

LIFE & HEALTH[®]

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO HEALTHFUL LIVING

FALL 2008



HEALING THE MIND: Alex Amante, MD, is the medical director of mental health services at St. Francis.

Redefining the role of mental health care

MOST PEOPLE don't like to talk about it. Many tend to demean or scoff at both the professionals who treat it and the patients.

But the brain is the most accomplished organ in the human body, and to treat or heal its illnesses or injuries takes capable, caring and well-trained experts in

the field of mental health.

The mental health physicians, or psychiatrists, at St. Francis not only understand the stigma attached to mental illness but deal with the added challenges of practicing in a rural setting. The mental health providers at St. Francis and the Family Life Services outpatient clinic are Alex Amante, MD; Gary

Gronstedt, DO; and Robert Hix, MD. They know firsthand that the biggest barrier to offering improved mental health care in rural Missouri is overcoming the stigma.

"Psychiatrists are trained to provide quality care and leadership," Dr. Amante says. "Through study of the array of clinical innovations and services necessary to meet the needs of individuals who suffer from serious mental illness, substance abuse, or other assaults to their mental health due to trauma or adverse social circumstances, we assure optimal care and hope for recovery."

St. Francis, realizing the importance of providing mental health services, opened an inpatient unit in 1988. Since then, services have expanded to include both a partial (day) and outpatient program.

Treatment has also seen progress over the years. "Through advances in science and technology, we now can determine what happens to the human brain when affected by stressors, trauma, and alcohol or illegal drugs," Dr. Amante says. "We can predict problems and handle patients using evidence-based medicine."

According to Dr. Amante, one common myth about mental illness
—Continued on back page

HEALTH NEWS UPDATE



EVERY LITTLE THING



Skip the whip, please. Make your next **MOCHA** or **LATTE** less fatty fare by switching to skim milk and passing on the whipped cream.

—American Dietetic Association

PEEK-A-BOO, baby! An infant's brain triples in size between birth and 2 years of age.

Parents can help a child's brain development with plenty of playful interaction—talking, singing and playing games like peek-a-boo. Along with love and care, such interactive play promotes learning and growth.

—American Academy of Pediatrics

Practice **PREVENTION**: If more people adopted healthy behaviors—such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise and not smoking—more than half of cancer deaths could be prevented.

—National Cancer Institute

Tuck-in time: Can a good night's sleep help protect kids from weight problems?

Childhood overweight and obesity are major health problems that often stem from unhealthy habits—eating too much of the wrong foods and not getting enough exercise.

A study from Northwestern University adds another reason some kids may gain weight—too little sleep.

The study gathered information on 2,281 children ages 3 to 18. Results showed that missing just one hour of sleep per night over time makes a big difference in a child's weight.

Experts recommend that children get 10 to 11 hours of sleep and adolescents get about eight to nine hours.

Specifically, the study found that:

- On average, children are sleeping less than the 10-hour minimum by age 7, and the trend continues as they get older.
- Sleeping an additional hour reduced young children's chances of being overweight by 6 percent, from 36 percent to 30 percent.

Missing sleep may add pounds by disrupting hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism, the researchers said.

Overweight and obesity can raise kids' risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol disorders and other medical problems. Getting more sleep may be part of the answer. ❖

Relationships: Leaving abuse behind

It can be difficult to admit to anyone—even yourself—that you're in an abusive relationship.

But you may be, if your partner does any of the following:

- Monitors your every move.
- Tries to stop you from seeing family or friends.
- Destroys things of value to you.
- Threatens or harms you, your kids or your pets.
- Blames you for causing his or her violent outbursts.

If someone is violent toward you, it's a crime. More important, that person is a danger to you. But even if you acknowledge this is true, it might not make your choices seem any easier.

Staying in an abusive relationship puts your safety at risk. At the same time, your partner may have warned



you against trying to leave. How can you best protect yourself?

A good first step may be calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233.

A counselor can help you weigh your options. Consider your safety—you might want to call from a phone your partner doesn't have access to.

If you can, you might also tell a trusted friend or family member about your situation. Maybe someone can offer a safe place for you to stay or other support.

If you decide to leave, plan where you will go and what you will take with you. And be careful to share your plans only with people you trust. ❖

Sources: National Domestic Violence Hotline; National Women's Health Information Center

Overweight kids at risk for bone and joint problems

Being overweight can be hard on your joints.

In adults, for example, it raises the risk of osteoarthritis. But research reported in the journal *Pediatrics* suggests it may also have an impact on the bone and joint health of kids.

In a study of 355 school-age children, researchers found that those who were overweight were more likely than their leaner peers to experience broken bones, joint and muscle pain, and difficulty getting around.

These problems join a list of already known health risks for overweight kids. Among them: type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, poor self-esteem, and heart and blood vessel problems.

Researchers involved with the study noted that when kids experience pain during physical activity, they may be less likely to take part, potentially adding to their weight problems over time.

Exercise that limits discomfort may therefore be best. The study's authors suggest that swimming or riding a bike can be good choices for kids who are significantly overweight. ❖



Safely disposing of old medicine

Throw it out, flush it down or give it back.

If you have an old prescription drug, there may be options for its safe disposal. Sometimes, however, certain options are better than others.

It's important to make sure that disposed drugs aren't accessible to pets, children or others who shouldn't have them. But flushing all drugs down the toilet isn't recommended, because some may affect water sources.

For the safety of all:

- Read the medicine's facts. You'll find disposal recommendations on the label or in the printed information that came with the medicine. Do flush medications when that's recommended.

- When flushing isn't advised, another method is to remove the medicine from its container and mix it with an undesirable substance, such as coffee grounds or used cat litter. Then put that in a sealed container in the trash.

Some organizations and communities have organized pharmaceutical take-back programs. Where available, these programs allow you to bring unused drugs to a specific location for proper disposal. Check with your pharmacist for more information. ❖

Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy



WELLNESS Feeling sick? Know when to stay home

Devotion to your job is one thing. But it may not be so admirable if you show up sick at work.

The truth is: When you have an infectious disease, you put those around you at risk.

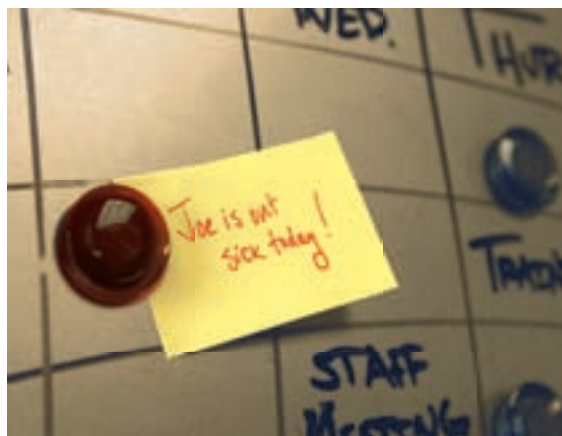
Stay home when you are sick, especially if you have symptoms of the flu. These include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

If you have a mild cold and feel like going to work, protect co-workers by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Better yet,

sneeze into a tissue and throw it away.

Wash hands frequently—including every time you cough or sneeze—with soap and warm water. Vigorously rub and scrub all hand surfaces for 15 to 20 seconds. Alternatively, wipe germs away with alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers. ❖

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Check out "Health Information" at www.stfrancismaryville.com.



2007 annual giving report

To our generous donors: We offer our deepest gratitude to the individuals, businesses, organizations and corporations listed below, whose contributions help to ensure the excellence in health care that patients and community members have come to expect from St. Francis Hospital & Health Services. Please call **660-562-7933** to correct any errors or discrepancies that may appear. Our apologies for any names that were inadvertently omitted. Donors listed are from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2007.

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Eating well on a budget

SQUEEZING A LITTLE MORE NUTRITION FROM YOUR DOLLAR

YOU DON'T have to spend a fortune to bring home the makings for wholesome meals.

When it comes to squeezing more nutrition from your dollar, these tips from the American Dietetic Association and the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help.

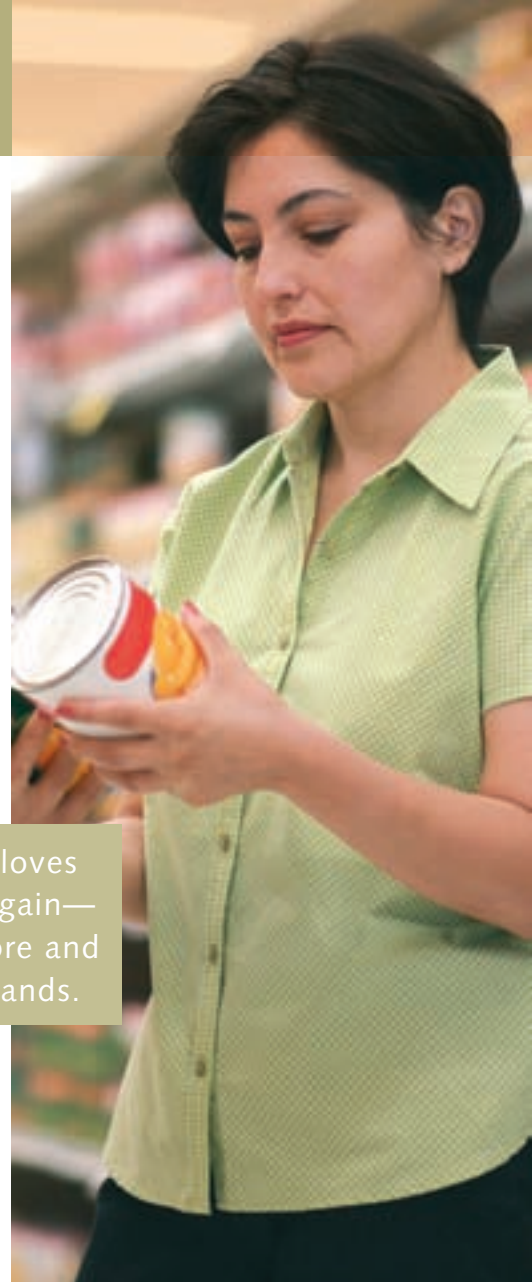
- Shop only with a list, which helps you plan meals and avoid impulse buying. Shop just once or twice a week—and not on an empty stomach, since you might give in to less nutritious choices.
- To help plan meals, check store ads for specials. Also, look for store and generic brands, which are often better bargains.
- Look for fruits and veggies in season, when they tend to cost less.
- Large bags of frozen veggies can be a good deal. Serve the needed amount and reseal the rest.

- Go for regular, not instant, rice and oatmeal.
- Swap meat, poultry and fish periodically for dry beans and peas, which cost less and supply similar nutrients.
- Buy whole chickens and cut your own servings.
- Purchase foods from bulk bins.
- Consider nonfat dry milk for extra savings; for fresh milk, choose large containers, not quarts.

Going for the good stuff. You'll want to aim for balanced meals that include plenty of fruits, veggies and whole grains.

Don't forget to use food labels to compare similar foods. Choose those with less fat and sodium; fewer calories; and more vitamins, minerals and fiber. ❖

Everyone loves a good bargain—look for store and generic brands.



Life is good: Growing happier with age



IH, THE GOOD OL' DAYS. Popular belief suggests that our younger years are the happiest time of life.

Yet researchers have found that people may actually become happier as they age. In a survey of younger adults (ages 21 to 40) and older adults (over the age of 60), researchers asked both groups to assess their current state of happiness.

While both groups predicted that happiness would decline as they aged, older adults actually

rated themselves as happier than the younger people rated themselves.

Researchers believe that increased happiness in older adults may be due to several factors. For one, people may be better equipped to manage life's ups and downs as they grow older and gain life experience. Also, people may tend to change their life goals over the years, making success and happiness more attainable.

The results of the survey were published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. ❖



TRUE OR FALSE?

Debunking the top 10 myths about mental illness

Myth Psychiatric disorders are not true medical illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. People who have a mental illness are just “crazy.”

Fact Brain disorders, like heart disease and diabetes, are legitimate medical illnesses, and they can be treated effectively.

Myth People with a severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, are usually dangerous and violent.

Fact Statistics show that the incidence of violence in people who have a brain disorder is not much higher than it is in the general population.

Myth Mental illness is the result of bad parenting.

Fact Most experts agree that a genetic susceptibility, combined with other risk factors, leads to a psychiatric disorder. In other words, mental illnesses have a physical cause.

Myth Depression results from a

personality weakness or character flaw, and people who are depressed could just snap out of it if they tried hard enough.

Fact Depression has nothing to do with being lazy or weak. It results from changes in brain chemistry or function, and medication and psychotherapy often help people recover.

Myth Schizophrenia means having a split personality, and there is no way to control it.

Fact Schizophrenia is often confused with multiple personality disorder. Actually, schizophrenia is a brain disorder that robs people of their ability to think clearly and logically. Medication has helped many of these individuals lead fulfilling, productive lives.

Myth Depression is a normal part of the aging process.

Fact It is not normal for older adults to be depressed. Signs of depression in older people include

a loss of interest in activities, sleep disturbances and lethargy. Depression in the elderly is often undiagnosed, and it is important for seniors and their family members to recognize the problem and seek professional help.

Myth Depression and other illnesses, such as anxiety disorders, do not affect children or adolescents.

Fact In the United States, one in ten children and adolescents has a mental disorder severe enough to cause impairment. However, only about 20 percent of those receive needed treatment.

Myth If you have a mental illness, you can will it away. Being treated for a psychiatric disorder means an individual has in some way “failed” or is weak.

Fact Ignoring a serious mental illness does not make it go away. It takes courage to seek professional help.

Myth Addiction is a lifestyle choice and shows a lack of willpower. People with a substance abuse problem are morally weak or “bad.”

Fact Addiction is a disease that generally results from changes in brain chemistry. It has nothing to do with being a “bad” person.

Myth Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), formerly known as shock treatment, is painful and barbaric.

Fact ECT is used when other treatments, such as psychotherapy or medication, fail or cannot be used. Patients who receive ECT are asleep and under anesthesia, so they do not feel anything. ❖

Source: National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression, the leading donor-supported organization funding research in brain disorders

Redefining the role of mental health care

—Continued from front page

is that a psychiatrist is a bearded older man with a couch who analyzes a patient's past. Not everyone knows that psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialize in emotional and psychological problems.

"Just like any other branch of medicine, we treat patients with a variety of disciplines," he says. "If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, you need medication and lifestyle modifications. The same goes for mental health issues. Counseling is very important, but new medications and behavior changes can really impact lives."

As with many other medical specialties, preventive measures can help people with mental health issues, but they tend to wait until the last minute. "Denial is the first human reaction to illness," Dr. Amante says. "I mostly encounter two types of patients: those who are finally

ready to seek help and those who are pressured by their loved ones or the legal system."

The American Psychiatric Association reports that more than 20 percent of Americans have a clearly diagnosable mental disorder that interferes with employment, attendance at school or daily life. Mental illness needs to be acknowledged as being as valid as any other physical illness, and emotional symptoms need to be viewed in the same objective manner as physical symptoms.

"Only then can we reach out to provide treatment that will help those suffering and get them back to being contributing members of our community," Dr. Amante stresses. "Mental illness is a social problem. It is projected that, by the year 2015, it will be a leading medical condition. The responsibility to seek care for those who need it lies with all of us. There is help and hope!" ♦

Contact
St. Francis
Mental Health
Services to
discuss your
mental health
questions.



5 ways to feel less stressed

As much as we might like to, we can't always walk away from stress.

We all have challenges. And we may face those challenges differently. But each of us can benefit from stress management techniques when dealing with life's tough situations.

When you're stressed, give one or more of these a try.

- 📖 **Relax your mind.** Try reading a book, listening to music or doing deep breathing—whatever works for you.
- 🏃 **Exercise.** It can lessen anxiety and depression, increase energy, relieve muscle tension, and improve mood.
- 👥 **Stay in touch.** Being with people you care about and talking to others can make you feel better.
- 🛌 **Get your rest.** Seven to nine hours of sleep is recommended for most adults.
- 📓 **Keep a journal.** It may be freeing and enlightening to put your thoughts on paper.

Source: Mental Health America

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