



# the whole story

Rehabilitation that focuses on the whole person

Dear Friends,



**A** new year has arrived and along with it many new challenges for us all. Since our last edition of *The Whole Story*, we have seen a remarkable down turn of the global economy; a new administration inaugurated in Washington; and of course many uncertainties about our future. Despite these and other challenges, the Rusk Institute continues to be a source of strength and inspiration to many, particularly to those we treat and their loved ones. While it may be easier to stay the course in these uncertain times given our many successes, we have opted instead to embark on several initiatives that will serve to enhance the care we provide to people with disabilities. We will accomplish this by strengthening existing clinical programs while advancing our efforts in research, education, dissemination and advocacy. Clinical and administrative members of the Rusk staff have dedicated themselves to a new initiative that aims to strengthen our clinical programs to better serve those with life-long disabilities. This effort will ensure that our already strong programs will be even better at providing a seamless continuum of care for those in need of long-term services. Our research efforts continue

*Continued on page 4*

**Steven R. Flanagan, M.D.**

*Chairman of Rehabilitation Medicine and  
Medical Director of The Rusk Institute*

## RUSK INSTITUTE OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUP

Jeffrey M. Cohen, MD and Jeffrey Heckman, MD

**F**ew words strike fear into a patient as these: “You need an amputation.” To deal with the devastating effects of limb loss, the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine has founded a special group, The Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine Amputee Support Group. Dr. Jeffrey Cohen and Dr. Jeffrey Heckman, who understand the value of a group to help amputees deal with their altered life situations, began this project in the fall of 2008. By reaching out to the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA) and the tri-state area’s regional representative, they were able to bring together the necessary ingredients to institute an effective group.

The primary mission of the amputee support group is to provide a forum for its members to share experiences and concerns while fostering an environment for education, social networking, peer mentoring and volunteer opportunities. New amputees have to deal not only with the physical ordeal of the amputation, but also with its impact on interpersonal relationships, careers and the stresses of daily living. The support group helps the amputee deal with these challenges.

There are many new physical barriers to face. Activities as simple as leaving one’s home or entering a public restroom become challenging. In addition, new amputees must learn to come to terms with an altered self image. They must learn to accept that their condition is permanent and that they will be amputees for the rest of their

*Continued on page 4*



*Members of the Rusk Amputee Support Group, Adhiambo “Adhi” Mitchell and Nicole Jones.*

# RUSK GETS A LITTLE GREENER

Matthew Wichrowski, MSW, HTR Senior Horticultural Therapist

Inherent in the 'Glass Garden philosophy' is the notion that nature provides benefits to patients and staff and adds value to a variety of settings. A successful collaboration between the Glass Garden Horticulture Program and the Environmental Improvement Work Team has enhanced the Tisch Hospital lobby and some treatment space at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine with beautiful plants.

During therapy in the greenhouse our patients have reported benefits including stress reduction, improved mood, opportunities to socialize in a supportive environment, and distraction from pain. In addition, there are numerous studies

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which support the health benefits of nature. Simply having a view of nature from the window or having plants in the hospital room resulted in lower usage of pain killers, lower blood pressure, and lower ratings of pain, anxiety, and fatigue. Other studies show improved ability to concentrate after spending time in a

garden, as well as increased staff productivity in an office setting containing plants.

In an effort to extend these benefits beyond the greenhouse and Tisch lobby, a 'Green Treatment Space' was created in one of the inpatient Physical Therapy gyms. We believe that the presence of plants in this treatment space will create a positive distraction, and lessen patients' perceptions of pain and anxiety during physical therapy treatment.

Through these efforts we look at the needs of the whole person and strive to create optimum healing environments for our patients as well as supportive conditions for staff.

We encourage staff to visit the glass Garden during breaks or at lunch for a quick de-stressor. Include a few plants in your office and relax a bit while caring for them. Take a short stroll in a garden or park during lunch. A walk in the park can work wonders to chase away the winter doldrums. At home, keep some plants on the windowsill or even tend a small garden to help relax after work. There is great satisfaction in picking a bouquet of flowers you have grown yourself. Get lost in the scent of honeysuckle, roses, or mint, and the fond memories that they trigger. Grow some basil or other herbs in the garden or in containers on your patio. Experiment with cooking with herbs to enjoy a more healthy diet. The garden is even a good place to do some deep breathing or other relaxation exercises to aid in stress reduction. There are so many ways to reap the bounty of nature; take some time to smell the roses! ●

*For more information contact Matthew Wichrowski, MSW, HTR, Senior Horticultural Therapist, 212-263-6058, matthew.wichrowski@nyumc.org*



For more information on Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine's programs, patient support groups, community outreach and events please visit our website [www.rusk institute.org](http://www.rusk institute.org)

# RUSK CAMPUSES HOST GROUP RUNS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Angela Stolfi, PT, DPT

One of the challenges faced by rehabilitation professionals is assisting patients with physical and emotional recovery following an injury or illness. Often, there is a gap between completion of therapy and the adaptation of physical and recreational goals beyond the clinical environment. In an effort to fulfill patients' various needs and bridge that gap, the Rusk Institute at both 34<sup>th</sup> street and 17<sup>th</sup> street campuses is partnering with the Achilles International to host group running sessions beginning in March 2009.

Achilles International, a nonprofit track club for people with all types of disabilities, was started in 1983 by Dick Traum, a marathoner with an above knee amputation. The Achilles International mission is "to enable people with all types of disabilities to participate in mainstream athletics, promote personal achievement, enhance self esteem, and lower barriers between people." Since its inception in 1983, Achilles International has expanded to include chapters in the United States and over 60 chapters internationally. Participants of all ages and with all types of physical disabilities can train with the club to walk, run, wheel, or handcycle in races such as the New York

City Marathon, and the Achilles Hope and Possibility 5 Mile. Megan Strong, a physical therapist in the Pediatric Rehabilitation Department in the Rusk Institute at 34<sup>th</sup> street, is very eager to start the group running program. She said, "What excites me about it is that it is a way for some of my patients to have achievable goals that they once may have thought were impossible. They are very enthusiastic about participating in the program."

The Initiative for Women with Disabilities (IWD) Elly and Steve Hammerman Health and Wellness Center at NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases will be hosting group workouts to take place on Mondays, from 3:30 – 5:30pm in Stuyvesant Square Park, across the street from NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases on 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Group workouts near the 34<sup>th</sup> street campus will take place on Thursday afternoons from 4:30 – 6:00pm on the running path overlooking the East River near The Water Club restaurant. All are welcome - there's always something for everyone. ●

For more information about the Achilles International and their group run schedule, including their workouts near The Rusk Institute campuses, please visit their website at [www.achillestrackclub](http://www.achillestrackclub), or call (212)354-0300.



## TAI CHI - BOTH OLD AND NEW

Diana Yap

The dance of Tai Chi, a graceful-looking martial art that originated centuries ago in China, was taking place in a meeting room in the Smilow Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation and Prevention Center on a weekday evening in March.

Six employees of Langone Medical Center, all women in T-shirts and sweats, were led in each flowing series of movements by Ying Tang, a senior clinical exercise physiologist. Mr. Tang, a Tai Chi instructor who has a medical degree in his native China, demonstrated each movement to the class, who gamely tried to imitate, and later memorize, the moves.

"It's kind of hard at the beginning, but if you practice, you're okay," he said.

Mr. Tang, who has taught Tai Chi to cardiopulmonary rehab patients since 1996, was teaching the first four forms, or series of movements, out of the 24 that he eventually would show this class: "Commencing form," "Part horse's mane on both sides," "White crane flashes its wings" and "Brush knee on both sides." Moving in slow motion, seven people bent their knees slightly, or punched out at chest level.

After the class, Noella Hermanns, of the radiology billing department, commented, "It looks easy, but it's not. In a cardio class, you're just following the instructor. Here, you have to think."

"You have to concentrate," agreed her colleague, Mila Shekhter. "It's very good for the mind."

While Mr. Tang learned Tai Chi at age three, Peter Walter, a senior physical therapy assistant, took some courses that led to his approaching his supervisors about starting a wellness program for Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine's outpatient physical therapy department's patients. And while Mr. Tang, who uses Tai Chi as an alternative medicine for the health benefit of people with chronic disease, notes



that the martial art, with its hundreds of styles, was not used for health purposes until after 1950, Mr. Walter looks at Tai Chi as an additional tool for physical therapy.

"It is somewhat of a blend of Tai Chi and physical therapy," Mr. Walter said. "I felt that with my interest in Tai Chi and my knowledge as a therapy professional, I could develop a comprehensive Tai Chi-based program that would keep patients interested in being active without feeling like they were simply exercising."

Scott Harding, a physical-therapy patient who uses a wheelchair, said in the physical-therapy gym that he took Tai Chi to improve his balance for transfers. ●

For more information about Tai Chi for Langone employees, please call (212) 404-3836; Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation patients, please call (212) 263-6129; Rusk physical-therapy patients, please call (212) 263-6075.

# WELCOME DR. LIU

Ann Thaler-Shore, MPT, MPA

**A**ngela Liu, M.D., is the new physiatrist for the Network, but she is by no means new to NYU. A graduate of NYU School of Medicine, she completed her internship at NYU Langone Medical Center (formerly NYU Medical Center) and residency at the Rusk Institute. During medical school, Dr. Liu developed an interest in physiatry. When asked what drew her to the specialty, she points to the teamwork with therapists and various medical specialists. She is motivated to give back to NYU, and Rusk in particular, for all that was offered to her as a student, intern, and resident.

As the Rusk Institute Rehabilitation Network physiatrist, Dr. Liu visits Rusk Network subacute/skilled nursing facilities weekly to see patients referred from NYU Langone Medical Center or from other hospitals through the efforts of Rusk clinical liaisons. She is able to provide continuity of care for patients and facilitate communication between physicians at various Network sites. Susan Finkelstein, from Office of Continuing Care notes: "The feedback on Dr. Liu's services has been overwhelmingly

positive. Dr Liu's on site presence enhances the seamless delivery of care to our patients."

Dr. Liu comments that she enjoys working at the various Network sites, where she develops relationships with different clinicians and provides consultative services with a frequency that the facilities may not have otherwise. In addition, she notes that she is able to "bridge the gap between therapists and medical doctors at these (Network) facilities so that the doctors are always aware of the rehab issues." The Office of Continuing Care and the entire Rusk Network welcome Dr. Liu. ●



For more information about the Rusk Network please call 212-404-3792.

## DEAR FRIENDS *Continued from page 1*

at a solid pace, which will be strengthened by the infusion of new talent being recruited to the Rusk Institute. Our clinicians and researchers continue to disseminate their scientific and clinical expertise to our colleagues from around the country at many national meetings, including those sponsored by the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, American Physical Therapy Association, American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and the American Psychology Association to name just a few. Our faculty has published numerous scientific articles and textbook chapters while several others have been involved in the development and implementation of regional and international conferences, with the goal of improving the care for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.

The Rusk Institute continues to flourish as a quality center for rehabilitation care, largely because of the dedication of our staff and their commitment to excellence. Recently, three members

of the Rusk family announced their intention to enter into partial retirement. Drs. Leonard Diller, Martha Sarno and Yehuda Ben Yishay have been pillars in the world of Rehabilitation Medicine. Their combined contributions to our field have been immense and perhaps immeasurable. They are renown both nationally and internationally for their work in rehabilitation psychology, language disorders and cognitive remediation. Together, they have devoted close to 150 years of service to the Rusk Institute, which has included outstanding contributions to both clinical care and research. On behalf of the staff of the Rusk Institute, I thank each one of them for their many decades of selfless devotion to those they have served. We are grateful for what they have given in the past, but also for their future contributions as they have agreed to remain on our staff in a reduced capacity. In closing, I am extremely confident that with the sustained enthusiasm and devotion of our staff, we will continue to grow in these challenging times. ●

## MEDICINE AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUP *Continued from page 1*

lives. Living with these new realities may be difficult, but the support group members are there to assist.

The Rusk Amputee Support Group believes that educating its members will help to relieve some of their anxiety about

the future. To this end, at each session, Dr. Cohen and Dr. Heckman are present to answer questions. In addition, the multidisciplinary team approach inherent in Rehabilitation Medicine is utilized at the meetings by inviting speakers from the various allied disciplines that amputees come in contact with. These speakers include prosthetists, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, recreational therapists and vocational counselors.

The Rusk Amputee Support Group meets on the second to last Thursday of each month from 6:00 to 7:30 P.M. Meetings are held on the first floor of the Rusk Institute at 400 E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. in room RR 111-112. ●

For more information, visit the group's website at [amputee-support.med.nyu.edu](http://amputee-support.med.nyu.edu) or contact Dr. Jeff Cohen at 212-263-6338.

### the whole story

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