

LAMORINDA Seniors

Hot Topic Addresses Women's Issues at Women's Health Center in Lafayette

By Linda U. Foley



L-Katie Rose, R.N. administrative director of Women and Infants Services at Alta Bates

Photo Linda Foley

"Have you ever wondered why your sex drive may change with menopause and aging? Have you wondered if there is anything that can be done about those changes? How can you improve your sex life?" These topics of the physiology and psychology of sex were addressed by Risa Kagan, M.D., guest speaker at the event held recently at the Alta Bates Summit Women's Health Center in Lafayette's Mercantile Center. Dr. Kagan—dead ringer for Sigourney Weaver with a sense of humor—is an OB/GYN on staff at Alta Bates with a specialty in menopause medicine and all things associated with that transition in a woman's life.

The second-story suite of offices was filled to capacity with energetic women many of whom appeared of indeterminate age what with today's 60-year olds passing for 40 plus. Nonetheless, it was a safe assumption that the topic of *Sex after 50: Keep the Fires Burning* was a hot topic. The atmosphere was rife with laughter and introductions with doctors mingling freely. Nibbles and libations added to a girls-night-out atmosphere with a distinct focus.

Katie Rose, R.N., administrative director of Women and Infants Services at Alta Bates, and one of the driving forces behind the Center, gave a brief overview of the well-appointed facility, open since November. She was joined by the other driving force in the fulfillment of the Center, Katarina Lanner-

by Dr. Kagan is by Daniel Bergner in NY Times Magazine 1/25/09 *What Do Women Want?* nytimes.com—search *What is Female Desire?*

Numerous factors affect sexuality including physiology, psychology, interpersonal relationships and socio-cultural influences. Healthy sexual functioning is affected by numerous determinants: family/work/relationship, stress, anxiety/ depression, health of partner and self, developmental experiences e.g. abuse, historical attitude regarding sex, age-related (declining) hormonal changes, use of various medications (anti-depressants) and body image or "hanging skin"—not my favorite description.

The good news is that there are corrective approaches such as testosterone therapy, herbal alternatives, oral or topical preparations and mechanical toys; the bad news is that 1/3 of a woman's life today is spent in post-menopause. However, spirits lifted when we learned that sexual activity in senior living communities is rampant.

Life is good after all!

Alta Bates Summit Women's Health Center, Lafayette Mercantile, 3595 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Ste. 350, 962-9129

Currently, the Center focuses on two issues: mammography screenings and treatments for pelvic health services.

The state-of-the-art digital imaging used for mammography emits half the radiation of traditional analog mammography. Mammograms are reviewed and patients contacted with results same day. In addition to the expedient process, the "dreaded procedure" takes place in a tranquil and welcoming atmosphere complete with personal attention and spa-like robes. If only there were a spa, it might be nearly perfect.

Various physical therapy approaches can reduce pelvic pain and help restore normal functions. According to physical therapist Esther Dolowich, "About 33 percent of all women suffer pelvic pain and/or urinary incontinence for a variety of reasons throughout life." In the future, the Center hopes to add other services such as cardiac assessments and dermatology to create a "one-stop-shop".

Says Dr. Lanner-Cusin, "Women will let us know what they need."

Cusin, M.D., Alta Bates Summit's medical director of Women's Services. "The Center is not just for Alta Bates Summit patients who live east of the tunnel."

The solely women-focused facility aims to address the changing stages of a woman's life which are beautifully interpreted in the artwork by Napa artist Jessel Miller and depicted on the sage-calm walls. I learned that in addition to the basic four stages to a woman's life: baby, child, teen, adult (family/career) there are two added stages—retiree (new directions) and—to my relief—one called "living well."

Living life well at any stage, particularly in later years, includes a healthy and fulfilling sex life. Dr. Kagan's warm and informative presentation identified and verified much of the internal female topography.

Women—not surprisingly—are designed differently than men in terms of the sexual response cycle requiring psychological and physical intimacy and emotions, while men are able to "perform" with "less strings attached." Per Dr. Kagan, "Viagra handles the mechanics but, not the mindset" which elicited commiserative chuckles and comments about wishing that men were in the audience. While women's emotional status remains physically hidden it is obvious where the man stands.

What to do? is the question most women have even after many years of a committed relationship. An excellent article recommended

DAVID PIERCE

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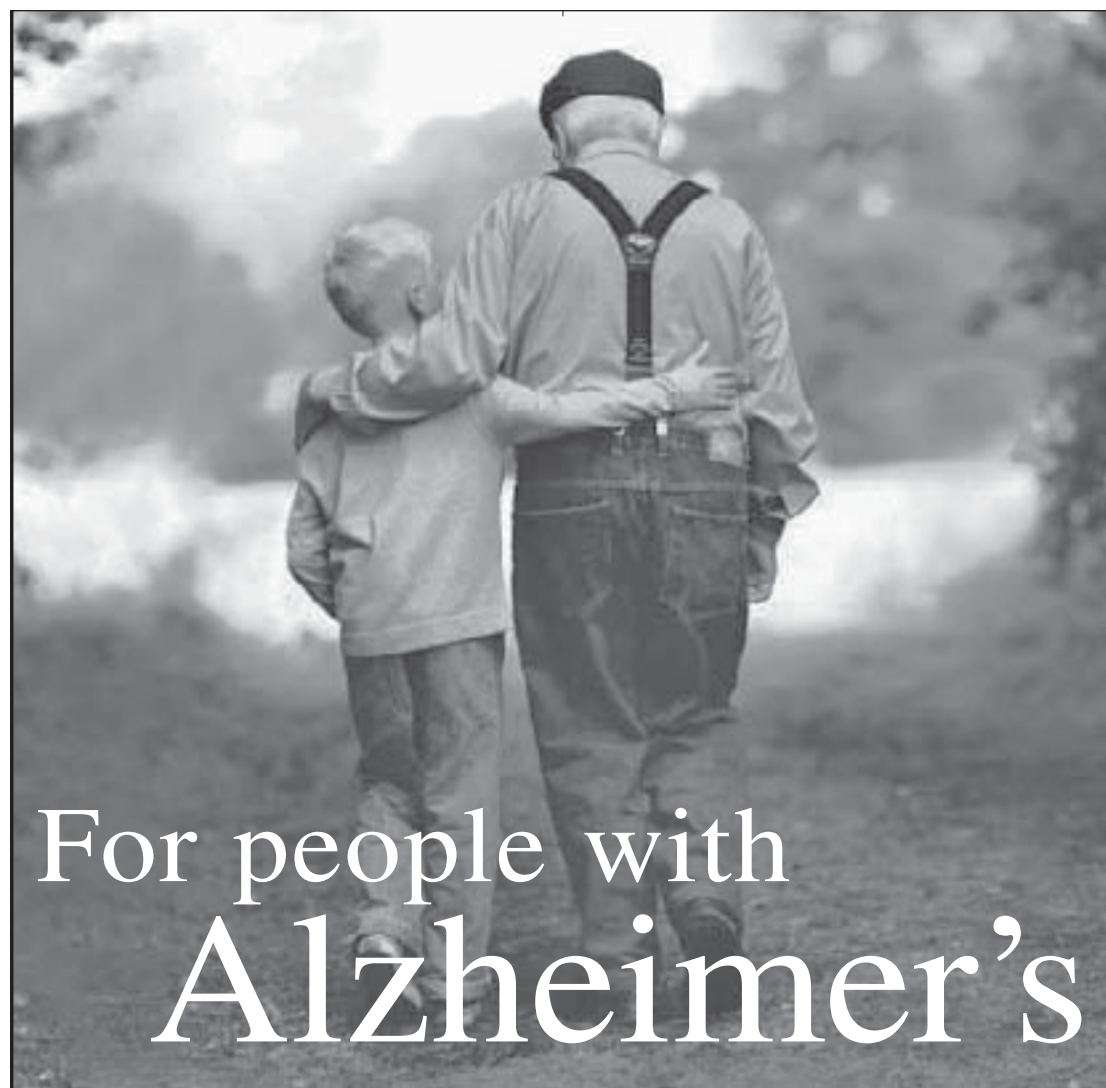
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For people with Alzheimer's there's no time to lose.

Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder—a disorder in which brain cells are lost. It is characterized by progressive loss of memory and cognitive function, such as movement control and decision-making ability. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia in the elderly and affects about 18 million people worldwide—5 million in the U.S. alone. Although there's currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, research is under way to find a new investigational treatment aimed at slowing the progression of the disease. The current medications are mostly aimed at maximizing the remaining brain activity. That's why the ICARA study was created—to explore a new investigational treatment option.

Throughout the 83-week study, participants may receive the investigational drug, study-related physical exams and laboratory services at no charge. All participants will be monitored by a medical team, including a nurse or study coordinator and a physician.

Ask your doctor if the ICARA study is right for you.

For more information,

Dr. Kathleen Toups
Bay Area Research Institute
3736 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite #204
Lafayette, CA 94549
925.283.9006

If you are 50 to 88 years of age and have a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease, you may be eligible to participate in the ICARA study.



Not to be missed

Come to the Peripheral Neuropathy Group meeting, in the Las Trampas Room, Hillside Clubhouse, Ross-moor, on April 24th, 2009, from 10:00 to 11:30 A.M., to hear Susan Trabulse, a local Acupressurist. Susan will share how she uses Acupressure, an ancient form of healing based on Chinese Medicine, to help relieve the pain and discomfort of Peripheral Neuropathy. PN usually is felt in the lower legs and feet and/or the hands. Symptoms include tingling, numbness, feeling of constant hot or cold, sharp transitory pain, weakness, difficulty with walking and balance. Our meetings are open and free to all who are interested in learning something new about this condition. For more information call Nancy Ostrander 930-9524 or Carolyn Cash 254-8195.

Widowed Persons Support Event—Monday, April 27, Social 7 P.M., lecture 7:30 P.M. A presentation by Dr. Alan Brast, Ph.D., C.C.H.T., CSA. Dr. Brast is a medical/clinical Hypoanalyst. His lecture is called *Banishing the Blues - Depression*. Bring your friends—they will enjoy the social and the lecture!! There is no charge. The lecture will be held at the Lafayette/Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. For information call 925/932-3448

The Widowed Persons Support group meetings: Saturdays, April 18, 25, May 2, 9, 16, and 23. 10 am to Noon at St. Stephen's Church, 66 St. Stephen's Drive in Orinda. The meetings are free informal discussions of the emotional and practical needs and concerns of the bereaving widowed person. For information, please call 925/032-3448.

Lafayette Senior Needs Assessment Project Workshop April 28 at Temple Isaiah, two sessions, from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 - 7:30, looking for input

from seniors, their families, and organizations that serve elders to help design a survey assessing senior needs.

First Annual Co-ed Exhibition Softball Game and Picnic for seniors - Friday May 1. Gates open at 9:00 a.m. and close at 2:00 at the Lafayette Community Park, 480 Saint Mary's Road. Senior ball players and fans \$3, kids 12 and under accompanied by an adult \$1. Picnic food and beverages provided. If you have softball equipment, please bring it. For more information or to sign up, call the Senior Center at (925) 284-5050.

Lafayette Senior Services Events—500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette
A min. \$1 donation at the door would be appreciated.

Call (925)284-5050 to reserve a spot
Monday, April 20, 1:30 - 2:30pm
Bi-Monthly Caregiver Support Group with Companion Care
Tuesday April 28th 10:30 - Noon
The Internet: Point and Click Your Way to the World (Wide Web), Let wizard Ed Zeidan of Nerd4Rent in Lafayette show you how.
Wednesday April 25, 12:30 - 3:00pm
Dance lesson and live DJ services, playing your favorites and taking requests. \$2
Thursday April 23, 1:00 - 2:30pm
Embracing Aging with Story and Movement
Friday April 24, 11:30am - 12:30pm
Abatable Arthritis Come and learn exercises to control pain, improve function, and protect your joints.
12:30 pm Free Blood Pressure Screening - John Muir Senior Services
12:30, 12:50, and 1:10pm- Free Memory Screening - Caring Solutions. (By appointment-call 284-5050)
Friday, April 24, 1:00 - 2:30pm
Self-Discovery and Aging - Creative Writing Workshop

Come on in, the Water's Fine!



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