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livingwell

Turmeric, more than just a cooking spice

BY PATTY LEON
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Turmeric, a rootstock perennial plant that is a cousin to the ginger family, is used as a spice in many Middle Eastern recipes. But recent studies indicate that turmeric could hold medicinal value as well.

Dr. Andrew Weil, an American physician, teacher, and author on holistic health and the founder and director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, lectured on the anti-inflammatory properties of turmeric in Savannah last year.

Weil said that when the body and immune system are working properly, inflammation is the cornerstone of the body's healing system.

"It is how the body gets more nourishment and immune activity to an area that been injured or under attack," he said during the lecture. "But if inflammation persists, if it serves no purpose, it becomes productive of disease ... it destroys tissue and causes damage."

Weil added that external influences such as living a sedentary lifestyle, having a diet of highly processed food and not providing the immune system with proper nourishment might lead to dangerous forms of inflammation that result in arthritis, coronary artery disease and other ailments associated with aging.

"Alzheimer's disease begins as an inflammatory process in the brain," he said. "Coronary heart disease ... the root there seems to be inflammation in the lining of our arteries."

He said studies suggest a link between inflammation and cancer.

"The same hormones that regulate inflammation also stimulate cells to divide more frequently," he said. "And anything that pushes the body in the direction of increased inflammation is also pushing the body in the direction of increased possibility of malignant transformation."

Weil said that if illnesses have inflammation as a common root, then

there is a common strategy to use when dealing with them.

"And turmeric is the most potent and natural anti-inflammatory agent that's been found," Weil said adding he now advocates an anti-inflammatory diet rich in turmeric.

Turmeric contains a substance called curcumin, which is thought to be an antioxidant. Weil said turmeric has been used for thousands of years in Asian medicine to treat a variety of maladies.

In 2007, ethnobotanist James A. Duke, Ph.D., published one of the most comprehensive summaries of turmeric, Weil said.

Reviewing some 700 studies, Duke concluded that turmeric appears to outperform many pharmaceuticals in fighting several chronic, debilitating diseases — with virtually no side effects.

According to a study conducted by the Mayo Clinic, laboratory and animal research suggests that curcumin may prevent cancer, slow the spread of cancer, make chemotherapy more effective and protect healthy cells from damage by radiation therapy.

The University of Maryland Medical Center reported that curcumin has been shown to lower the levels of two enzymes in the body that cause inflammation. It also stops platelets from clumping together to form blood clots.

Weil said the key is adding turmeric to your diet. The best way for the body to absorb turmeric, he said, is to make sure it is taken along with some black pepper.

Simply adding one heaping teaspoon into most any recipe can start to boost the anti-inflammatory benefits.

One Green Planet, a website for vegans and the health-conscious, recommends a turmeric tea that, if sipped before bedtime, can also improve your sleep. Simply heat 1 cup of coconut or soy or almond milk. Mix in 1 teaspoon of turmeric, 1 teaspoon of cinnamon and 1 teaspoon of your sweetener of choice, and enjoy.





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Senate approves creation of Joint Coastal Greenway Study Committee

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER
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Legislation sponsored by Sen. William Ligon, R-Brunswick, would create a joint House and Senate Coastal Greenway Study Committee to examine the proposed Coastal Georgia Greenway trail.

The trail will link to the proposed East Coast Greenway trail that runs from Maine to Florida. It will connect 12 historical landmarks and a variety of green areas along the Georgia coast, including in Liberty and Bryan counties.

The Senate approved Senate Resolution 26 on



Friday.

"The Georgia coast is one of our state's most beautiful and thriving tourist destinations," Ligon said. "It is my hope that the study committee will find the trail to have a positive impact on Georgia's tourism industry and our economy and will encourage the creation the trail."

If the House of Rep-



resentatives approves the measure and Gov. Nathan Deal signs it into law, the committee will consist of 13 people, including members from the state Transportation, Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Economic Development departments.

March recognizes social workers across the Nation

March is National Social Work Month

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER
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During, this time the National Association of Social Workers begins an eight-month celebration of its 60th anniversary which will end in October, the actual month the association was founded back in 1955.

The theme "Social Work Paves the Way for Change" was selected to convey what the association and the social work profession have done over the past six decades to bring about positive changes in society and for individuals.

Social work is the profession of hope-fueled by resilience and advocacy. Social workers matter because every day they help millions of struggling people dream differently. In the United States, more than 650,000 of these highly trained professionals know how daunting and immobilizing life's tragedies and obstacles can be.

But they also witness the sheer determination of countless individuals and families to achieve different lives. Sometimes, all it takes to help people get on the right path is guidance toward what is possible. Other times, social workers are an immediate lifeline in crisis-providing access to resources and new life options.

Social workers have



worked to improve the rights of numerous people and have advocated for social justice.

Those served by social workers possess much strength that keeps fighting for a better future despite personal and systemic barriers to success. They climb toward what is possible rather than simply accepting what the current situation may be. Professional social workers help combine these client strengths with effective personal and public advocacy.

Social workers also make a difference in the day-to-day lives of millions of Americans by helping to build, support and empower positive family and community relationships. For example, they work in schools helping students over-

come obstacles to their education. They work in hospitals helping patients navigate their paths to recovery. And they work in agencies and organizations helping protect vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect.

Social workers – more than any other profession – recognize that more must be done to address persistent social problems such as poverty, lack of education and health care access, and discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality or income. They know that all people, no matter their circumstances, at some time in their lives may need the expertise of a skilled social worker.

Positive social change is never complete. It's a work in progress.

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UF Health researchers establish why exercise can worsen exhaustion of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER
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The mechanism that causes high-performance athletes to "feel the burn" also causes people with chronic fatigue syndrome to feel exhausted by the most common daily activities, new University of Florida research shows.

Published in the February issue of the journal *Pain*, the study shows that the neural pathways that transmit feelings of fatigue to the brain might be to blame. In those with chronic fatigue syndrome, the pathways do their job too well.

The findings also provide evidence for the first time that peripheral tissues such as muscles contribute to feelings of fatigue. Determining the origins of fatigue could help researchers develop therapies or identify targets for those therapies.

Researchers focused on the role of muscle metabolites, including lactic acid and adenosine triphosphate, or ATP, in the disease. The study has demonstrated for the first time that these substances, released when a person exercises his or her muscles, seem to activate these neural pathways. Also, Florida health researchers have shown that these pathways seem to be much more sensitive in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome than in patients without the disease, something that hasn't been studied before.

Chronic fatigue syndrome, which the Institute of Medicine recently renamed systemic exertion intolerance

disease, or SEID, is characterized by extreme chronic fatigue. Because its chief symptom — fatigue — is often associated with many other diseases, it can be difficult to diagnose SEID for the more than 1 million people who actually have the disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The disease has no root medical cause, and researchers don't know what triggers it. But they are studying aspects of the disease to figure out ways to treat it.

"What we have shown now, that has never been shown before in humans, is that muscle metabolites can induce fatigue in healthy people as well as patients who already have fatigue," said Dr. Roland Staud, a professor of rheumatology and clinical immunology in Florida's College of Medicine and the paper's lead author.

During exercise, muscles produce metabolites, which are sensed by metaboreceptors that transmit information via fatigue pathways to the brain, according to the researchers. But in patients with SEID, these fatigue pathways have become highly sensitive to metabolites and can trigger excessive feelings of fatigue.

"For most of us, at the end of strenuous exertion we feel exhausted and need to stop — but we will recover rapidly," Staud said. "However, these individuals tire much more rapidly and sometimes just after moving across a room, they are fully exhausted. This takes a toll on their lives."

Staud and co-author Michael E. Robinson, Ph.D., a

professor in the department of clinical and health psychology in Florida's College of Public Health and Health Professions, recruited a group of 39 patients with SEID and 29 participants without the disease. The researchers asked the participants to don a blood pressure cuff just above their elbows on their dominant side, pick up a spring-loaded device and squeeze it to 100 percent of their maximum capacity, which was measured by a dial.

With research assistants encouraging them, the study participants then squeezed the device so that the dial showed they were gripping at 50 percent of their maximum capacity for as long as they could.

At the end of the hand-grip exercise, the blood pressure cuff on the participant's arm was inflated, almost instantly trapping the metabolites generated by the exercise within the forearm muscles. This allowed the metabolites to collect in the forearm tissue

without being cleared by the circulatory system. There, the metabolites continued to activate fatigue pathways, sending messages of fatigue to the brain and allowing researchers to measure how much fatigue and pain may occur because of the trapped metabolites.

With the blood pressure cuff still inflated, the participants rated fatigue and then pain in their forearms every 30 seconds. Both patients with SEID and patients without the disease reported increasing fatigue, but patients with the disease recorded much higher levels of fatigue and pain.

"We found that the fatigued individuals reported more fatigue than the non-fatigued individuals during the exercise, and also found that they had more pain compared to the non-fatigued individuals," Staud said.

On the Fatigue Visual Analog Scale used to measure participants' fatigue, patients with SEID rated their fatigue at approximately 5.5 on a scale

of 0 to 10 after the hand-grip exercise while wearing the inflated blood pressure cuff, whereas participants without the disease rated their fatigue at approximately 1.5.

After 30 minutes, the participants repeated the exercise, but with the opposite arm and without the cinching blood pressure cuff so the metabolites could be cleared from the arm. Both sets of participants experienced fatigue, but the feeling of fatigue in those with the disease was much lower than when the metabolites were trapped with the blood pressure cuff.

"This suggests that hypersensitive fatigue pathways

play an important role for the often pronounced exercise-related fatigue of patients with the disease," Staud said.

Next, Staud plans to explore treatment interventions and to conduct brain-imaging studies of patients with SEID.

"The take-home message here is, like many of the pain studies we have conducted, there are both peripheral and central nervous system factors at play in these complex syndromes," said Robinson, who is also the director of the UF Center for Pain Research and Behavioral Health. "Our study seems to highlight the important role of these peripheral tissues."

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