

My Furry Companion

Ten years ago I was diagnosed with Post-Polio Syndrome: new pain, fatigue, and muscle weakness more than 40 years after I had polio. My prescription is “conserve to preserve.”

Boo Boo, a six-pound black and white “tuxedo” fur ball, adopted me five years ago when she was just a baby. Boo Boo naps in my lap while I rest, and if I’m tempted to skip a rest period, she meows non-stop to let me know this is unacceptable. Boo Boo also gives me some gentle aerobic exercise when we play ball: She sits in an open area high above the kitchen and bats small shiny balls back to me when I pitch them to her. Her small furry body, gentle purr, and persistent presence calm me. Because of her, I wake up laughing as she snuggles and yawns, and I generally have a good laugh at bedtime as she wriggles up beneath the quilt to find a comfy spot. My furry companion is powerful medicine.

Becki Gipson
Vacaville, Calif.

My loveable mutt Jake is an angel in disguise. He wiggled his black-lab self into our hearts. As I got weaker, he would help me up the stairs. When I fell down those same stairs, he was right there licking my face, whimpering, and barking the alarm. Many times he’s looked right into my eyes as I’ve lamented my sorrows and wept for a long time, all the time acting as if he could feel my pain. He’s a doggie send from God to ease the pain any way he can!

Margie Barnhart
Canton, Ohio

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: Thank you to everyone who sent in stories, poems,



and pictures of their pets in response to “Dementia Therapy Goes to the Dogs” in the March/April 2007 issue. Although we don’t have the space to print them all, your furry companions each deserve a place of honor and a big hug.

Fragile X

After reading the Julie Andrews article in the March/April 2007 *Neurology Now*, I had to share some news about a genetic disorder called Fragile X Syndrome. It is the most common inherited cause of mental impairment and is implicated in many cases of autism.

Fragile X Associated Tremor Ataxia Syndrome (FXTAS) is a progressive neurological disorder affecting a significant percentage of carriers of the Fragile X permutation after age 50. My husband is horribly disabled by FXTAS. He was a brilliant Ph.D. scientist who now has severe cognitive impairment, loss of balance and coordination, and incontinence. The symptoms are similar to those of Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s, and people with this disorder are often wrongly diagnosed.

Please include resources for Fragile X in your magazine.

Terri Corcoran
Falls Church, Va.

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: Please see Resource Central on page 46. Thank you very much for your suggestion, Terri.

Art Therapy

I want to compliment your staff on an outstanding magazine.

The “Art of Therapy” article [Nov/Dec 2006] was most interesting to me because I practice it on a daily basis. I have been diagnosed with relapsing and remitting multiple sclerosis (MS) for nearly 30 years now, and currently I am a studio artist who also tutors students in my home.

Art therapy is not used nearly as much as it should be, especially among MS sufferers. Allowing the mind to be submerged in a work of art is not only stimulating, it is valuable in aiding memory retention and cognitive function.

I hope to see more of this subject explored in the near future, and in the meantime I look forward to each and every issue of your magazine.

Maryann Gamel
Lansing, Mich.

I read a very interesting article in *Neurology Now* about Alzheimer’s disease and art programs in museums [Nov/Dec 2006]. I shared the article with colleagues at an assisted living facility near Spelman College, and there is great interest in starting a program at our museum on campus. We met earlier this week and formed a committee to design a program. Thank you for the idea!

Dr. Arturo Lindsay
Spelman College
Atlanta, Ga.

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: Good luck, Dr. Lindsay. Keep us posted.

@Your Service

YOUR VOICES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Correspondence for publication on this LETTERS page must include name, address, and daytime phone number, and may be edited for purposes of space and clarity. It should be e-mailed to neurologynow@lwwny.com, faxed to 646-674-6500, or mailed to 333 Seventh Ave., 19th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

PERSONAL ESSAYS: The SPEAK UP essay is a forum for people who live with neurological conditions and those who care for them. Submissions should be kept to 600 words and sent to the addresses above.

ASK THE EXPERTS: If you have a question for a doctor to answer in our ASK THE EXPERTS department, send it to the addresses above.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

You may order a subscription—available for free to individuals with a neurological disorder and their families and caregivers—through the following methods.

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WEBSITE

neurologynow.com features an electronic version of the print magazine, dating to our premiere issue. The site also offers publication information, resource links, and web-exclusive content.

Dystonia

I read your magazine faithfully, and would like to see more articles about dystonia. I have writer's cramp, oramandibular dystonia, and a clawing problem with the toes of my right foot. I have seen quite a lot about writer's cramp, but the literature is scarce about the others.

Judy Johansen

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: Thank you for the suggestion, Judy. Look for coverage of dystonia in upcoming issues.

Vagus Nerve Stimulation for Epilepsy

I would like to recommend a treatment for epilepsy that has improved my life

greatly. It is called Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS), and it was a godsend for me.

Almost a year after starting it, I have only had two seizures and am on less medication. I believe it's been in use for nine years and also works on uncontrolled depression, a common side effect of epilepsy.

I know it is working for me and expect to be taken off of the anti-depressant drugs this month. Please tell your readers about this wonderful advancement—they can check out Epilepsyfoundation.org for more information.

Susan Seals

THE EDITOR RESPONDS: We wish you continued success with your therapy. We have reported on VNS in previous issues and will cover it again in the future.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We always want to know if a story has touched you or helped you—or rubbed you the wrong way. Plus, here are three questions for you, based on stories in this issue of *Neurology Now*.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA:

In "The Fight for Medical Marijuana" (page 8), we discuss the use of cannabis for neurological conditions. What do you think the government should do about medical marijuana?

RELATIONSHIPS:

In "Sex, Love, and Multiple Sclerosis" (page 34), we discuss the effect of MS on relationships. How does your neurological condition affect your relationship with friends and family? How have you brought the subject up with a new friend or someone you had a romantic interest in?

ART CONTEST:

Send us your artwork about living with a neurological condition. One submission will be published in the Nov/Dec issue and the artist will receive \$100. People with epilepsy can submit art to the Expressions of Courage contest, co-sponsored by the Epilepsy Foundation and Ortho-McNeil (expressionsofcourage.com).

Email your thoughts to neurologynow@lwwny.com. You can also fax your letter to 646-674-6500 or mail it to Wolters Kluwer, Neurology Now, 333 Seventh Ave., 19th Floor, New York, NY 10001. Letters may be edited for purposes of space and clarity.