

# Senior Services News

## Conversations that Count - You, Your Doctor, and Quality of Life

I first met Mike (not his real name) a few days after he had been discharged from hospital after an episode of fatigue, shortness of breath and leg swelling caused by heart failure. He arrived with his brother, who appeared very concerned about his condition.

Mike smokes regularly, and drinks a few glasses of whiskey daily, although the hospitalist physicians noted that he did not go into alcohol withdrawal while in hospital.

He was in a wheelchair, unable to rise from the chair by himself, and walked very unsteadily. When he was helped up to the examining table, he looked embarrassed - the wheelchair seat was wet, as were his pants. In the course of the physical, I examined the raw skin on his buttocks which had a dime-sized ulcer on the right side.

I learned that Mike lived in a rented house with his son (his brother lived across the bay) and that his lease was going to expire soon. His son was unemployed, but was out of the house most of the day and was not particularly helpful.

Mike was scheduled to receive, an assessment by a home care nursing social worker. He initially refused to allow visiting health care personnel into his home, and had to be coaxed by calls from his brother. The nurse noticed piled bags of soiled adult diapers on the floor, and the house was generally unkempt with dirty carpets, and smelled of cigarette smoke.

It seemed clear to everyone (except possibly Mike) that he would be better off cared for in an assisted living setting rather than in his own home. I suspect, however, that Mike would prefer to go on living like he was; so that he would not have to stop drinking, and he could maintain his privacy and some shred of dignity. If he were to be found dead in his armchair some day, so be it.

Atul Gawande, MD has written a very thoughtful book, "On Being Mortal" based on his own struggles with his patients and with his ailing father, around decision making near the end of life. He notes that "we want autonomy for ourselves, and safety for others", that we are prepared to assume risks on our own behalf that we are not prepared to take on behalf of our loved ones. We believe those in our care should live in a safe, controlled environment, and that involves trading off some of our autonomy. He points out that this surrender of independence means we surrender something of our very identity and spirit, and that this also creates a risk to quality of life and health. Many patients suffer a decline in health in nursing homes and assisted living facilities despite receiving "the best of care".

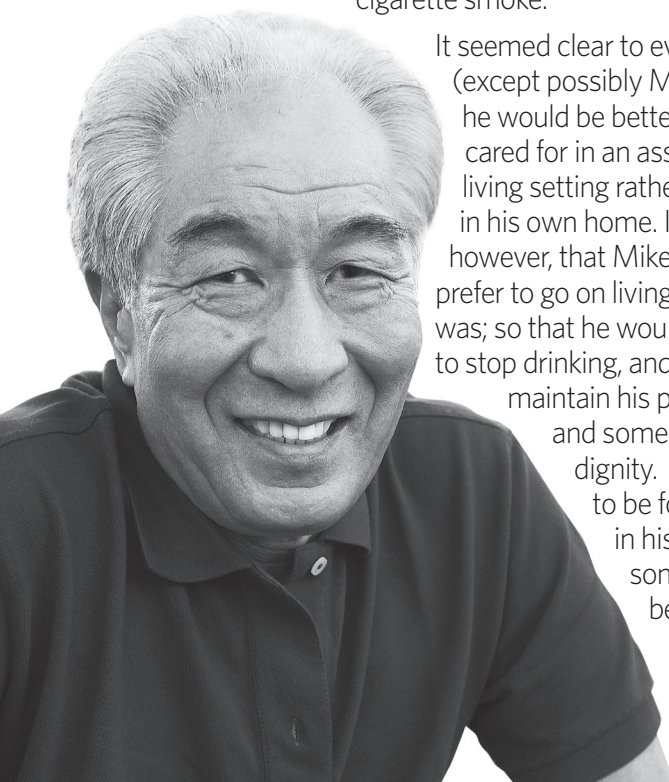
His point is that there is an optimal balance between safety and autonomy that is not yet found in most long-term care facilities today, where the balance is tipped heavily toward safety. This is fundamentally what makes long-term care facilities so unattractive.

In the 40-minute visit I had with Mike, it was all I could do to document his complex medical and social situation and give him and his brother some preliminary advice about his condition. For the next visit (and I hope there is one) Dr. Gawande's book provides these important questions:

- "What do you understand about your condition and your prognosis?"
- "What concerns do you have about what lies ahead?"
- "If time becomes short, what is most important to you?"
- "What tradeoffs are you willing to make in order to preserve your quality of life?"
- "How would you like to spend your time if your condition worsens?"
- "Who do you want to make decisions for you if you can't?"

For someone nearing the end of their life, this is how one can start a conversation in the interest of maximizing the quality of the time remaining.

**Lawren Hicks, MD**  
 Medical Director, Senior Services



# 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 941-7900 option 1.

APRIL - JUNE 2015

## **Avoiding Fraud and Scams for Senior Citizens** - Virginia George, Esq.

**April 3 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor**

This class will inform and educate attendees on how to spot potential elder fraud and scams. Legal tools and practical suggestion on how older adults can protect themselves from being potential victims will also be discussed.

## **Eating for Optimal Brain Function** - Kathy Napoli, MA, RD

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

Research is showing that you can increase your chances of maintaining a healthy brain as you age by adding specific "smart foods" to your daily diet. Find out how your nutrition and lifestyle choices can help you achieve a focused and happy brain.

## **Preventing Osteoporosis through Nutrition** - Kathy Napoli, MA, RD

**May 1 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor**

**May 7 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord**

Can your nutrition and lifestyle help your body "bone up?" For those with a higher risk for bone loss, discover key bone-building nutrients and lifestyle changes, according to the latest research, that will help improve your bone health.

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

**May 5 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Brentwood**

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.

## **Importance of Maintaining Good Posture & Balance** - K Daly

**May 15 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Health Wellness Services, Walnut Creek**

Falls can be prevented with healthy posture and good balance. Using physical therapy based techniques, this class will teach you how to improve your balance and posture to be capable of avoiding falls and reducing injury.

## **Conversations that Count - You, Your Doctor and Quality of Life** - Lawren Hicks, MD & Suzanne Leib, MFT

**May 21 | 2:30 - 4 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

End of life care is something we all face, yet too many people are dying in a way they wouldn't choose, leaving loved ones feeling burdened, guilty, and uncertain. Join us to learn how to normalize having "the conversation" with your doctor and family. For additional information, [www.eastbayacp.org](http://www.eastbayacp.org).

## **Palliative Care for You and Your Family** - Karen Winer MSW & Colleen Wagner MSN, RN-BC

**June 11 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord**

Palliative care has emerged as specialized care for those with advanced illnesses. Come learn more about Palliative Care and how it differs from Hospice Services. Presented by John Muir Health Palliative Care.

# Ongoing Classes

## AARP Driver Safety Program

**May 12 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord**

**May 23 | 1-day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek**

**June 20 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek**

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, MFT

**April 28 | 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

**May 27 | 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor**

**June 23 | 6 – 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek**

All adults, regardless of age, need to understand how they can have control over their own life and death decisions. Learn the choices you or your family may face due to an accident or serious illness. This is an opportunity to clarify your choices and make sure they will be carried out should you become unable to make your own health care decisions. Required documents will be provided.

## Catch Yourself – Maintain Your Independence

**April 6, 10, 13, 17 | 11:30 – 12:30 | 941-7900 option 1 | Outpatient Center, Brentwood**

**May 4, 8, 11, 15 | 11:00 – 12:00 | 941-7900 option 1 | Behavioral Health Center, Concord, Classroom A**

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. 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 8, May 20, June 10, | 7 – 9:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek**

This course is for those new to Medicare, or soon to enroll, who want to understand the many benefits available. Learn about health benefits, drug coverage and how to supplement your coverage. HICAP does not sell or endorse insurance products. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

## Memory Screening — What's Your Memory Fitness?

**April 14, May 19, June 16 | morning appointments | 947-3300**

**April 15, May 20, June 17 | afternoon appointments | 947-3300**

**Outpatient Center, Brentwood | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek**

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, Senior Services, in partnership with John Muir Health Neurosciences Institute, offers a free individual memory screening to help determine if your memory is functioning at a level that is typical for a person your age. This is a screening and not a diagnostic exam. Screenings are offered on the specific dates and times at the three locations listed. Call for a 30 minute appointment.

## Making a Difference In Alzheimer's / Dementia Care -Teepa Snow

**May 4 | 2 - 5 p.m. | 925-376-8000 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek**

Join Senior Helpers and Teepa Snow for this seminar that will provide essential information on how to have a positive and meaningful relationship with loved ones with Alzheimer's and dementia throughout their journey. Cost \$30 for CEU attendees and \$10 for general public.



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 947-3300 or [seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com](mailto:seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com)

### 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

Outpatient Center, Brentwood  
 2400 Balfour Road, Suite 201  
 Brentwood

Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor  
 1220 Rossmoor Parkway, Suite 100  
 Walnut Creek

Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek  
 1450 Treat Boulevard, 2nd Floor  
 Walnut Creek

### May 2015 - National Osteoporosis Month

#### Bone Health Services

John Muir Health offers comprehensive services for preventing and treating osteoporosis. We work with you every step of the way, including education, diagnosis, and treatment. Before scheduling an appointment, you will need a referral from your primary care physician. Some health plan companies may require prior authorization. So, please be sure to check with your health plan. See more at: <http://www.johnmuirhealth.com/services/bone-health-services>.

#### Better Bones Forever: Osteoporosis Update 2015 – Richard Kamrath, MD

**May 6 | 6:30 - 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | John Muir Health Wellness Services, Walnut Creek**

Join Dr. Kamrath, a John Muir Health endocrinologist, and learn about the current developments in the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of osteoporosis.

#### Program Locations

John Muir Health Wellness Services  
 1656 N. California Blvd., Ste 100  
 Walnut Creek  
 (925) 941-7900 option 1

John Muir Health Outpatient Center,  
 Tice Valley/Rossmoor  
 1220 Rossmoor Pkwy., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-1220

John Muir Medical Center, Concord  
 2720 Grant St, Classroom A  
 (925) 674-2351

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

John Muir Health Outpatient Center,  
 Walnut Creek  
 1450 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek

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

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