



Extending 'Healthspan': Brain Scientists Tap Into The Secrets Of Living Well Longer

Sharon Jayson January 2, 2020

AUSTIN, Texas — Retired state employees Vickey Benford, 63, and Joan Caldwell, 61, are Golden Rollers, a group of the over-50 set that gets out on assorted bikes — including trikes for adults they call “three wheels of awesome” — for an hour of trail riding and camaraderie.

“I love to exercise, and I like to stay fit,” said Caldwell, who tried out a recumbent bike, a low-impact option that can be easier on the back. “It keeps me young.”

Benford encouraged Caldwell to join the organized rides, which have attracted more than 225 riders at city rec centers and senior activity centers. The cyclists can choose from a small, donated fleet of recumbent bikes, tandem recumbents and tricycles.

“With seniors, it’s less about transportation and more about access to the outdoors, social engagement and quality of life,” said Christopher Stanton, whose idea for Golden Rollers grew out of the Ghisallo Cycling Initiative, a youth biking nonprofit he founded in 2011.

But that’s not all, according to brain scientists. They point to another important benefit: Exercising both body and brain can help people stay healthier longer.

The new thinking about aging considers not just how long one lives, but how vibrant one stays later in life.

“If you’re living, you want to be living well,” said Tim Peterson, an assistant professor of internal medicine at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. “Most people who were interested in life span and were studying genes — which control life span — switched to ‘healthspan.’”

“Healthspan,” a coinage now gaining traction, refers to the years that a person can expect to live in generally good health — free of chronic illnesses and cognitive decline that can emerge near life’s end. Although there’s only so much a person can do to delay the onset of disease, there’s plenty that scientists are learning to improve your chances of a better healthspan.

The work takes on special resonance in light of a [new report](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association showing that life expectancy in the United States has decreased in recent years. A rise in midlife mortality (ages 25 to 64) has dragged down the overall expectancy.

“The idea is to make people productive, healthier and happier longer and more capable taking care of themselves,” said Andreana Haley, a psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin who is among this breed of researchers working to understand healthspan. “We now live a long time with a lot of chronic diseases, and it’s not fun. It’s costly — in terms of productivity, caregiving responsibilities, cost of health care.”

Haley, who collaborates with exercise physiologists, nutritionists, behavioral neuroscientists and physicians, said researchers from many other disciplines are also studying healthspan, such as nurses, speech pathologists and pharmacists.

Their work is inspired by an aging U.S. population with changing needs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 10,000 people a day turn 65, the nation’s fastest-growing population segment.

“We have a lot of people who will need to be taken care of in the next 50 years,” she said, “and fewer young people to do the care.”

Haley, with UT’s Aging and Longevity Center, focuses her work on midlife, which she defines as ages 40 to 60, a time when health choices can have a big impact on older years. She’s especially interested in brain health.

Her team is collaborating with UT’s Human Laser Lab to pilot the use of low-level light therapy to increase brain energy and improve cognitive performance.

Because of this close brain-body connection, any degeneration in the brain affects not only cognitive function but also areas that control weight, appetite, personality, mood and blood pressure.

Online games and brain-training exercises have become popular as another way to keep the brain sharp.

However, research on brain training reflects mixed results, including a study published last year in the journal *Neuropsychologia*, which “calls into question the benefit of cognitive training beyond practice effects.”

Still, aging experts urge people as they age to work to keep mentally active, as well as

physically active, to lengthen their healthspan.

One of the country's largest continuing-care companies, Acts Retirement Communities, offers residents weekly social-based classes for brain fitness and memory developed by Cynthia Green, an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai in New York City. Green said her brain health approach, available since 2015, is offered at 150 retirement communities around the country.

Some of the Acts communities are participating in a two-year study about memory improvement supervised by a researcher at the University of Alabama.

Helen Marner and her husband, Jim, both 76, are study participants at Indian River Estates, an Acts community in Vero Beach, Fla.

"I'm always interested in bettering my health, my brain and my body," Helen Marner said. "I'm interested in keeping myself as alive and current and bright as I can."

Marner bikes, swims and attends exercise classes. The former kindergarten teacher also sings in two choirs, designs and sews quilts, and is active around town as well as at Indian River Estates.

Mary Beth Vallar, 74, and her husband, Bill, 88, joined the study at Vero Beach.

"We figured it couldn't hurt," Mary Beth Vallar said. "They're teaching us certain techniques to remember people's names and remember lists and remember sequences. Their techniques are very helpful."

To remember a list, techniques include taking a mental snapshot of it, organizing the items into categories or linking one word on the list to another. As for names, said Robin Leatherow, the Vero Beach community's fitness director, a creative strategy could be making up a story in your mind about the name or repeating it to yourself.

"There's a lot of different things you can do for brain health," said Theresa Perry, Acts' corporate director of wellness services. "One is to engage with other people. We thought it would be good for our residents and better than sitting in front of a computer and playing games by yourself."

Because research shows that people who stay active and exercise their brain "tend to be healthier and have better brain function and will be physically healthier because of the brain-body circuitry," the recent shift to improve healthspan makes sense, said Peterson, of Washington University.

"It's quality of life versus quantity of life," he said. "It's probably as simple as that."

WPA Announces Exclusive Program for its Members



WPA announced today that it is working with Coverys to provide its members with an exclusive medical malpractice program. AM Best has assigned a financial strength rating of A (“Excellent”) to the Coverys group of companies in recognition of the strong risk-adjusted capitalization, profitable operating performance, and effective enterprise risk management. Coverys has over 40 years of experience protecting the healthcare community with net assets of 3.5 billion dollars and 1.6 billion in policyholder surplus.

This exclusive program through Coverys offers WPA members a broad range of products and services:

- Advanced data analytics that uncover the root causes of risk.
- Robust risk management that provides newsletters, publications and best practice manuals.
- Award-winning education such as webinars, online healthcare risk management and continuing education credits.
- Responsive claims defense with legal counsel who specialize in medical liability cases and utilization of alternative dispute resolution, if appropriate.

Exclusive WPA Membership Benefits:

- **Coverys will provide a 10% discount for being a member of WPA**
- **Additional 5% discount for each WPA member who participates in the risk management eligibility program**
- **Coverys will offer profit sharing to the insured, which will allow sharing of underwriting profits generated from the WPA Exclusive Program**
- **After a period of time and maturity of the program, Coverys will be able to rate the WPA group on claims experience specific to the WPA**
- **Choice of counsel, as long as they have MPL experience**
- **Optional participation in the senior leadership committee to allow for program input by those who benefit from it most**

Coverys is backed by proven financial strength and outstanding support. Founded by healthcare providers, Coverys offers insurance protection and services that help you succeed. You can expect uncompromised defense against medical malpractice claims and proactive risk management and education to help you control loss, reduce the risk of medical error and enhance patient safety.

WPA has local enrollment specialists who are available to address the highlights of the program and answer any questions during the enrollment process.

BriAnne Buhler; bbuhler@capstonemg.com (775) 336-2311

Sierra Wellness Calendar

Start the New Year by joining our Tobacco Cessation Program!!!

The **Tobacco Cessation Program** is designed to provide patients with the motivation, tools and support they need to begin a smoke-free lifestyle and to prevent relapse. Health Plan of Nevada and Sierra Health and Life invites our members to join us by celebrating their accomplishment of choosing a smoke-free lifestyle. The 12-week program may include medication or nicotine replacement therapy.

Health Education and Wellness

9850 Double R Blvd., 2nd Floor, Reno, NV 89521

To refer a patient for a class or consultation, call **775-412-9190**.

Fax referrals to **702-838-1404**.

February 2020

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Diabetes Class 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Feb. 3 & 10)	Tobacco Cessation Class 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Enrolled members only)	Pregnancy Class 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Feb. 5)	Weight Management Support Group 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Spanish)	Lactation Class 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (Feb. 7)
Weight Management 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Feb. 17 & 24)	Lactation Class 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Feb. 18)	Pregnancy Class 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (Feb. 19)	Tobacco Cessation class 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Enrolled members only) Weight Management Support Group 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	

Please Note: Orientation to enroll in TCP is mandatory prior to attending classes.



Actual Member
Portal Shown Here

Western Physicians' Alliance

WPA Exclusive Member Portal: Register Today

Registration Link Below: Access to Education, Savings, Advisors and More.



WPA Member Update - Benefits, Education and Featured Advisors

Dear WPA Physicians and Practice Managers:

Welcome to the new WPA Exclusive Member Portal. We are excited to be able to offer our members a web based Education, Benefit and Advisor panel to help with your practice needs.

There is no charge to access the WPA Portal and you will have access 24/7. Some of the key features included are, Deep Discounts from vendors, Practice Management Solutions and a Complimentary Benefit Review, in which you can learn about the new benefits and cost savings now available to you as a member of WPA.

To help identify how the Portal can benefit your unique practice, you are encouraged to register below. Should you have any questions, please log in to view the instructional walk-through of the WPA member resource center.

And, to help you identify how the portal can benefit your unique practice, you are encouraged to sign up for your Complimentary Benefit Review, in which you can learn about the new benefits and cost savings now available to you as a member of WPA.

WPA Member Benefit and Education Portal: Register Today!

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new and improved Exclusive Member Resource Center. As a member of WPA, you now have **24/7 access** to your online Benefit, Education and Advisor Portal.

[Register now by clicking here!](#)

WPA Exclusive Member Portal: Virtual Tour

The image shows a tablet displaying the WPA Exclusive Member Portal dashboard. The dashboard is titled "Welcome to your Exclusive Member Dashboard" and features several key sections: "education center" with 2017 CME Presentations, "online provider directories" including Provider and Outpatient Services, "meet your advisors" with a "Today's Practice Panel of Experts", "search and discover your member exclusive benefits" listing partners like Office Depot, Bank of America, and Archer LLC, and "upcoming events" with a "Schedule your Complimentary Benefit Review" button. Callouts on the left point to "WPA Education Center" and "Your Business Advisory Panel". Callouts on the right point to "Online Provider Directory", "WPA IPA Member Exclusive Benefits", "Upcoming Events", and "Online Reservation: Complimentary Benefit Review".

Discover your new WPA Member Benefits!

Learn what Deep Discounts, Exclusive Services and more that you are already entitled to use in your practice! Our new benefit partners are fully vetted and endorsed to provide you, the WPA member, the best in service and the deepest savings available. From superior Financial Management and Billing Services to a Complimentary Medical Malpractice Premium Cost Comparison, we will discuss your immediate needs, and bring you the best in vendor savings to which you, as a current member, are already entitled.

Register Today

& Schedule your Complimentary Benefit Review through the online portal.