

# SENIORS DIGEST

News and Info for Older Adults and Their Families

## Seattle-King County Edition

August 1, 2006

### Polarity Therapy: A Healing Hand for Caregivers of Dementia Patients

**Native cultures have long embraced traditional therapies that utilize the healing power of touch. However, Western medicine is just beginning to understand and appreciate the benefits of these traditional healing arts. With funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Dr. Leslie Korn is using Polarity Therapy to help reduce stress and improve the health of American Indians who are caring for a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's disease.**

The NIH-funded American Indian Elder Caregiver Health Study is designed to address health disparities of American Indians by utilizing culturally appropriate treatments. Administered by the [Center for Traditional Medicine](#) (CTM) in Olympia, the study will evaluate the effectiveness of using Polarity Therapy for reducing stress and improving the health of caregivers.

Polarity Therapy is a comprehensive approach to health that involves bodywork, diet, exercise and self-awareness. The therapy is based on balancing positive and negative energies through gentle manipulation. Balanced and smoothly flowing energy is the key to good health. If stress or other factors block this flow, the result can be pain and disease. Polarity therapy uses touch to unblock the energy, reducing stress and improving mental and physical health.

Caring for a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's disease is often referred to as "the living loss"—the body remains intact but the person you once knew is gone. The enormous stress in caring for someone with dementia makes these caregivers vulnerable to a number of health-related problems, including depression and chronic disease such as diabetes.

According to Dr. Korn, for minority populations, the lifetime accumulation of stress is even more acute. In American Indian communities, anecdotal evidence indicates that family members are taking on caregiver roles earlier in life—caring for elders while still raising their own children.

Participants in the study will be divided into two groups: 1) a treatment group—those who receive Polarity Therapy; and 2) those who receive respite care, or time off from caregiving. While Polarity Therapy typically incorporates nutrition and exercise in addition to touch, the study participants will receive only touch. The



[Print-Friendly Version](#)

[Send to a Friend](#)

[Subscribe Today](#)

#### This Issue

Welcome to the August 2006 Seniors Digest

Legislative Forum to Take Place

August 23

Accessing the Aging Network from a Distance

**Polarity Therapy: A Healing Hand for Caregivers of Dementia Patients**

Take Care of Your Back

"Picnic Basket" Wordfind

Links You Can Use

Don't Miss an Issue!

#### Archives

2007

2007 ([hide list](#))

09/01/2007

08/01/2007

07/01/2007

06/01/2007

05/01/2007

04/01/2007

03/01/2007

02/01/2007

01/01/2007

2006

study will measure changes in mental and physical health as well as quality of life factors.

The study, now in its second year, has shown some interesting trends, including evidence of the incredible levels of stress under which participants are living. Stress is measured by salivary cortisol levels and heart rate, as well as with self-reporting methods. Many participants were not aware of how stressed they were. Throughout the study, they have become more self-aware—a first step in making positive changes. Preliminary analysis of the data indicates a statistically significant reduction in stress, pain and depression for the caregivers receiving polarity therapy.

The project has been well received by the local community and has received funding to conduct a concurrent study among non-native caregivers with support from the local Area Agency on Aging for Lewis/Mason/Thurston Counties and Assured Home Health and Hospice. Dr. Korn hopes that the work at CTM will help advance social change and influence public policy so that these types of holistic approaches will be more available. According to Dr. Korn, people are aware of the value of touch, and one of the study goals is to generate data to support this approach.

*Dr. Korn is the Director of the Center for Traditional Medicine (CTM) in Olympia. Formerly on the faculty at Harvard Medical School where she received her graduate school training in Public Health, she also currently teaches at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon and at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dr. Leslie Korn has a private practice specializing in chronic pain and illness Olympia where she also conducts research and consults on CAM health policy.*

Photo: Lloyd Wolf, U.S. Census Bureau

## 2006 [\(hide list\)](#)

12/01/2006

11/01/2006

10/01/2006

09/01/2006

[08/01/2006](#)

07/01/2006

06/01/2006

05/01/2006

04/01/2006

03/01/2006

02/01/2006

01/01/2006

## 2005

### 2005 [\(hide list\)](#)

12/01/2005

11/01/2005

10/01/2005

09/01/2005

08/01/2005

07/01/2005

06/01/2005

05/01/2005

04/01/2005

03/01/2005

02/01/2005

01/01/2005

## 2004

### 2004 [\(hide list\)](#)

12/01/2004

11/01/2004

10/01/2004

09/01/2004

08/01/2004

07/01/2004

© Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services  
Electronic newsletter design and publication by Caresource Healthcare Communications.

Powered by PublishWithoutPaper™