, stroke survivor Myra Sharp of Sacramento wishes she had seen a doctor sooner. What she thought was just a virus turned out to be a brain attack — at the age of 45. Today, Sharp is unable to move the left side of her body.

"If I had gone to the neurologist at the beginning of my symptoms, I wouldn't have near the disability I have today," says Sharp.

"We want people to recognize that strokes are an emergency," says Joan Mengelkoch, program director of Sutter Neuroscience Institute at Sacramento's Sutter General Hospital. "Too many people deny they are having strokes because they don't feel any pain. But in reality, they are literally having a brain attack."

Brain attacks are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and the No. 1 cause of adult disability. According to the National Stroke Association, half a million people suffer brain attacks each year; a third of those people die. Although the majority of people who experience brain attacks are age 65 or older, strokes can occur at any age. Babies can even have strokes in the womb, says Mengelkoch.

Like a heart attack, a brain attack is a circulatory disease that blocks blood flow. This is why stroke educators prefer the term "brain attack." Usually, either a blood vessel bursts or, more likely, a clot cuts off blood flow

*See Brain, Page 5*

#### INSIDE

##### Rehab Therapy

It's simple, and it works.  
Page 2

##### Local News Items

- Pregnant? No insurance? Affordable health care is available.
- Teenagers are People Too!
- Prostate screening.
- Asthma information classes.
- Breast cancer prevention trial.
- Flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Page 3

##### Hearing Loss

It can happen at any age.  
Page 4

##### Donating Blood

Saving lives is easier than you think.  
Page 8

##### Immunizations

Quick guide to protecting yourself.  
Page 9

##### Your Donations

How generosity is used to help others in the community.  
Page 11

#### Want to Know More?

See page 10 for resources in your community.



group hosted by CPMC's Institute of Healing. This is therapy. But unlike the traditional regimens these women are also undergoing, this treatment doesn't use needles, drugs or machines. Here, the mind is the medicine, and dance the vehicle for healing.

CPMC's Arts Medicine program, directed by Ilene Serlin, Ph.D., A.D.T.R., is one example of numerous holistic therapies, integrating right and left brain knowledge within the mainstream health care environment. Such approaches have long been featured at places like Sutter Center for Psychiatry; yet now,

these intuitive, often artistic, therapies are on a journey from the world of mental health into the realm of physiology.

Given increasing evidence that the mind can help heal the body, advocates believe that right brain exercises — ranging from storytelling to dance — can stimulate the healing process. These activities offer a bridge between the mind and the body, giving the human spirit a chance to join forces with traditional medicine in the quest for healing.

Already, researchers have seen positive outcomes of these therapies, some scientific, some

anecdotal. Such results have prompted deep philosophical questions about the nature of health, healing and disease.

"Is our responsibility simply to the cellular structure of a patient or is it to the entire person?" asks Rari Coss, director of the Sutter Wellness and Healing Network (SWAHN), a group of Sacramento physicians, nurses and other health care professionals working to promote wellness and alternative therapies within mainstream care.

Consider the following:

- A study at the Medical Illness Counseling Center in Maryland found that guided imagery stimulated the production of white blood cells, our bodies' defense against cancer cells.
- At the Cancer Counseling and Research Center in Dallas, Texas, O. Carl Simonton, M.D., concluded that terminally ill cancer patients who practiced guided imagery while undergoing radiation treatment lived twice as long after diagnosis as those who did not use imagery.
- In their initial research, Ilene Serlin, Ph.D., and Barbara Frances, Ph.D., found that women with breast cancer, participating in movement and art therapy, reported improved mood, quality of life and spirituality, as well as reduced depression, anxiety and tension.

Motivated by such results, clinicians, psychologists, artists and social workers have joined forces to mix the best of clinical and intuitive knowledge. For example, a cancer patient might spend the morning in

chemotherapy and the afternoon in music therapy, or someone with lupus might try art therapy as an addition to a regimen of drugs. For those involved, these new approaches to health care represent efforts to treat the "whole" person — mind, body and spirit. And many believe this can make the difference in fighting and living with disease.

"In a neck-and-neck race, a 10 percent lead can be the winning margin," says Leslie Davenport, director of Marin General Hospital's Humanities Program. Marin General is one of the only hospitals in the nation to offer free guided imagery to all of its patients. In addition, Marin General offers courses in art therapy, Mandala drawings, dance and music. Such programs help patients maximize their healing resources, says Davenport.

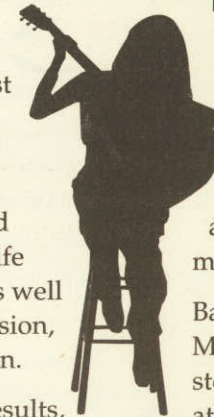
### **How Do Artistic and Intuitive Therapies Promote Healing?**

"Creative therapies are a way of recapturing those things that will nurture us in harder times," says SWAHN's Coss.

These therapies are vehicles that help people to reach deeper layers of consciousness where many believe healing can occur.

Through the ritual of dance, people are able to connect with each other and themselves, says Serlin. "It helps people tap into healing images from within and listen more closely to the body."

Barbara Frances, Ph.D., an Arts Medicine instructor and certified storyteller at CPMC, says creative art therapies help us bypass our linear brain, which is "stuck" in logic. Frances works with patients through storytelling and mythology in an attempt to



## **Examples of Intuitive/Artistic Therapies:**

### **Movement/Dance Therapy:**

The use of repetition, ritual and movement to teach participants to sense and move different body parts, attend to the flow of energy and relaxation response, and externalize energy. Designed to help people get in touch with their bodies and discover their inner healing potential.

### **Art Therapy:**

Utilizes art media, images and the creative art process to reflect the individual's personality, concern and conflicts. The artwork becomes a meaningful metaphor enabling the individual to problem-solve, reconcile conflicts, reduce anxiety, and reconnect with health.

### **Healing Stories:**

Creative analysis of life circumstance through storytelling techniques such as re-framing someone's life story from the disease's perspective and identifying the mythological characters to which people relate.

### **Guided Imagery:**

The directed use of pictures seen in our minds, our feelings, and our inner senses for the purpose of healing. Imagery serves as a window into people's inner worlds, offering glimpses into the unconscious influences affecting our lives and health.

### **Music Therapy:**

Use of song, instruments and lyrical composition/analysis to help patients relax, manage their pain and express themselves.

### **Contact Numbers:**

Sutter Wellness and Healing Network – 916-554-6775

Marin General Hospital Humanities Program – 415-925-7624

California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) Institute of Healing – 415-561-1374



better understand themselves and their disease. "What is your personal mythology and what role might your disease play in your myth?" Frances asks. "If your disease were telling your story, what would it have to say about you?" These answers, says Frances, offer patients a fresh perspective into their circumstance, perhaps opening channels of healing.

"Art helps us to make some sense of what has happened," says Peggy Gulshen, A.T.R., director of the Children's Bereavement Art Group at Sutter General Hospital in Sacramento. "The grief process can be very physical. If people don't express or externalize grief, they can be susceptible to physical illness."

Gulshen believes programs like the bereavement art therapy group are preventive medicine. Having worked in psychiatric facilities, where many patients had suffered the loss of loved ones as children, Gulshen committed herself to helping people externalize their grief before their sadness translated to physical and mental illness.

"Why not spend a little on these children now, so that they can deal with grief in a healthy way, so that when they go out into the world, they aren't at risk of ending up in a psychiatric inpatient unit because they're depressed or on drugs. To me, it seems a bargain."

For some, intuitive and artistic therapies help by enabling

people to live with their "dis-ease," finding peace with their circumstance.

"I use music to keep me in the moment and in tune with the world," one SWAHN music therapy patient said. "The music is an aesthetic experience that affirms life, even if that means coping with cancer."

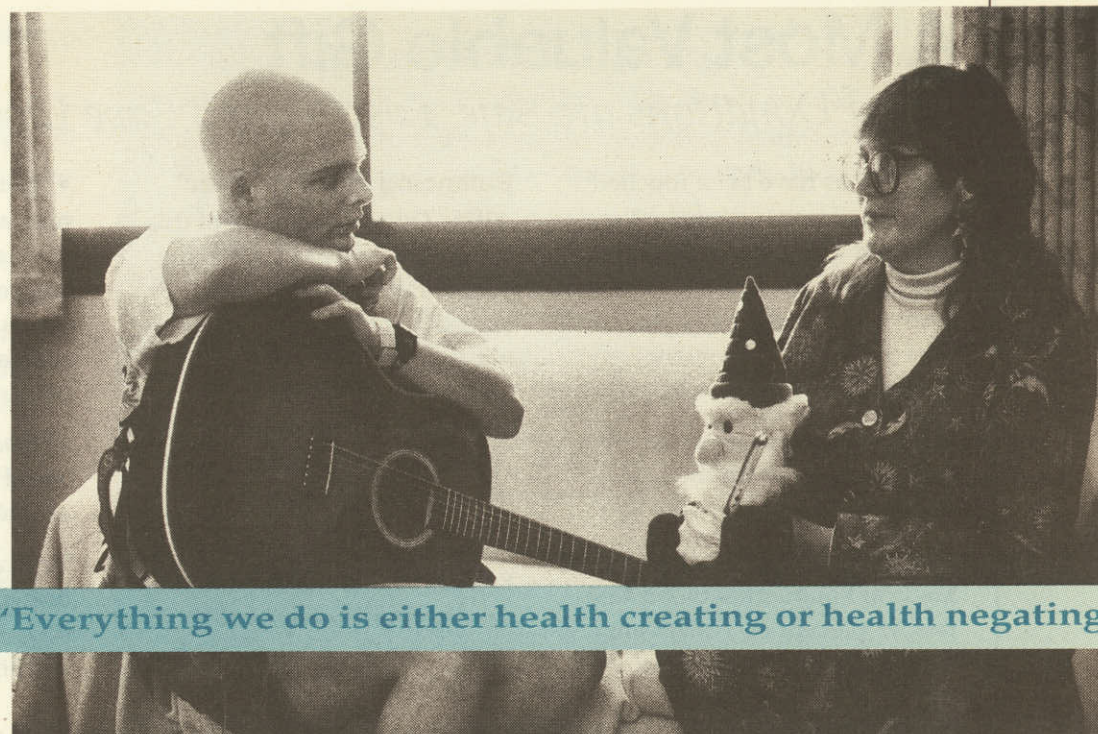
Sometimes, the benefits of creative therapies are indirect. Celeste Behnke, a board certified music therapist (R.M.T.) involved in the SWAHN program, says she has seen music therapy help health care staff, as well as patients. Behnke has seen music bring a lightness to the darkest of circumstances, prompting even the most serious of physicians to sing.

"Music fills space and creates an environment that nurtures everyone present," says Behnke.

### What About the Resources?

Can health care providers and patients afford these therapies, that go beyond the bare basics of traditional medicine? Private and public sector health care resources are slim. Yet Americans spend \$14 billion a year out of their pockets on alternative medicines. Some say the pressing dilemma is not whether complementary therapies ought to be included in mainstream health care, but how.

"There is a huge demand for these services, and we need to find ways to integrate them into the traditional medical model," says Mark Rieger, assistant administrator for heart and trans-



**"Everything we do is either health creating or health negating."**

plant services in Sutter/CHS' Central Area. The challenge, says Rieger, is getting hospitals, primary care physicians and health plans together to make this expanded model a reality. "The problem is that we're dealing with a fixed or declining revenue stream. More money is going to have to come in or get redirected from other services."

Yet doors are opening. Sixteen major HMOs now fund five "complementary therapy" classes at CPMC's Institute of Healing for its members. Meanwhile, more than 20 major U.S. medical schools offer classes in "alternative medicine."

As the health care industry changes, so too must today's patients. With mind/body approaches like artistic therapies entering mainstream medicine, patients will need to become actively engaged in their own care.

"Everything we do is either health creating or health negating," says Bill Stewart, M.D.,

medical director at CPMC's Institute of Healing. "We are all responsible."

To many, these new approaches to health care can be threatening, but according to Maxine Barish, M.D., a Sacramento internist, their emergence serves as an indicator that times are changing for the better. "Current challenges in health care may turn out to be a blessing. We're going to be pushed in the direction of searching for what is really essential, and we may find, in the end, that we can achieve well-being and even healing without so much technology after all." ■



**"Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease." Hippocrates**