

# *From the Heart...*

## *...Life Skills for Today's Family*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, CLC*



### **Wellness . . . just around the “Y” corner**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 6, 2012)

In the past several weeks, I have been getting a workout at my local Wells Physical Therapy for a leg and hip that were misbehaving. Now, what do I do to keep all of me in shape? My husband visited our local YMCA fitness center a few months ago. So, I decided I would check it out myself. My friend Carolyn told me it's a great place. So, off I went after my last physical therapy appointment.

Walking into the “Y” I cruised through all kinds of brochures and flyers about the many programs they offer. I was then given a very gracious tour by their business manager, Selma. Being part of the “younger” senior crowd, I was particularly interested in what was available for us more grey-haired ones.

I was shown all the basic equipment for aerobics, stretching, and flexibility training. Classes are also offered for low impact and joint friendly sessions involving cardio, flexibility, strength training, and coordination exercises. Light weights, elastic tubing, and stability balls are also incorporated with an opportunity for modification based on ability. These classes are FREE for members. I also learned they are very passionate about their members' and staff's overall wellness and life satisfaction.

Sounds like a good deal to me. I also found out that your insurance company may actually pay for part or all of the membership fees. Unfortunately, for me Blue Cross doesn't at this time. Hopefully, they will with some encouragement and win-win negotiation with the Y.

For those who have only heard of the YMCA but never checked out its mission or history, here's a short version. Their mission is to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Their strategic plan is to focus on Youth & Families, Strengthen and engage for life, Health & Well-being, Balanced Spirit, Mind & Body, Member Engagement, Create a member-centric culture, Expanding the Y's Reach, Establish a Y presence in all communities, and even Staff Development.

Here's a short version of their fascinating history for the Hill Country. The YMCA of Greater San Antonio was founded in 1876, 32 years after the first YMCA was founded in London England. During this time, cowboys, railroad employees, young men and boys moved from the suburbs into the city to find employment. Without owning their own building, volunteers began providing food, lodging, reading rooms and activities in borrowed facilities around town. In 1907, volunteers were able to raise enough money to build their first facility on North Alamo and Third Street. The services provided were an outlet for the young men and allowed for them to participate in Bible studies, physical activity and educational classes.

In World War I, the YMCA brought field services, food, first aid supplies and blankets to soldiers and their families throughout South Texas. By 1918, the

YMCA was offering San Antonio's first swim lessons, organized High School Clubs (Hi-Y), and reached out to African American and Mexican American youth in the community. These programs led to the building of the first full facility YMCAs, Davis Scott in 1944 and Westside YMCA in 1949.

In 1927, Camp Flaming Arrow was purchased, again with funds raised by volunteers. This camp in the Hill Country provided young boys "healthful recreation without temptation, the gratification of the natural desire for a free and easy life outdoors, together with the cultivation of a manly Christian character" (Sumner Dudley, 1885). By the 1960s, the Northwest and Northeast branches were built to offer expanded programs in swimming, team sports, day camps, drug abuse prevention and teen leadership.

In 1971, the Downtown YMCA opened its first location at 903 N. St. Mary's. Through the 1970s and 80s, YMCA programs were developed to help at-risk youth stay out of trouble and learn new skills; women started participating in health and wellness programs at the Downtown branch; the Southwestern Bell branch was opened where early child development, after-school child care and bilingual pre-kindergarten were introduced, leading to the development of campus based student enrichment programs and youth sports. Texas' first teen parent child care was developed at the YMCA.

From 2003 to 2006, an impressive vision and plan were set in motion to reach out to surrounding communities. **The Boerne Family YMCA opened in January 2006 and was the first facility to be built in San Antonio in over 30 years.** From then to today, other YMCAs followed in New Braunfels, Schertz,

and other locations, with renovations of existing facilities and relocation of several others. They even assumed responsibility of two full-day Preschools (Labor Street and Stablewood) from Positive Beginnings, Inc. Then came full-day child care and afterschool programs at Haven for Hope in the San Antonio/Bexar County area.

In 2011 their Walzem location opened; they transformed their Southcross location into a Y Living Center which addresses the biggest threats to our health: obesity, diabetes and cancer, through medically-based wellness programs; and established their tenth full facility in Thousand Oaks, just to name a few.

With changing their logo and expanding their vision, the YMCA can now better reflect the vibrancy of their mission, programs, and the diversity of the communities it serves. Their core mission is to be known as a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to strengthening the foundations of our communities. They credit Boerne and other communities with their incredible success as they continue to evolve and grow in the years ahead.

So, after reading that, who wouldn't want to give them a try. Check them out for yourself at <http://www.ymcasatx.org/boerne/> [1361 S. Main St., Boerne TX 78006; (830) 815-1040]. ***Wellness for you is just around the "Y" corner.*** Now, I just need to get myself in gear and get over there. Anyone ready to join me?

*Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com). Visit her website at [www.celebratingyourjourney.com](http://www.celebratingyourjourney.com).*

# *From the Heart. . .*

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### **Wellness . . . your annual physical**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 13, 2012)

There is a number floating around that says about 70 million US adults have their annual physical. This is only about only 22 percent of our population in 2012. According to Michael Saenger, MD, WebMD (June 5, 2012) "For some people, having an annual physical examination is a source of reassurance that they're as healthy as they feel. Others see it as an alarm system, to catch health problems before they become serious. The value of the routine annual exam has been debated recently, but it remains a cherished tradition among many doctors and patients."

Yet, how often you should get a physical depends on your age, your health condition, your insurance coverage, and ability to pay for it. And don't forget your own level of need for reassurance. There is often a major difference in perspective between your doctor and your insurance company on how often and what are the allowable time intervals between physicals and other tests. I recently had my physical and learned from my Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas coverage that a mammogram and DEXA (bone-density) is only allowed every two years. This is the case even with certain health conditions that require monitoring, such as benign cysts and osteoporosis history. And your

doctor may even say you don't need certain exams each year, which is great on the budget. Yet, do you still have reassurance that everything is still ok?

That depends on your own comfort zone with time period between exams and tests results. As you age, both doctors and insurance companies allow for more frequent exams and tests if warranted. When insurance companies deny coverage doctors recommend, you will undoubtedly find yourself asking your doctor to write medical necessary letters on appeal. If your doctor is savvy enough, he will use certain diagnostic codes in order to get it covered without the need for any appeals. It's all a learning process for both physician and patient.

During the first year of life, physicals or check-ups are required often, even for healthy babies. After age of one, most doctors recommend an annual physical until the child is 18. As children continue to grow and change, health assessments, immunizations, and booster shots are all part of the annual physical assessment. For young women, it is recommended to have an annual gynecological exam, particularly as soon as they are sexually active. Some physicians combine the general physical exam with the gynecological to avoid two trips to the doctor. For both men and women, there are various recommendations given.

What should you expect, generally? Doctors will want your family and medical history and will usually have a long form for you to complete. Many doctors' offices are going digital and online. So, patients will need to be more computer savvy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Your doctor or nurse will weigh you in, check your vital signs; then comes the blood pressure, heart rate, respiration rate, and

temperature. They will also check your general appearance and ask for a large amount of information about you and your health just by watching and talking to you. They observe your memory and mental quickness, how healthy is your skin, and how you stand and walk. Next will be your heart and lung exam; then head, neck, and abdominal area. Other exams may be neurological, dermatological, and sensory.

And don't forget the basic chemical screen blood and urine work to be done. Hopefully, the lab tech you use is a veteran at the needle to get your blood. My own veins are very small; and as I have aged, they tend to roll and flex. So, I'm not an easy patient to draw blood from. I fortunately had a great lab tech who reassured me that he was an expert at my kind of veins; and so he was.

Consider your own health status. Is it time for an overall physical? If you haven't had one in the past two years, I encourage you to drop in for one. And what kind of wellness team do you depend on? The next article will cover what a 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team looks like.

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### **Wellness . . . Team Up**

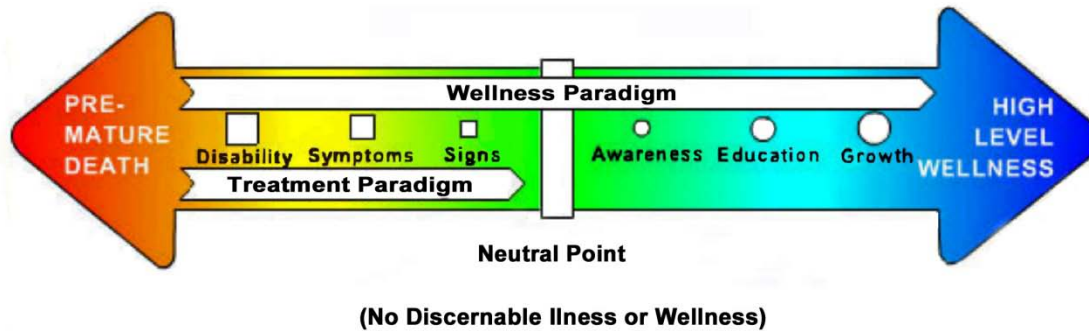
(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 20, 2012)

What kind of wellness team do you depend on? When you think about your health and wellbeing, who do you go to for help. Naturally, the first one most of us consider is our family doctor. He or she is the one that not only is handy when you have a cold you just can't seem to kick but is also there when something scary shows up.

Your family doctor will treat you the best he or she can and may recommend a specialist to look a little closer. We all know the traditional layout of our healthcare system tied to insurance coverage . . . along with the layers of forms, copays, coinsurance, deductibles. You name it! We also know there is more to taking care of our health.

First, what is wellness? Here's a simple, practical illustration for genuine wellness.

## THE ILLNESS-WELLNESS CONTINUUM



Copyright 1972, 1977, 1981, 1988, 2004 John W. Travis

As you can see, traditional medicine typically provide care left of center, called the Treatment Paradigm. Basically, it goes from signs, symptoms, disability, to premature death. Once the diagnosed symptoms are seemingly gone, you are considered to be at the neutral point with no discernible illness or wellness. You are usually sent home. Rarely, are there any follow-ups to be done or even a phone call from the doctor to see how you are doing. Yet, wellness outcomes take a giant leap when you, as the patient, center stage, decide to travel right of center.

Where does your journey take you? As you can see from the Illness-Wellness Continuum, you begin to have a heightened awareness of your physical, emotional, mental, and even spiritual arenas of wellness. Then comes education. You begin to do research on your own. You bring your results and questions to your doctor. Hopefully, he or she is teachable and a genuine listener. If so, your doctor is rare and, at heart, wants to be a team player with

you. This kind of relationship shows both of you are experiencing growth together.

The destination for you both is a high level of wellness. Believe me, with the many years I have had as a life and wellness coach, plus my own 20 year journey regaining my health and reaching high level wellness, it's a great place to arrive.

Are you ready to take the journey yourself? If you are, then you are more than ready to start choosing your own 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team. You will actually be seeking them out, interviewing them, and deciding whether they should share the journey with you. Who do you think is your first pick on your team?

It's a logical choice at the beginning of your journey. It's your own family doctor. Yes, the Wellness Paradigm includes by conventional, complementary/alternative, and integrative health providers. Then by all means include your dentist and physical therapist. But always remember to honestly evaluate their value or lack of their support for your own life and wellness goals. If they are not contributing to your satisfaction, then it is time to find someone else.

Now, who do you feel is next to add to your team? I have already given you a hint by mentioned that the Wellness Paradigm includes all three worlds of health and wellness. My first choice, personally, would be to connect with an integrative health provider, preferably an MD or DO, who utilizes the best of both conventional and complementary/alternative medicine. And that one would

actually be my family doctor. Who would be your first then second choice? The next article will go further in offering what a 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team looks like.

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# *From the Heart. . .*

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## **Wellness . . . Team Up, part 2**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, July 27, 2012)

Have you ever thought of your dentist as a member of your wellness team? I know, none of us would probably include our dentist, let alone choose this provider as our first choice on the team.

As mentioned in the previous article, my first choice, personally, would be to connect with an integrative healthcare provider, preferably an MD or DO, who utilizes the best of both conventional and complementary/alternative medicine. This provider would also be savvy with women's health, hormone balance, and weight management. And this one would actually be my family doctor.

Who would be your first then second choice? Often our choices depend on our health condition and our relationships within the medical/healthcare arena. Referrals from family, friends, and co-workers also play a part in who we choose. And don't forget the complicated world of insurance coverage. To give you a glimpse into a 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team, consider the following providers. Then check off which ones you already have and are satisfied with their care. Remember, a 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team includes providers from three worlds of wellness, including allied areas in conventional, complementary/alternative, and integrative healthcare.

<b>Integrative Medicine Physicians</b> (primarily MDs with specialties or in collaboration with Prevention and Wellness Assessment, Chronic Disease Issues, Women's Health, Sports, Occupational, Longevity; insure affiliation with preferred hospitals)
Primary Family Physician
Intern Physician
Physician Assistant
Women's Health
Men's Health Focus
Newborn/Children's Health Focus
<b>Clinical Conventional Helping Professionals</b>
Clinical biomedical nutritionist
Physical & Neuromuscular Therapist
Fitness Program specialist
Mental health counselor
Other
Other
<b>Clinical CAM Helping Professionals</b>
Naturopath
Homeopath
Chiropractic
Acupuncture
Herbalist
Massage therapist
Other
Other
<b>Non-clinical helping professionals</b>
Certified Life Coach(es)
Certified Wellness Coach(es)
<b>Standard and Function/Metabolic Diagnostic Labs</b>
Conventional labs
Function/Metabolic labs
Hormone panel specialist
Nutritional/Absorption specialist

Healthy aging specialist
<b>Extended wellness services</b>
exercise centers and spas
health food store
healthy food cafes
education and learning centers
<b>Legal/mediation-litigation professional</b> (regarding issues that may surface in any medical practice)
Insurance Advocate
Mediation Specialist
Litigation Attorney

Be sure to add any provider not listed that works for you. As we age, we tend to automatically add certain providers based on the challenges confronting us. Populations between the young Millennials, Gen X to Boomers vary considerably in engagement and opinions about their own healthcare prospects and our nation's controversy with healthcare reform. It seems the younger you are, the more you say "yes" to universal healthcare, even individually mandated. The older we are, caution and outright opposition surfaces.

No matter your age or health condition, the value of gathering your own personal wellness team is center stage. Your lifestyle behavior and your budget will be integrally involved in not only choosing your team but also supporting your own life and wellness goals throughout the years. As you take responsibility and personal accountability for your health and wellbeing from early age on, the more likely you will live a healthier, happier life. So, today is the day to choose your 21<sup>st</sup> century wellness team.

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