



***Associated Neurologists'***  
***"The NeuroTransmitter" Newsletter***

***The "Summer is HERE!" Edition, June 2015***

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***Wishing Everyone a Wonderful Summer!***



***Back Row (L to R): Drs. William Yorns, Samuel Markind, Robert Bonwetsch, David Greco, and Neil Culligan***

***Front Row (L to R): Drs. Behzad Habibi, Diane Wirz, Jan Mashman, and Michelle Lavallee Dagostine***

## Do You Have Migraines or Headaches?

*If so, do not despair: there's hope!*



Did you know that **June is Migraine and Headache Awareness Month**?

Observed every June in the United States, the goal is to increase awareness, educate the public, and reduce the stigma that may be caused by others who may tend to discount the severe impact of debilitating headaches. Those who do not have migraines themselves may have difficulty understanding just how severe and unpredictable they can be. But the theme for June 2015 is a reassuring one: "Inspiring Hope."

### Dr. Diane Wirz

**Neurologist Diane Wirz, M.D.**, who is Board Certified in Headache Medicine, understands well the frustration, concern, and fear that some patients with migraines may feel and how difficult it can be for some to describe the experience of their migraines when looking for answers.

As a clinician who primarily sees migraine and headache patients, Dr. Wirz stresses the following:

***"Although it is important for a physician to be knowledgeable in his or her field, it isn't enough. People want to be heard and understood. A person with headache is frightened about what that pain may represent. It takes time to understand a person's problem as well as to understand who that person is.***

***"Empathy, compassion, and hope become therapeutic tools that help people to heal."***

Sarah Hackley, an author who writes about migraines, described her experience with migraines this way:

"Migraine is a weird and changing disease. It affects all of us differently, and every attack is a little different than the one before. This means that no one can understand your life, symptoms, or illness like you can. This can be incredibly empowering: you are the expert. But, it also carries great responsibility: to live as happily and fully as possible, you must listen to your body and trust your instincts." (From *"Finding Happiness with Migraines: a Do It Yourself Guide"*)

Dr. Wirz agrees and stresses that there are a number of steps many migraine and headache patients can take to help significantly reduce their number of migraines, such as through listening to their bodies, having self-compassion, and developing healthy habits, including a wholesome diet and physical exercise. Below are several tips that Dr. Wirz shares for the many of us who are affected by headache and migraine:

- **Eat regularly.** Remember to eat breakfast, and do not skip meals, since low blood sugar levels can tend to trigger or worsen migraines and headaches. It's also helpful to have small, healthful snacks available.

- **Limit caffeine.** Caffeine is a double-edged sword. In some cases, it can help when you have a headache. Yet too much caffeine may also cause withdrawal headaches. For example, if you usually drink 3 cups of coffee every day, and you are fasting for a colonoscopy, you are likely to get a caffeine-withdrawal headache. Fasting itself can also trigger a headache.
- **Drink plenty of water and other non-caffeinated fluids.** Migraines and headaches may be triggered by dehydration, which occurs when you use or lose more fluid than you take in. When your body has an inadequate amount of water and other fluids to perform its normal functions, if you do not replace lost fluids, dehydration will result.
- **Avoid aspartame (NutraSweet ®).** This artificial sweetener can be a potent migraine trigger for migraineurs (i.e., people affected by migraines). Always be sure to check labels carefully, since aspartame is hiding in many different foods.
- **Learn to recognize any food triggers you may have.** Many migraineurs, though not all, will find that certain foods will trigger their migraines. When a food or beverage prompts migraines, this is a trigger, not an allergy to the food. It can sometimes be tricky to determine which specific foods trigger migraines, since the food may not always prompt an episode.



Therefore, keeping a [Headache Calendar](#) is vital to help determine whether specific foods trigger a person's migraines. **Be sure to click on the "Headache Calendar" link above** to learn more about keeping a headache calendar and for free access to a [Monthly Headache Calendar](#) that you can print out and begin using today.

Because every person is different, there are many specific foods that may trigger migraines and headaches for one person, whereas someone else has completely different food triggers. Below, Dr. Wirz provides several helpful ideas for isolating your personal food triggers.



- **Ask for a list of the most common food triggers associated with migraines and headaches.** For example, the most common triggers include alcohol, strong cheeses, cold cuts, chocolate, and possibly MSG. However, Dr. Wirz does not recommend avoiding all the foods on such a listing. You'll find that there are multiple foods listed, and you should only avoid a specific food if you in fact find that it triggers your migraines and headaches.
- **Some people will find that the protein gluten may trigger their headaches** even when they do not have Celiac Disease, which is an immune reaction to eating gluten found in wheat, rye, and barley. (For patients with Celiac Disease, eating gluten triggers an immune response that produces damaging inflammation of the

with Celiac Disease, eating gluten triggers an immune response that produces damaging inflammation of the small intestine's lining, preventing proper absorption of certain nutrients.) If you think that gluten may be a trigger for you, try avoiding gluten for one month. If you do not notice a change in the frequency of your migraines or headaches, it is unlikely that gluten is a trigger for you.



- **Many people find that refined sugars trigger their migraines.** You can try cutting back on sugar for a month to determine whether your migraines or headaches decrease.
- **If you suspect that you have a number of food triggers, but you are having difficulty isolating them, an elimination diet may be helpful.** This can be done under the guidance of Associated Neurologists' registered dietitian.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Studies have found that being overweight is associated with greater frequency and increased severity of migraines when compared with having a healthy weight. If you are overweight, adding appropriate dieting strategies (while also taking into account the tips above) together with daily exercise may play an important contributory role in reducing the severity and number of migraines.
- **And speaking of daily exercise, do be sure to add regular, gentle exercise to your daily routine.** For some, very intense or sporadic exercising can cause migraines. However, regular, gentle exercise may often serve to reduce the severity and frequency of migraines through reduction of tension. If you are new to exercise, remember the importance of warming up before exercising, beginning gradually, remaining adequately hydrated throughout, and cooling down slowly afterward. Beneficial exercise options for beginners may include yoga, walking, swimming, and gentle cycling.



**If you or a loved one is affected by migraines and headaches, be sure to visit the ["Headache & Migraine Center"](#) on our website for further helpful information and resources!**

## Stroke and Alzheimer's Disease

### Currently Enrolling Clinical Trials

Associated Neurologists has a dedicated [Research Department](#) that has been actively conducting neurology clinical studies for more than 15 years.

Our research team includes 7 Board-Certified Neurologists and 2 Certified Clinical Research Coordinators (CCRCs) along with ancillary staff, all of whom are ardent about clinical



Certified Clinical Research Coordinators (CCRCs) along with auxiliary staff, all of whom are ardent about clinical research. Together, we all work towards the same goal, which is to help make our community, the world, and the future better by being involved in Research.

Please take a few moments to read about the 2 clinical trials below, which are actively enrolling today at Associated Neurologists.

- **STARBRIGHT Study:**

An opportunity has arisen that may be of interest to you. Patients like yourself are needed for an important new clinical study which may improve the treatment of patients with Alzheimer's disease.

The STARBRIGHT study will look at how a new type of investigational drug works and how safe it is for patients with Alzheimer's disease. This investigational drug, known as Lu AE58054, works by helping nerve cells in the brain to work together to improve memory, thinking, and reasoning.

If you decide to become a part of the trial, you will need to visit this office on a regular basis and undergo routine tests. You will be treated with either the investigational drug or placebo (a dummy capsule without an active ingredient) as well as the medication you currently take (donepezil, rivastigmine, or galantamine). All study-related medications and consultations during the study will be free of charge and reasonable travel, parking, and food expenses will be paid.

- **MILESTONE Study:**

Walking Problems since your stroke?

As someone who has experienced an ischemic stroke, you know how challenging the recovery process can be. It often requires a combination of hard work and patience to maximize your recovery and independence after an ischemic stroke. New medications are being studied in stroke recovery. In this medical research study, local doctors want to evaluate the safety of an investigational medication that may help with walking problems following an ischemic stroke.

The investigational medication has been approved as a treatment to improve walking in another indication, however, not in patients recovering from a stroke. The stroke indication is still investigational.

The investigational medication is being tested in people with stroke because this condition has some nervous system changes that are similar to what is seen in multiple sclerosis (MS), for which the medication is approved. In an earlier study with about 80 participants who have had stroke, there was some initial evidence of improvements in walking while taking 10 mg of the investigational medication

twice a day for 2 weeks, when compared with placebo. If you have had an ischemic stroke and continue to have walking problems, we hope that you will consider participating in this study.

If you think that you may be a candidate to participate in one of these trials:

\* Please ask your Neurologist at your next office visit.

\* Contact our study coordinators, [Janet Mauro, BA, CCRC](#), at (203) 748-2551, x 351, or [Dawn Morsey, BS, CCRC](#), at (203) 748-2551, x 377.

## Meet Our Providers

### *Dr. Lisa Dransfield*



Each edition of our newsletter features an interview with one of Associated Neurologists' staff members. For our Summer Edition, we're delighted to share a discussion with [Dr. Lisa Dransfield](#), Physical Therapist (PT), Doctor of Physical Therapy, and Director of Physical Therapy and the Balance & Vestibular Center at Associated Neurologists.

**Editor, *The NeuroTransmitter*:** There are multiple clinical areas for physical therapists, including orthopedic, cardiovascular and pulmonary rehabilitation, pediatric rehabilitation, and others. What factors helped you determine you would like to specialize in working with patients with neurological disorders as well as

balance, dizziness, and vestibular conditions?

**Dr. Dransfield:** Twenty-five years ago, Associated Neurologists' CEO at that time, Dr. John Murphy, brought in a physical therapist from Sister Kenney Institute to educate the doctors and therapists about "some new and exciting developments" in vestibular medicine. I found the anatomy, physiology, and treatment techniques fascinating. We were really the first practice in this area to implement vestibular rehabilitation for patients with vertigo. This area is very rewarding, because most patients do recover fully or at least improve significantly. I found that patients with vestibular disorders were underserved, largely because of lack of knowledge. I became passionate about educating the lay and medical community about vestibular rehabilitation. I make it a priority to stay current in the field and insist that our staff implement evidence-based practice for our patients with vestibular disorders.

**Editor:** Could you tell us a bit about the different services provided by your clinical staff, including the PTs, Physical Therapy Assistants (PTAs), and Occupational Therapist (OT), as well as the Balance & Vestibular Center staff at Associated Neurologists? In addition, could you describe your PTs' and OTs' clinical areas of special interest?

**Dr. Dransfield:** The therapists and ancillary staff in our department are dedicated to helping patients heal and rehabilitate in a warm, professional, and friendly atmosphere. Our staff professionals understand the unique social, psychological, and physical implications of living with a balance and vestibular problem. We have been caring for patients with dizziness, vertigo, and imbalance related to the inner ear for over 25 years now.

We have 2 very skilled therapists, [Cynthia Bahr, PT](#), and [Kim Downs, OT](#), who are providing amazing care to our patients with Parkinson's disease (PD). Both are certified in [LSVT Big®](#), an intensive program that has been heavily researched and proven to improve movement in this population. Cynthia also runs a variety of groups for people with PD, including a "boot camp" and [Move with Music](#), both very successful in offering patients camaraderie and exercise in an upbeat and fun environment!

Our Physical Therapist Assistants, [Karen Nell](#) and [Nicole Bruno](#), have expertise in [Concussion Rehabilitation](#), and both hold certificates in Corrective Exercise through the National Academy of Sports Medicine.

Anne Wolf, our newest Vestibular PT, also brings to our patients her expertise in managing imbalance, falling, and movement dysfunction with "BalanceWear," a new wearable product that enables patients to regain their balance and mobility immediately upon application.

In line with the vision statement for the Physical Therapy Profession which is "*Transforming society by optimizing movement to improve the human experience,*" our highly trained and experienced Physical Therapists, **Diane Yandow** and **Michelle DiBona**, successfully treat a myriad of patient problems, including Musculoskeletal and Neurological conditions, Concussions, Migraines, and Vertigo.

***Editor:*** You and your clinical team are committed to bringing on unique new services to help further fulfill the daily needs and concerns of our patients and those referred by other practices. Could you discuss some of these new services for us?

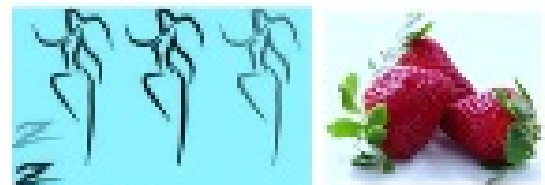
***Dr. Dransfield:*** We strive for comprehensive care for our patients. **Karen Olencki** is our committed Vestibular Diagnostic Technician, who has recently rounded out our menu of hearing and vestibular testing by adding a hearing aid specialist, Mr. Frank Scarfi, BC-HIS, to help meet the needs of our hearing impaired patients, a condition very common among our older clients and those with vestibular issues.

***Editor:*** Similarly, a few years ago, you felt that there was an unmet need that could be filled by establishing a **Medical Fitness Center** (MFC) here at Associated Neurologists. Could you share the vision you had for the MFC as well as information about some of the programs and services that are offered by the MFC for patients as well as members of our community?

***Dr. Dransfield:*** The purpose of such a Center is different than that of a regular health or sports club. Its purpose is to provide a safe, private environment that recognizes the importance of fitness, wellness, and proper nutrition for people with medical conditions.

As an example, the MFC provides **Yoga classes** for able-bodied beginners and intermediates, as well as **Chair Yoga classes** for folks with neurologic conditions, such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

The MFC also offers a Senior Exercise class, led by Physical Therapy Technician, Missy Craig, who has extensive experience assisting the therapists in the care of patients with medical conditions. Charlotte Honda offers **Tai Chi classes** for individuals with imbalance and/or Neurologic disorders. In addition, **Personal Trainers** Penny Cidri, Dee Poquette, Garner Lester, and Brigid Knauer combine specialty training and compassion to patients of all abilities to enhance overall fitness and well-being.



*Medical Fitness Center*

Our newest exercise experience is called **TRX Suspension Training**, which leverages one's own body weight and gravity to develop strength, balance, flexibility, and core stability.

Our mission statement is to help educate, motivate, support, and inspire our clients for healthy activity and exercise, despite the physical and emotional challenges posed by medical conditions.

**Editor:** What has been most rewarding to you in your work as a Physical Therapist and as the Director of Physical Therapy here at Associated Neurologists?

**Dr. Dransfield:** The Neurologists at Associated Neurologists, P.C have been dedicated to growing our multidisciplinary [Balance & Vestibular Center](#), supporting my vision to serve the needs of persons with dizziness by a team of specialists in a dedicated space. We offer rehabilitation, education, resources, diagnostic testing, behavioral and psychological support, medical management, hearing optimization, and even non-traditional services, such as [acupuncture and therapeutic massage](#), reflexology, [nutrition counseling](#), and [personal training](#).

Of course, the most rewarding part of what I do is meeting and caring for those patients with dizziness, who have had difficulty getting answers or help for their problem. I have been rehabilitating patients with vestibular issues for 25 years and have a deep understanding and respect for this population. Many just need to be heard and then educated about the nature of their vestibular issue, so they can get back to their lives.

**Editor:** What personal hobbies or outside interests do you enjoy? Do these interests help to inform your work with patients and vice versa?

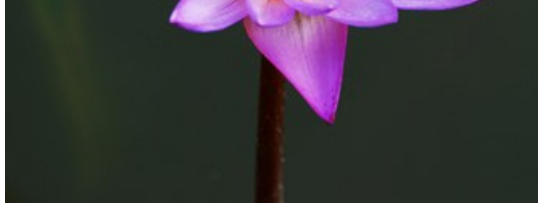
**Dr. Dransfield:** I love running and hope to always be able to keep moving like that! I've run a marathon that taught me about perseverance, a quality many of our patients embody. Watching patients continue to press on, despite the challenges of disability and disease, has inspired me, just like that marathon did! I am eternally grateful for those patients who have shared their courage, their persistence, and their strength with me throughout the years.

**Editor:** Thank you, Dr. Dransfield, for sharing this helpful information about the unique services and programs that are provided by you and your dedicated staff. Speaking with you has been a pleasure and an inspiration.

**If you are interested in learning more about the services provided by Physical Therapy, the Balance & Vestibular Center, or the Medical Fitness Center at Associated Neurologists, please contact us at (203) 748-5631.**







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