

Local partners promote 'Participatory medicine'

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"I love my doctor!" exclaimed Emily after one of our recent classes. "He really listens to me, he really talks to me."

This is not a common sentiment these days in our average 17-minute per patient model of medical care.

This is not easy for doctors or patients. However, things are changing with new models of medicine that place a higher priority on relationships among healthcare providers and patients.

The late Dr. Tom Ferguson, himself a long-term patient with a terminal diagnosis of multiple myeloma, understood this.

He defined what he called Participatory Medicine and coined the term e-Patients, those who are 'equipped, enabled, empowered and engaged' in their own health care.

This model envisions health care as an equal partnership between patients and health professionals. It leverages the power of the Internet to gather information and create networks among caregivers, family, friends and patients.

This evolving model of



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medicine addresses a huge need via tools of the Internet.

Locally, we have taken the initiative in a project to help further define Participatory Medicine.

We have noticed over the years that participants in our courses take better care of themselves.

Students in our 8-Week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program often report a greater sense of empowerment to be more engaged in their health care even though many came to the program with health care concerns: cancer, MS, anxiety, chronic pain and more.

In one of his last articles, Dr. Ferguson wrote that empowering patients is not about more information or sophisticated computer systems but about acknowledging that when patients succeed in resolving their own problems they feel em-



Submitted photo

At Orenco Medical Practice, Dr. Hui-Ning Fung and assistant Patricia Morgan spend quality time to participate with patients and help them make informed decisions about their health care.

powered.

Perhaps mindfulness helps people better resolve their problems.

Mindfulness is the meditative practice of bringing awareness to the experience of moment-to-moment life: sensations, breaths, sounds, and thoughts.

With practice there is a softening of the impact of the ongoing and often disturbing thoughts we all have about what should be, could have been, what's not enough, and so on.

It's about 'tuning in' rather than 'tuning out' of personal experience.

In practicing mindfulness we begin to calm down, feel better, be healthier and have a greater ability to engage life more fully with less distress and distraction.

We decided to collaborate on a Four-Year MBSR Survey to ask nearly 200 MBSR graduates how mindfulness had helped them stay healthy.

The survey included well-established tests like Duke University Medical Center's Health Profile.

We found that participants had significant decreases in perceived stress, pain, anxiety, depression

and significant increases in physical health, mental health, social health and self-esteem.

The vast majority of people reported they were feeling better, were more active, and were coping better.

About a third reported less need for medication and more than half with high blood pressure said it had been reduced.

More important long term is that the majority reported that they felt more able to take care of themselves and to express their needs to their healthcare provider.

They, in-fact, had become better e-Patients.

Local doctors are beginning to work with patients in a participatory way.

At Orenco Medical Practice Dr. Hui-Ning Fung, MD, practices preventive medicine and understands the role of e-Patients.

She is board certified in family medicine and integrative holistic medicine. Her practice is decidedly participatory with routine visits of 45 minutes to allow problems to be addressed in depth.

"I believe that patients should be involved in the medical decision-making process," she said. "My role is to assist patients in making informed medical deci-

sions."

Likewise, she understands the value of complementary approaches to care such as mindfulness, yoga and appropriate diet. Her website provides a reading list for patients (www.orenco-medical.com).

We have been invited to present the findings of the Four-Year MBSR Survey at the Spring 2012 Annual Scientific Conference on mindfulness sponsored by the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Combining the power of modern on-line tools with the transformative personal practice of mindfulness offers a version of medical care that we e-Patients can look forward to in the years ahead.

BRANT ROGERS AND HIS WIFE, MARIE PIELAGE, PT, OWN AND OPERATE YOGA HILLSBORO AND THE STRESS REDUCTION CLINIC WHERE THEY TEACH MINDFUL YOGA AND MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) (WWW.YOGAHILLSBORO.COM).

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