

## John Muir Health Senior Services

Senior Services offers a wide range of services for John Muir Health seniors including resources, information, assessment services, and educational programs. We help older adults, their families, and those who care for them. Our goal is to help older adults keep their independence and enjoy the best possible quality of life.  
(925) 947-3300

- Berkeley Outpatient Center  
3100 San Pablo Avenue, 4th Floor  
Berkeley
- Brentwood Outpatient Center  
2400 Balfour Road, Suite 201  
Brentwood
- Pleasanton Outpatient Center  
5860 Owens Drive, 2nd Floor  
Pleasanton
- Rossmoor Outpatient Center  
1220 Rossmoor Parkway, Suite 100  
Walnut Creek
- Walnut Creek Outpatient Center  
1450 Treat Boulevard, 2nd Floor  
Walnut Creek

Lawren Hicks, MD  
Medical Director, Senior Services



APRIL — JUNE 2019

# Senior Services News

## Cannabis – Still Uncharted Territory

In 2014 the New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd wrote that she took a nibble of a marijuana chocolate bar in her hotel room in Denver, while reporting on the newly legalized pot culture in Colorado. Not feeling anything, she nibbled some more. An hour later, feeling nothing, she ordered dinner instead. Then... long story short, she spent the rest of the night curled up in bed “convinced that I had died and no one was telling me”.

Now that the recreational use of cannabis (marijuana) is legal in California, I am getting more and more questions from my patients about whether taking it would be useful for them. Cannabis has been recommended by the lay population, as well as by “experts”, for treatment of symptoms of chronic pain, depression, anxiety, alcoholism and other addictions, and nausea, particularly from chemotherapy drugs (I’m sure this is an incomplete list!).

When inquiring of me (an older man in a white coat) about the effects of a drug, you might expect my response to be based on a) my personal professional experience in prescribing it, and b) the results of an extensive body of scientific medical research on a large number of subjects who have been administered the drug and then followed closely over time. You might also have some information from family, friends, or the internet (let’s call that “public information”) regarding their experience with the drug. You would then take all that information and make an informed decision about whether to take the drug.

While there is a wealth of public information about cannabis – going back at least a century – there is to date a comparative paucity of professional experience among physicians in prescribing it, and a

relatively small body of research, since the drug remains illegal by Federal Law since 1937. It is classified as a Schedule 1 drug, which means you need a special license from the Drug Enforcement Agency to use it, and until 2 years ago researchers could use only the cannabis grown at the University of Mississippi.

The marijuana plant produces more than 100 different cannabinoid molecules, but the two that have attracted the most interest are delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which produces the “high” that devoted potheads have come to expect, and cannabidiol (CBD) which is not considered to be “psychoactive” but nonetheless appears to have anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, and anti-seizure properties. It may have value in treating anxiety, epilepsy, and some other neurological diseases.

Cannabis products can be inhaled by various methods, eaten, or applied to the skin in the form of oils or creams. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has licensed 3 cannabis-based drugs – Marinol and Cesamet for nausea and appetite stimulation, and Epidiolex for certain types of seizures.

Beyond these, the cannabis products you might purchase are not FDA regulated, and may not contain the labelled amount of active ingredient, and may in addition contain contaminants such as pesticides, fungi, or bacteria. A 2017 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that only 26 of the 84 CBD products they analyzed contained the labelled amount of the drug, and 18 contained THC as well!

*continued on back page*



# EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There is no charge to attend our health education events unless otherwise noted. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** Register early - class size is limited. Register on-line at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call (925) 941-7900 option 1.

## APRIL – JUNE 2019

### **Age Well Drive Smart** – California Highway Patrol, Cindy Lima

**April 12 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Rossmoor Outpatient Center**

Learn information to help you tune up your driving skills and make a self-analysis of your driving abilities to help be a better, safer and more alert driver. This free interactive class will demonstrate safety devices applicable to most cars.

### **Intimacy Over 60** – Alan Brast, Ph.D., C.C.H.T., CSA

**May 2 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Concord Medical Center**

Many people want and need to be close to others as they age. But, with aging, you may experience changes that can cause problems. Dr. Brast will talk about intimacy and how to understand sexuality as you age.

### **Get Leaner and Stronger** – Kathy Napoli, MA, RD

**May 17 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

Learn how age affects body composition and metabolism. Discover the important role that nutrition, exercise and sleep plays in helping us build muscle and prevents us from storing fat. Also key nutrients to help keep us strong and vibrant will be discussed.

### **Cannabis – Still Uncharted Territory** – Lawren Hicks, MD

**May 21 | 3 – 4:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

What do we really know about medical marijuana? Learn how one medical doctor views the new trend and increasing questions from patients about possible benefits.

### **Lupus: What It Is and What It Isn't** – Raul Romea, MD

**May 24 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

Lupus can be difficult to diagnose because its signs and symptoms often mimic those of other ailments. Lupus affects different people in different ways. Dr. Romea will discuss basic points about the disease with time for questions.

### **Understanding the Neuroscience of Pain** – Lori Sweet, PT

**June 7 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Rossmoor Outpatient Center**

Research proves that learning how the brain processes pain actually helps people with pain reduce their symptoms. This class will give you a chance to understand how your body processes pain, so that you can help control the symptoms.

### **Primary Prevention in Cardiovascular Disease** – Cynthia Xiaoqian Zhang, MD, FACC

**June 27 | 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Pleasanton Outpatient Center**

Cardiovascular disease is a health risk for many older adults. Dr. Zhang will discuss how to recognize the symptoms and risk factors as well as recommendations to help prevent the disease.

# ONGOING CLASSES

## **AARP Driver Safety Program**

**April 4 & 11 | 2 - day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

**April 20 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

**May 7 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Concord Medical Center**

**May 18 | 1 - day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

**June 6 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

**June 15 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

This Smart Driver classroom course, designed for motorists over age 50, helps drivers refine existing skills and develop safe, defensive driving techniques. Offered in an eight hour or four-and-a-half hour refresher course for those who meet the criteria for renewal. There is a charge for this class. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

## **Advance Health Care Directives – Suzanne Leib, LMFT**

**April 10 | 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

**May 16 | 11 a.m. – 1p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

**June 11 | 2 – 4 p.m. | Rossmoor Outpatient Center**

All adults should have an advance health care directive that clarifies their choices for end-of-life care. Individuals who are informed and have an advance health care directive in place are better prepared to help their families manage medical decisions at the end of life. Senior Services hosts monthly classes about advance health care directives across our communities. Required documents will be provided to attendees during the session.

## **Catch Yourself – Fall Prevention to Maintain Your Independence**

**May 6, 10, 13, 17 | 11 – 12:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Rossmoor Outpatient Center**

**June 3, 7, 10, 14 | 11 – 12:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Pleasanton Outpatient Center**

This four-session class series raises awareness about falls by practicing techniques in class. Learn how to improve your strength and balance, simplify your environment, and identify fall risks. Classes will cover home safety strategies, exercise, techniques, medication management, and other ways to decrease your risk of falling. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Plan to attend all four classes. If you have taken this class in the past 12 months, and feel you still need fall prevention information, we ask you to follow up with your primary care doctor or call Wellness Services 941-7900 option 1.

## **Welcome to Medicare – Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program**

**April 10, May 8, June 12 | 7 – 9:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

**May 14, June 11 | 7 – 8:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Pleasanton Outpatient Center**

**May 9, June 13 | 6:30 – 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Berkeley Outpatient Center**

This course is for those new to Medicare, or soon to enroll, who want to understand the many benefits available. Learn about Medicare coverage, the prescription drug benefit, and supplemental plan options. HICAP does not sell or endorse insurance products.

## **Memory Screening – What's Your Memory Fitness?**

**April 16, May 21, June 18 | morning appointments | 947-3300**

**April 17, May 22, June 19 | afternoon appointments | 947-3300**

**Brentwood | Pleasanton | Rossmoor | Walnut Creek Outpatient Centers**

Many people notice changes in their memory as they grow older. If you are 65 or older and have a John Muir Health primary care physician, either ask your doctor to refer you to Senior Services or call for a free individual memory screening. This screening is not a diagnostic exam but it can help to determine if your memory is functioning at a level that is typical for a person of your age. Screenings are offered on the specific dates and times at the four locations listed. Appointments are 30 minutes.



Senior Services  
 1450 Treat Blvd  
 Walnut Creek, CA 94597

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**Change in information?** If you have a change in address or wish to be removed from our mailing list, please notify us at (925) 947-3300 or [seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com](mailto:seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com)

## PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Concord Medical Center  
 2540 East St., Concord  
 (925) 682-8200

Walnut Creek Medical Center  
 1601 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-3000

Berkeley Outpatient Center  
 3100 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley  
 (510) 985-5020

Brentwood Outpatient Center  
 2400 Balfour Rd., Brentwood  
 (925) 308-8100

Pleasanton Outpatient Center  
 5860 Owens Dr., Pleasanton  
 (925) 224-0800

Rossmoor Outpatient Center  
 1220 Rossmoor Pkwy., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-1220

Walnut Creek Outpatient Center  
 1450 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 296-9700

### Cannabis Uncharted — cont. from pg. 1

The growing availability of edible cannabis products has led to some unpleasant surprises for users accustomed to smoking it. Whereas the “high” from inhaling can start within seconds to minutes and subside within 1-4 hours, an edible dose may take 1-3 hours to work, and the effect may not wear off for 5-8 hours or longer. The risk with edibles is that the consumer may eat too much while waiting for the effect to start, then be severely impaired for a prolonged period of time.

But stay tuned! In 2017 the National Institutes of Health reported funding 330 cannabis research projects, to the tune of \$140 million, and hopefully this support will be sustained. Until more scientific information is available, I would provide this advice: You should obtain these products only from a licensed, reputable vendor. If you are new to cannabis, you should take it at home or in a familiar private place, and have a friend with you. You should not schedule other activities for at least half a day. Particularly for edibles, you should read the package carefully and take only the portion recommended. If you are not “feeling anything”, you should wait at least 4 hours before considering taking a repeat dose. Marijuana products are much more potent now than they were in the mid-20th century. It’s still a minefield out there and you should tread carefully.

Lawren Hicks, MD, Medical Director, Senior Services

### Medicare — Which card to carry?

The good news for seniors today is that there are more Medicare options than ever before. People with Medicare can get their health coverage through either Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan. Original Medicare include Part A (inpatient/hospital coverage) and Part B (outpatient/medical coverage). The traditional program is offered directly through the federal government. You will receive a red, white and blue Medicare card to take to your providers when receiving care.

Medicare Advantage Plans are also known as Medicare private health plans or Part C. Private plans contract with the federal government to provide Medicare benefits. If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you will not use the red, white and blue Medicare card when you go to the doctor or hospital. Instead, you will use the membership card your plan sends you.

At John Muir Health, we work with the following Medicare Advantage health insurance plans:

- Humana Gold Plus HMO Plan
- UnitedHealth Care AARP Medicare Complete Secure Horizons Plan 2 (HMO)

If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, please remember to bring your membership card your plan provided when you come in for your doctor visits.

If you have questions, call Customer Service 925-952-2887