

Health & Wellness

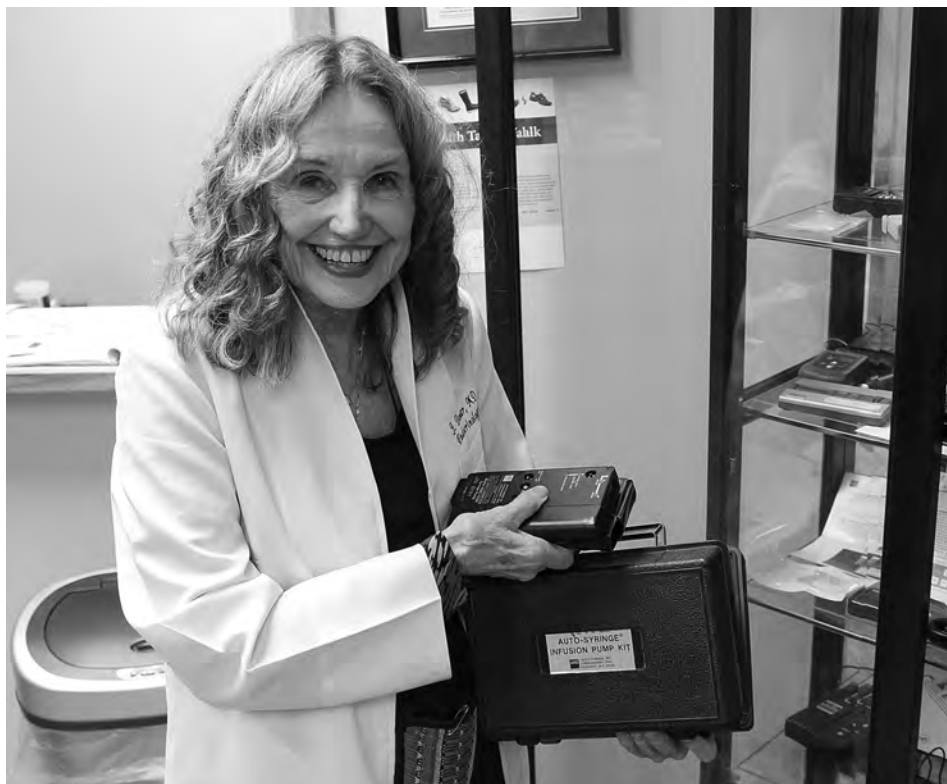
Inside:

- Keto Lifestyle
- Cupping
- Non-surgical weight loss
- Diabetic antiques collection
- Invisible orthodontics



ANCHORAGE
PRESS

THURSDAY AUGUST 24, 2017



Anchorage endocrinologist Dr. Jeanne Bonar shows off one of the relics of diabetes treatment in her waiting room museum of a cabinet. Bonar has been collecting diabetes treatment implements since the early 1980s. (Photo by Matt Hickman)

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MATT HICKMAN

Inside a glass cabinet in the office of Anchorage endocrinologist Dr. Jeanne Bonar is a rather unique collection of antiques.

Dating back to the 1978 Accu-Chek and the first home glucose testing system that cost about \$400 at the time and took 3 to 4 minutes for a patient to get a blood sugar reading, to the first MiniMed insulin pumps that scratched the surface in allowing patients to be in more control of their own insulin management, the collection is a testament to Bonar's decades of treating diabetes.

Pretty much all of the pieces in the collection she saved over her 37 years-and-counting of practice in Anchorage.

"It's just to show the progression and show how much better we can become. I always

ton of medicine.... They approached me and asked if I could screen 500 people in a week. I thought, sure, two or three seconds and you've got a blood sugar reading."

But life has been anything but all work and no play for Bonar, who is also a prolific downhill skier, dancer and musician, specializing in the organ, piano and French horn.

"I started at 5 on the piano, then when I was

"I want to see more people using the technology to improve control of their diabetes."

in junior high I started on the French horn," Bonar said. "My father wouldn't buy me a flute, and a lot of girls play the flute but not the French horn."

Bonar played the horn in the Shreveport (La.) Symphony Orchestra, plays piano and organ regularly in churches, and plays in the Anchorage and Mat-Su Community Concert Bands.

She says that other than spectator sports, there's really nothing that doesn't pique her interest. It's a curiosity she credits her family for instilling in her.

"My father worked for Bell Telephone and was also a union chairman. My mother was a professional photographer back when women didn't work — that was during the war, too," Bonar said. "(Soldiers) didn't get to see their wives, didn't get to see funerals, so she took pictures of funerals and sent them to them. My father had a number of hobbies. He was a gunsmith and I helped him with gunsmithing. He had 199 guns in his collection when he died — some of them are museums now."

In addition, Bonar's brother was a PhD from Yale, who did his thesis on magnetic resonance, the technology that enable the MRI machine.

"We were just always interested in a lot of different things," Bonar said.

That wasn't always so easy for women in her day.

She grew up in Arkansas and attended Centenary College in Louisiana. She whipped through that coursework in three short years and sought to enter medical school. She'll never forget her ensuing exchange with the admissions official.

"My grades out of college were as good and

better than anybody's and my MCAT scores were better than some of my classmates who went to Tulane," Bonar said. "I went down there to discuss things with the admissions committee and, well, he called me 'Ms. Boner', and he said, 'well, everybody doesn't have the grades.' I showed him my grades. He said, 'not everybody has the test scores...' I showed him my test scores. 'Not everybody has the recommendations...' I showed him

over insulin injections has been Bonar's passion project in her work in Alaska.

"The reason the pump works better is it gives you a better basal rate and you can control the basal rate, whereas with injections, it varies from person to person," Bonar said. "It plugs into the computer... and it will beam over, tell the pump what the blood sugar is."

Bonar said her push to advance use of pumps has been met with some resistance, especially in hospital settings, where, she says, doctors and nurses insist upon stick treatments, is her *raison d'être* in the remaining years of her professional life.

"I've been wanting to see this insulin pump come out on the market — a closed loop pump that will do it for you. We've had technology for it for maybe a decade," she said. "I want to see it on the market; I want to see the bugs come out and I want to see more people using the technology to improve control of their diabetes."

those. Finally, he was just stumped and said, 'well, you're just not homely enough to be a doctor.'"

Working her way through medical school, Bonar did a number of odd jobs, as students do. Her employ included working as a private duty nurse, being a guinea pig for testing shots for histoplasmosis and IQ testing, and selling men's underwear at J.C. Penney's.

"In those days it was the women who bought men's underwear," she said.

Bonar's scientific background was in chemistry and it was that interest that turned her on to insulin and diabetes.

"I thought (insulin) was a practical use of chemistry," she said. "I liked my lab research into hypertension and endocrinology related to hypertension."

Promoting the value of the insulin pump



Dr. Jeanne Bonar with fellow doctors during her annual trips to Honduras where she screens hundreds of locals for diabetes and provides treatment in a matter of days. (Photo by Matt Hickman)



Dr. Jeanne Bonar was a spokesman for the MiniMed insulin pump in the early 1990s. (Photo by Matt Hickman)

said, 'we can put a man on the moon, why can't we have better progression with these instruments?'" Bonar said. "Patients would give them to me. Sometimes the company would say, 'send the old one back in, we'll upgrade it,' but most of the time they didn't care."

At first, Bonar would leave the old instruments on the waiting room coffee table, but eventually it became time to introduce a proper case.

"People were interested in them," she said. "Some would walk out, so I suppose about 10 years ago I started putting them in the cabinet."

Bonar's efforts in the fight against diabetes have taken her around the world. She plied her medical trade in Russia, Uzbekistan and Georgia before and after the fall of the Soviet Union and each fall she travels to Honduras to test and treat for diabetes there, partnering with an Episcopal church out of Phoenix.

"Type 2 diabetes is very prevalent in the Hispanic population," Bonar said. "We take a

Heal thyself

Whether it's chiropractic or bodybuilding, Dr. Blake perfects the craft on herself first

BY MATT HICKMAN

Sometimes at women's rowing practice at the University of Clemson, Brittany Blake couldn't be found. She'd shut herself in locker room with the lights out, waiting for the latest migraine to pass.

One day, the team doctor, who was also a chiropractor, went looking for her and decided to give her a chiropractic adjustment.

"He started adjusting me regularly and I went from six migraines a month to one a month and now I don't have migraines anymore," Blake said from the practice in Palmer she opened in February of 2016. "I thought, this was pretty cool. I wanted to learn more, so I shadowed him. It's not just moving bones... there's a lot more to it."

Growing up in Palmer, Blake always wanted to pursue a career in health, but the migraine-conquering miracle turned her academic attention fully to the chiropractic, and after getting her degree from Clemson in biological sciences and from the College of Charleston in kinesiology, she entered graduate school, ironically enough at the Palmer College of Chiropractic in Port Orange, Florida.



Palmer native Brittany Blake at her Optimum Performance Chiropractic office in Palmer, which offers chiropractic and massage therapies. (Photo by Matt Hickman)

A standout basketball player at Palmer High, Blake was always athletic, and with organized team sports in her rear-view, she began competitive distance running, even marathons. Despite those miles logged and calories burned, she continued gaining weight.

She was diagnosed with hypoglycemia and her doctor recommended weight lifting as a means of increasing her metabolism. Her trainer told her she had 'great genetics for bodybuilding' and recommended she give it a try.

"Ew, no, I don't want to be vascular and striated," was her first reaction. "But it's so much more than that. I watched some before I got into competing and then I started a heavy weightlifting program. I thought, I don't want to get bulky — which can't happen to a woman, not enough testosterone — but I started a powerlifting program and started losing a lot of body fat."

Her maiden spray tan voyage on stage netted a fourth-place finish, and she was hooked on the sport. More than that, many of her symptoms associated with hypoglycemia had gone away, though she's still on medication for the condition.

"The more muscle mass you have, the more calories you burn, and it just kind of became my stress reliever — not only for myself and my struggle with hypothermia — stress from school. I could just let go of everything," Blake said. "With exercise, you get endorphins, so I was in a much better mood. I don't notice cold hands and feet like I used to. I sleep a lot better and I notice if I don't do it I start to feel like I used to, so I don't take much time off."

After getting her Doctor of Chiropractic, Blake moved back

to Alaska with her husband — a Wasilla High grad — and after working for an office in Eagle River for two years, opened Optimum Performance Chiropractic on Colony Way in Palmer, where she's the lone chiropractor on staff, joined by two massage therapists.

In June, she captured first place in the Ms. Bikini and top overall at the IFBB Arctic Pro/NPC Muscle Fest at the Wendy Williamson Auditorium in Anchorage, qualifying her for the NPC USA Bodybuilding Championships in Las Vegas earlier this month.

As one of 20 team members on the Ms. Bikini team from the Temecula, California-based Body By O, Blake didn't place, but the experience, she said, was invaluable.

"We're going to be lifelong friends," Blake said of her teammates. "I had a great time with them and we're planning for our next competition in November in Miami."

A top two finish there would earn Blake her pro card, which is her No. 1 bodybuilding goal at the moment.

Back in her Palmer office, Blake extols the virtues of lifting weights with most of her clients, much more practical advice in Alaska where the average age of her clientele is 40 and active, compared to her patients in Florida, who were typically 70-and-older.

"I do see quite a few weightlifting and crossfit injuries, but I don't really like telling people not to continue exercising — you can always modify your workouts," Blake said. "I don't think I've ever told anybody to be sedentary or wait out an injury. If you're sedentary, more injuries can follow."



Palmer chiropractor Dr. Brittany Blake at the NPC USA National bodybuilding championships in Las Vegas last month. (Submitted photo)

She said there are exceptions, however.

"I don't tell them to restrict too much unless they have a degenerative disc disease or some underlying condition where heavy lifting can aggravate the lower back, especially," she said. "Most of my patients actually end up getting into lifting because I do an exam on them and they say, 'oh, I'm in pain, I can't exercise', but it's actually one of the best things for you. It's not necessarily heavy; just some kind of weight regimen supporting the core and connective tissue."

Blake said it was always her intention to return to Alaska to open up shop.

"It definitely helps being from here," she said. "A lot of my same teachers, old classmates are here. We had a big grand opening — over 500 people came in. I'd say 90 percent of them were really close friends. It's been great. I wish I'd done it sooner."




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The Paleo Diet

Benefits, Risks and My Experience

BY M. COTE WARNER

Question: What's the Paleo diet all about? Oversimplified answer: Eating like a cave-man.

I've been on and off (mostly on) the Paleo Diet for about five years. In my early days of embarking on this quest toward health, I read an article purporting that if you really want to eat like a caveman, you would have to eat people. During the Paleolithic age, also called the Stone Age, people commonly practiced cannibalism. Saying Jeffrey Dahmer was motivated by a health food craze would be equally as ridiculous. 10,000 years ago, just before the Paleolithic age ended, Alaskans were nomadic, traveling to wherever food was the least scarce. They were hunter-gatherer people, living primarily off fish, moose, caribou and berries, and times of famine were frequent. To truly embrace a Paleolithic lifestyle, one would need to cast off all modern entrapments and start following the herds of caribou. This is not what modern-day Paleo is about.

So what is Paleo? The Paleolithic age, the age of hunter-gatherers who used tools, began around 2.5 million years ago and ended 10-15,000 years ago. Use of horticulture generally marks the end of the Paleo-

"...there is preliminary evidence to suggest eating more like a hunter-gatherer can have significant health benefits..."

lithic age. The foundation of the Paleolithic Diet, first outlined by gastroenterologist Dr. Walter Voegtlin in his 1975 book *The Stone Age Diet*, is based on foods that would have been available during the Paleolithic age, and eliminates foods that only became readily available after the domestication of plants and animals. Foods to eat: meat, fruit, vegetables, nuts, eggs, seeds. Foods to avoid: grains, legumes, dairy, sugar, refined oils, artificial ingredients, added salt, alcohol, caffeine. There's a consensus amongst doctors and nutritionists that cutting out added sugar,

refined oils, alcohol and artificial ingredients would be better for all of us. But what about grains, beans and milk? Those foods are the staples of the American diet, and grains even have that prominent place as the base of the food pyramid.

Science is mixed. Doctors and nutritionists can't agree (surprise, surprise). Nutrition is notoriously difficult to study for a number of reasons. The large-scale, double-blind, long-term studies have yet to be conducted, which leaves surveys, animal studies, small-scale studies and anecdotal evidence. Whereas there is preliminary evidence to suggest eating more like a hunter-gatherer can have significant health benefits, such as improved heart health, weight loss, improved blood sugar levels and insulin sensitivity, and lower blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, some studies have also found that people on the Paleolithic Diet have a hard time meeting all their nutritional needs.

I am currently on a variation of the Paleo Diet called the Autoimmune Protocol for health reasons. In addition to avoiding grains, legumes, dairy, sugar, alcohol, caffeine and processed foods, I also avoid nightshades (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant), eggs, nuts and seeds. A recommendation of this proto-

col also calls for "eating the rainbow," which requires meals heavy in fruits and vegetables, and eating organ meat a couple times a week. I can't get on board with eating heart and liver twice a week (I would rather just take a multivitamin) but my meals do consist of mostly fruits and vegetables. I can now vary from the diet without an immediate flare up, but eventually my stomach will punish me for it. I have chronic inflammation in my stomach and my small intestine, and certain foods hurt me. However, I cannot adhere to the Paleo guideline that says "no added salt." I add a lot of salt to my food, and my blood-salt levels tend to be on the low side.

In conclusion, staying on the Paleo Diet long-term is not for everyone. Everyone needs the proper balance of macro and micronutrients, and getting enough fiber, calcium and vitamin D on the Paleo Diet can be challenging. But getting all the nutrients an individual needs to function optimally is challenging on any diet. For me personally, I never have to worry about my weight or overeating. I stay at a healthy weight and I feel satiated after meals. But I also feel isolated, and oftentimes have a difficult time finding things to eat. Diet is very personal and individual, and should be tailored for you by you and your doctor.

Hands on

Anchorage native Gagnon staying plenty busy with plastic surgery practice in the Valley

BY MATT HICKMAN

When most people hear the term plastic surgery their thoughts turn immediately toward vanity — facelifts, tummy tucks, breast enhancements and the like.

Wasilla plastic surgeon Dr. Elliott Gagnon has nothing against the cosmetic side of the craft and gladly performs those procedures, but they're not his specialty, nor his passion.

Growing up in Anchorage, Gagnon saw numerous injuries that required reconstruction, and many of them involving the hands. So when it came time for him to leave his home state to pursue his schooling, the Service High School graduate knew exactly what he wanted to do.

"I knew I wanted to pursue medicine and I knew I wanted to do hand trauma reconstruction — there's a lot of that up here, a lot of people using knives, saws, construction," Gagnon said. "I remember, as a kid, bringing

food to a family where the father had to go to Seattle to have some complex repair, and that was the starting point for my interest in plastic surgery. I wanted to be part of the process where people injured in Alaska could stay in Alaska and not have to go so far away."

Up until 2015, Gagnon worked as a plastic surgeon in Northern California, when Dr. Susan Dean, the lone plastic surgeon in the Mat-Su Valley asked the local hospital to send out a recruiting call for another plastic surgeon.

Gagnon and his wife, Janel, whom he met while in medical school in Portland, jumped at the opportunity. The two opened their office in the medical building at 950 Bogard Road in Wasilla, where Janel works as the office manager.

"The Valley has growing so much since I was a kid," Dr. Gagnon said. "It was too much for just one provider."

The need for reconstructive surgery in

the Valley, he's found, has been at least as prevalent as it is in Anchorage.

"People here are active," Gagnon said. "In the Valley there's a lot of hand and face trauma, a lot of burns — especially in the summer. We get cut tendons, there's animal attacks, car accidents where moose actually go through the windshield."

"I think most people out there don't really know what plastic surgery is," Gagnon said. "I don't use plastic — that comes from the Greek word 'plastikos,' which basically means 'to form or shape. It's a surgical specialty based on using parts of the body to rebuild or reshape."

Business has remained steady for Gagnons since their arrival in January of 2016, helped in large part by their neighboring offices at the old site of the Mat-Su Regional hospital.



"Right down the hall there's a certified hand therapist, which is critical for hand reconstruction. To have a good team-based model, the core to that is a good hand therapist," Gagnon said. "Right across the hall is the Mat-Su Wound Center, of which I'm the co-director, for complex wounds. We've also got urgent care next to us, which means a lot of dog bites to the face, children with injuries and we can fix them there."

On top of that is the convenient location.

"I think we're happy where we're at," Gagnon said. "It's kind of a dream come true. Since we've been here we can fix them up here and they can sleep in their own beds at night."

Learning by heart at the hospital

Cardiac connection brings UAA students to Providence

BY J. BESL

A new faculty-led internship option is linking University of Alaska Anchorage students with their future peers across the street at Providence Hospital.

Last year, Maryann Hoke, a tenure-track assistant professor in UAA's Health, Physical Education and Recreation department, accepted an additional position at the Alaska Heart & Vascular Institute. Her two workplaces are, conveniently, right across the street in Anchorage. On campus, she teaches exercise science classes. At the hospital, she now also works as an exercise physiologist.

The new role was a great fit for Hoke, and an added benefit for her students. From the start, Hoke wanted her new position to bridge the clinic and the classroom. This summer, the Heart Institute accepted its first summer intern, directly as a result of Hoke's connection.

"My philosophy with teaching [allows] students, especially in their junior and senior year, to be out in the community and gain experience or observation opportunities in the real world," she said.

To that end, Hoke negotiated with both Providence and UAA to bring her cardiac rehabilitation class into the Heart Institute. Her students had studied various cardiac and stress-related tests but, as Hoke noted, "the books talk about these tests in four pages." So she brought her class to the hospital to



Maryann Hoke, left, with her UAA student and Alaska Heart and Vascular Institute intern Mary-Kathleen Cross (Photo by Ted Kincaid / University of Alaska Anchorage).



observe procedures and meet professionals working with treadmill stress tests, MRI tests and even cardiac radionuclide imaging in person.

Her students' readiness surprised her colleagues. "When they hear physical education, they don't think there's a clinical approach to our program," said Hoke of the public perception. "They didn't realize our students were this well-equipped."

Mary-Kathleen Cross was one of 16 students in Hoke's cardiac rehab class this year, and was hooked on the idea of heart health after the class visit.

"I didn't know there were job opportunities within a hospital setting as an exercise physiologist," she said.

Cross—a four-year member of the UAA track team—earned a physical education degree this month, with an emphasis on exercise rehabilitation, plus minors in nutrition and athletic training. She took her first exercise science class with Hoke as a freshman and considers the professor her mentor. She credits the internship, though, in part to her dad. "Every year [he said] keep up with Ms. Hoke, she'll find you an internship somehow," Cross laughed.

"My philosophy with teaching [allows] students, especially in their junior and senior year, to be out in the community and gain experience or observation opportunities in the real world,"

After studying diagnostic tests in class, UAA physical education students crossed the street to tour Providence's equipment, including the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner (Photo by Ted Kincaid / University of Alaska Anchorage).

“To see them in a work setting—to see their professionalism, their punctuality, how they communicate and how much they’ve grown—is really rewarding for me.”



Physical education students observed radionuclide testing at Alaska Heart and Vascular Institute. The test traces radiated atoms through the bloodstream to diagnose heart performance issues (Photo by Ted Kincaid / University of Alaska Anchorage).

This summer, physical education seniors interned everywhere from Colorado to Costa Rica, but Cross simply crossed the street to Providence. The required internship was the final item on her graduation checklist (her family flew up from Cobble Hill, B.C. to see her walk at graduation in May).

Hoke arranged a tailored internship to match Cross’ interests: four weeks together at the Heart Institute, and another four weeks with Providence Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehab. “I think it’s a win for both places,” said Hoke.

It was a win for Cross as well, as her responsibilities built on her coursework at UAA.

“With her internship, she’s able to have more of a hands-on experience,” said Hoke. “She’s doing blood pressure, she’s running some of the exercises, she’s reading the EKGs with supervision.”

Cross was especially involved at the rehab center, where patients who are recovering from heart operations stop by for three-a-week visits. As an intern, she was able to take blood pressure, guide nutrition conversations, and monitor heart rate as her patients eased back into heart stress through supervised and incremental exercise.

Though Cross understood the basics from school, the internship added context. “It’s re-

ally neat to work with these nurses and other exercise physiologists and [hear them say] ‘You know all this stuff. Go get certified and work,’” Cross noted. “It’s definitely given me more confidence.”

Though her eight-week internship is complete, Cross hopes to extend her visa and spend the next year gaining clinical experience in Alaska. She originally considered physician assistant school, but as doctors at Providence shared insights and encouragement with her, she’s now entertaining medical school as well.

Hoke, meanwhile, will bring the next crew of students to observe at the Heart Institute.

Hopefully one will step into Cross’s shoes and intern next summer.

“I absolutely love being in this role,” Hoke said of sharing her work with students, most of whom she first met as freshmen. “To see them in a work setting—to see their professionalism, their punctuality, how they communicate and how much they’ve grown—is really rewarding for me.”

“It’s really encouraging. It’s exciting, and I feel very fortunate to be able to build this internship.”

J. Besl highlights alumni stories and campus events at UAA.



Maryann Hoke demonstrates how to monitor patient heart rate during exercise tests (Photo by Ted Kincaid / University of Alaska Anchorage).

The Orbera solution

New non-surgical, doctor-supervised weight loss option showing promise in Anchorage

BY AMY ARMSTRONG

An Anchorage-based surgeon who heads up the area's newest bariatric clinic is also now the only doctor in the state to offer a revolutionary non-surgical approach to weight loss that inserts a silicon balloon in the stomach via the esophagus creating the sensation of the stomach being fuller even before eating.

Orbera is its name and Dr. Justin Clark, owner of Anchorage Bariatrics, said it is yet another tool he uses in the battle against obesity.

He speaks highly of Orbera's usage for certain patients – those with a body mass index between 30 and 40, who have struggled with losing weight and with portion control.

"It is just one piece in this huge puzzle of helping people manage weight," Clark said. "It is the right thing to do for some people, especially those that prefer a non-surgical weight loss option and are willing to do the diet and exercise work that goes along with it."

Clark describes the Orbera balloon as a "jumpstart" to help a patient garner physical feedback regarding how they should eat to give their body the proper nutrients and only the amount of food they actually need. The Orbera balloon – which is about the size of a large grapefruit – takes up space in the stomach for its six-month insertion thus leaving less room in the stomach for food and subsequently creating the physical sensation of being full by eating less food.

It plays a trick, of sorts, on the body that patients can transition to a mindset change

through weekly dietary counseling provided by specialists at Anchorage Bariatrics. At the six-month mark, the balloon is removed as required by the product's approval for medical use by the federal Food and Drug Administration. Clark's patients continue another six months of dietary and exercise counseling to help ensure their new eating habits are maintained.

Clark learned the role psychology plays in supporting weight loss during his fellowship at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, during his tenure in the Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery Fellowship.

He saw first-hand the model of how dietitians, exercise experts and psychologists worked together as a team and determined to implement such when he started his own practice.

One of his patients – Joni J., of Anchorage – said the team approach was what helped her lose weight as an Orbera patient.

She did not want to be fully identified, but did share some details of her life prior to becoming one of Clark's patients.

Until reaching her 50s in age, Joni J. had little trouble keeping weight off. Her nickname was "skinny." But then her sedentary job in the oil patch, combined with buffet meals while in the field and the onset of menopause, caused her to start to gain weight. The lucrative oil patch job went away in the economic decline and she found herself at home, topping out at more than 240 pounds. Both of her parents had died from heart disease complications and she knew she needed



help. She could not identify the correct combination of diet and exercise on her own, she said. Her former neighbor works at Anchorage Bariatrics and Jodi J. inquired regarding her options.

Clark determined the Orbera balloon might be Joni J.'s best option.

"I made the commitment that 2017 would be my year of transformation," Joni J. said.

The team approach Anchorage Bariatrics uses gave her hope of successful weight loss because it was focused on all the changes she needed to make.

"Their mission every time we met was very clearly to help me achieve my goals and trade my bad lifestyle habits for good ones. "'Mindful Eating' is really the secret. Learning to be aware of your choices and learning to make the right ones."

The holistic approach and the teaching of the "Mindful Eating" concept was one Clark used regularly during his first four years in Alaska as an U.S. Air Force bariatric surgeon at JBER (Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson). His clients were military dependents and retirees.

A bit more than a year ago, military cuts did away with that position and Clark decided to remain in Alaska to help fight the state's battle against obesity.

According to the white paper, "The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America" released in Sept. 2016 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Alaska has the 26th highest rate of adult obesity in the country with nearly 30 percent of the state's adults being classified as obese. That is a nearly 10 percent increase from 2000 when the rate was 20.0 percent and nearly a doubling since 1995 when the rate was 15.7 percent.

Now, running his own clinic and serving as the head of bariatric surgery at Providence Alaska Medical Center, those statistics alarm Clark, who has seen the other medical complications of diabetes, high blood pressure, increased risk of certain cancers, heart conditions, osteoarthritis and stroke zap the energy and long-term health from his patients.

He has also seen the negative impact obesity has on family life.

Overweight parents tend to have less energy for their children and or their partner. It sets an example of inactivity.

He has also seen the positive changes that weight loss for even just one family member can have for the entire clan.

His practice tends to have more women than men. And even in today's modern society in which women work just as much outside the home as men do, women still do

much of the food shopping and preparation.

"I have noticed that with our female patients, the entire family does tend to get a little healthier after the woman has surgery," Clark said. "She is modeling better eating habits and is becoming empowered to implement that in her family structure. Studies have shown that children born after a mother has surgery became people who were life-long thinner and healthier than children born to the same mother before her surgery. A lot of it has to do with what the child experiences at a very young age."

The Orbera balloon has one significant drawback: a \$10,000 price tag that the insurance industry currently will not cover.

But now that his clinic has been open for one full year and the first of his Orbera patients are approaching the six-month mark at which the balloon is removed, he is documenting results that he said his patients are hailing as life-changing.

Some report running their first race or hiking a mountain they never thought they could. Others talk about having more energy for their family life. Others talk about going off medications and having blood tests that show lower blood sugar levels and lower bad cholesterol plus blood pressure readings in the normal range.

Clark's office offers a full suite of surgical weight loss options that most insurance plans will cover as long as the patient meets medical requirements.

Again, he views the surgical options as tools that provide only the start of a journey toward sustained weight loss.

His clinic's motto, "For a New Beginning," is highlighted on the clinic's website with the words, "Take Control of Your Weight." The idea that combining weight loss surgery with a healthy, well-balanced diet and regular exercise is the only way to successfully maintain weight loss is not just casually mentioned on the clinic's landing page, it is highlighted and emphasized.

For Clark, it is his passion. It is his life's calling.

"I absolutely could do nothing else with my life," Clark said. "To help someone take control of their life and completely change their life is very satisfying."

Learn more about Anchorage Bariatrics and Dr. Justin Clark and his team online at: www.anchoragebariatrics.com.



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BY DR. JOHN CAPUA

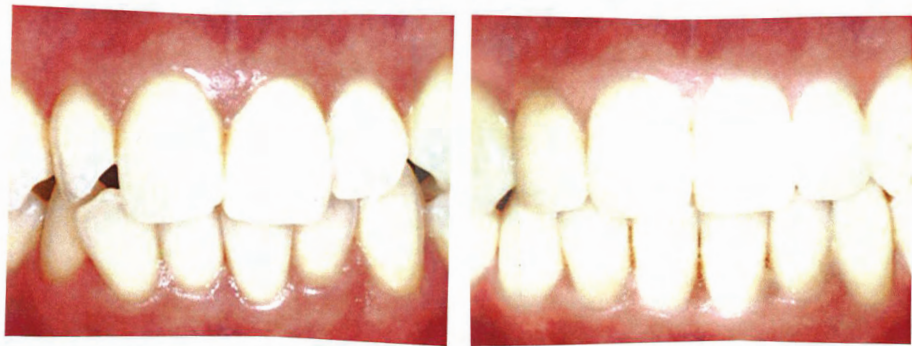
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Anchorage Yoga and Cycle Director of Operations Rachel Eakes at the club recently. (Photo by Rob LeFebvre)

BY ROB LEFEBVRE

Rachel Eakes doesn't want to sell you a membership to yet another health club. Anchorage Yoga and Cycle (AYC) promotes health and wellness through practice, and is open to people of all levels of experience and fitness. Don't feel like you have to hit the floor and keep up with any advanced yogis in the room.

"If you want to lay on your mat in a Hot 26 class, you do that — we don't care," said Eakes, director of operations for the club that boasts nearly 1,300 members. "You don't bring your cellphone in, though, ever."

Anchorage Yoga started seven years ago when Katey Inman and Rick Resnick decided to bring their own brand of welcoming yoga practice to the Anchorage community. The original building at 701 W. 36th Ave. (by Jens Restaurant and Scan Home) has expanded to include three yoga spaces, while the business

itself has added more activities, becoming Anchorage Yoga and Cycle.

The main building has showers, lockers, and amenities like towels and yoga props, plus a well-apportioned merchandise area where you can buy yoga wear and other essentials. The second location came online two years ago in the same lot that houses Organic Oasis and Bosco's Comics. The second locale offers spin classes, aerial fitness, and some yoga. You can schedule classes via a website or smartphone app, too, if you're a technology fan.

Yoga has been shown to help with weight control, heart health, mindful eating, and a better body image. You can gain greater muscle strength and endurance, increase your flexibility, and even see improvements in your cardio-respiratory fitness. Cycling not only helps you improve your heart, brain, and blood vessels, but it's also easy on your joints

and helps you with balance, walking, standing and climbing stairs. As noted on the Anchorage Yoga and Cycling website, the instruction here, whether you're cycling, aerial, or in one of the more than 80 yoga classes, is designed to inspire and motivate you to become a "healthier, happier version of yourself."

Eakes promises that yoga and cycling are more complementary than they might at first seem.

"You get the muscle training and you get the stretching," she says.

Those who need to get pumped and have the motivation of a high-energy instructor and music might choose to cycle, while others might need the centered workout of a hot yoga class. Stiff muscles from cycling can be made more pliable (and stronger) by a yoga practice. "A question that I ask (people who come in) is 'what activity brings them the most joy — period?'" says Eakes.

Over at Anchorage Yoga and Cycle's original 36th Ave. location, members can choose from a variety of yoga classes, including hot

Aerial yoga equipment hangs from the ceiling at Anchorage Yoga and Cycle, located at 701 W 36th Ave. (Photo by Rob LeFebvre)









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(97-100 degrees) yoga, Hot 26 (a more structured set of movements performed at 100-105 degrees), and options like yoga sculpt in the smaller room, which typically stays around 75-80 degrees.

Need a class for your kids while you take your own time to practice? They've got that, too.

The entire space is as welcoming as the front-desk staff, or "co-creators," are. Walking into the studio, you'll be immediately greeted by a warm, friendly co-creator. The walls are all painted in warm earth-tones and there are a variety of benches and decorative nooks that let you sit on or in to remove your shoes. At the cycling location, the co-creators are just as friendly, though the vibe is a bit higher-energy with people coming in for high octane spin classes in the state-of-the-art cycling studio or the aerial fitness sessions.

You don't need to sign up for membership to take classes, either, though there are plenty of subscriber options for Yoga, Cycling, or a combination of both. Both clubs offer punch cards and per-class walk-in fees on a space-available basis. You can also take part in a 30-day challenge to help your new practice become a habit. "Originally, the 30-day challenge started with only 90-minute hot classes, meaning hot yoga, hot 26, or hot flow," says Eakes. "Now we just want people to get on in here. Now it's any class you want to take — 60, 75, or 90 minutes."

Eakes, a yoga practitioner for the past five years, suggests you give these fitness activities a try.

"Are you interested in trying something new?" she asks newcomers. "Be adventurous. Enjoy the journey."



Modern decor defines the lobby at Anchorage Yoga and Cycle. (Photo by Rob LeFebvre)



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The Keto Lifestyle

Fad, Fiction, or Fantastic?

BY RJ JOHNSON

Our parents had Tupperware parties. When I was in my early twenties my friends were constantly asking if I would attend a PartyLite candle party, or if I wanted to see the Cutco kitchen knives they were selling. In current times, with the proliferation of social media it seems that I have a lot of entrepreneurial friends online, and there is never a shortage of people selling LipSense or Pure Romance products. Even though the sales methods may turn you off, you cannot deny that the products are actually quality.

The product that catches my attention the most is Keto OS, mainly because of the people that swear by it. For many of them they are already in good shape, or better shape than me, but this product, and the ketogenic lifestyle adds to their already healthy and active ways. I decided to do some research and figure out what exactly was happening, and whether this is a fad diet like Atkins, or something that could actually assist me with my health goals. I decided to do some research on my own, and I found out some interesting things.

On the surface a ketogenic diet, or Keto, seems very similar to the Atkins Diet. They both require restricted carbohydrate intake. This is very common among weight loss plans; high protein, low carb. Atkins took off early on for it's seemingly fast and easy weight loss, but for many people, there was a weight gain bounce back immediately once people were not following the plan.

The first difference is that with Keto is that you monitor if you are in ketosis or not. While there are products on the market that can test this, such as urine testing strips or blood testing strips, there are physical changes that will be able to tell you. Increased urination, dry mouth, and bad breath are common symptoms that someone following the plan will experience. These symptoms usually go away, and after you have gotten over what some call the "keto flu" you begin to have decreased hunger, and increased energy. When the body is no longer relying on sugar and other carbohydrates for energy and instead burning fat, many positive changes more than make up for the negative symptoms in

the beginning.

The next thing that makes Keto more of a lifestyle plan is the uses. While many are taking part because of the weight loss aspect, some begin in order to gain muscle, while others simply want to maintain their current weight and muscle, and simply are looking for the benefits of increased energy. This is all calculated in the beginning, and from there you start to find out what your daily consumption of macronutrients, or Macros, should be. Macros are the fats, protein, and carbohydrates that are part of your daily intake. This is calculated by determining your goals, current daily activity, body fat percentage, age, weight, gender, etc.

Following any strict diet is difficult. It makes dining out a challenge, and really cuts in to an active lifestyle. The part of the Keto lifestyle that I have seen the most is the consumption of the Keto OS products. These are supplements that assist with a ketogenic diet. It seemed to me that with the assistance of these products dieting and workouts became easier.

The reason for this is to help produce ketone bodies. These are the byproducts of the body breaking down fat for energy. The body using fat for energy is the main goal of any weight loss program, and has many other health benefits including lowered blood pressure, increased mental clarity and extra energy for exercise, or even for individual events like a snowboarding trip or a local 5k run.

I still wasn't completely convinced, since most of the information I found was from websites selling the products, and I needed to speak to someone that is part of this movement. Joshua Nelson has been a body builder for a while now and shed some light onto why he is such a proponent of the product and the lifestyle. He answered several questions for me, and helped me understand from a first person perspective things in a way that my research hadn't.

RJ: How did you discover Keto?

JN: "I was introduced to a conversation about ketones and ketosis a little over a year ago by a good friend of mine while attending



Heart of the City Church. I was vaguely familiar with the process called ketosis in which your body burns fat as a fuel source into an energy metabolite called a ketone. However I was unfamiliar with the product called Keto//OS (Keto operating system) in which it was taught to me that it had the capabilities of putting my body into a state of ketosis within 59 minutes after just by one serving of the exogenous ketones."

RJ: What is Keto?

JN: "Keto//OS is a supplement that contains exogenous ketones. This all natural powdered supplement is a way for a person to consume ketones and raise their ketone body levels high enough so that if tested by breathe, blood, or urine can be recognized as the main fuel source within the body and qualify it to be in a state of ketosis. The definition of Ketosis is simply, an elevated level of blood ketones, and the optimized state of human performance"

RJ: Years ago Atkins was a huge craze, isn't this the same thing?

JN: "Robert Atkins was the creator of the "Atkins diet" and his main premise for this particular diet was only the emphasis on low carbohydrate intake. It did have some education on healthy fats but not near enough for the body to start recognizing this metabolic switch to burning fat as a fuel source, also the protein was encouraged to still be rather high. A ketogenic diet is one that consists of high healthy fat intake, moderate protein intake, and minimal to zero carbohydrate consumption. This particular diet structure will nutritionally speaking take your body into a state of ketosis, however the process of this can take several weeks to several months. Also staying in that optimal state of ketosis is particularly difficult because once your carbohydrate intake rises to high it will kick you out and immediately put your body back

A plan like Keto may seem too good to be true, but unlike other products there is still a good amount of work that goes into the lifestyle.

into a state of only burning glucose. At which point this process will start all over again and you will be forced to suffer through making that metabolic switch."

RJ: You have always seemed like someone that has been pretty healthy, what did Keto add to your diet and workout that you were missing before?

JN: "In my particular fitness journey, which has been over the last decade or so, I was consistently fueling my body on carbohydrates and stimulants. This kind of carb cycling diet I was particularly used for most of my bodybuilding career which left me with very low energy, hence the abuse of different types of stimulants to power me through my day.

continued on page 9

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Cupping Rage

Local purveyors explain the benefits of muscle healing tactic popularized by Michael Phelps

BY AMY ARMSTRONG

The ancient Eastern medicinal art of cupping has found an acceptance in to mainstream American massage including clinics and healing arts centers in Alaska.

Cupping – done with either bamboo, earthenware, glass or silicone cups – became the media darling during the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Brazil after the characteristic red marks dotting the back of Michael Phelps, an American swimmer, were repeatedly analyzed and discussed by broadcasters doing their best to let viewers know the marks were created by the application of a long-time Chinese medical practice that the western world has just recently “discovered” and not by some sort of self-abuse on the part of the swimmer who has weathered his fair share of controversy.

In fact, the characteristic red marks are the proof-in-the-clinical-pudding so to speak that it works, say those that administer and those that receive the treatment.

“Initially, I looked like I got my ass kicked,” Charlie Clark from Chugiak said, regarding the treatments he received on his upper back and at his waistline.

That was OK with Clark as his therapist at the Ancient and Modern Pain Management Clinic in Wasilla explained to him that the darker circles left by cupping treatments are ones where the stagnant blood and attached toxins were released in the treatment process.

Cupping is an Eastern medicinal treatment in which suction is used to draw the skin up

into the cup creating a vacuum where the cup is placed over the targeted area for treatment. Cups are usually left in place for five to 15 minutes depending on how much time the therapist believes is necessary for effective treatment. Another form of cupping is done by sliding cups across skin that is lubricated by a type of oil. The therapist moves the cups back and forth in an effort to release tension in the muscles.

“It basically uses the body to fix itself,” Clark said.

Deb Morton, a mom of two from Eagle River who works a full-time job outside the home, said cupping has given her relief from aches and pains.

“When regular deep tissue massage did not help my shoulder, we tried the cupping technique,” Morton said of her experience at the Anchorage-based Paimore & Young Synergy Chiropractic. “Within hours, I had full range of motion without any pain.”

Clark reports similar results.

“Before trying acupuncture and cupping, I felt like I was 35 go on 65,” he said. “I couldn’t bend over for crap and I had to use the headboard with both hands to get out of bed. I struggled to put socks on. Now, I can put socks on. I can bounce out of bed. I still have weakness in my back and waistline, but the huge knots in that area are all gone.”

He emphasizes that patient communication with the therapist is key to treatment success.

“You have to actively participate letting



“It basically uses the body to fix itself,” Clark said.

the therapist know what you are feeling and where it helps,” Clark said.

That is something an Eagle River-based massage therapist also agrees with.

Vivian D’Mico administers massage and cupping at Alaska Chiropractic and Therapy.

She believes the effectiveness of cupping is reflected in the partnership between the massage therapist.

Knowing that cupping remains relatively new on the Last Frontier, she holds off on suggesting use of the procedure until she has gotten familiar with a client’s beliefs and personality.

“It often does not come up in the first treatment session,” she explained. “I usually wait until I discover how open-minded the client might be toward something like this.”

D’Mico decided to learn the art after receiving cupping treatment for her own healing process, she said.

“It was the result that I already felt within my own body in using the Oriental medicine that prompted me to learn the techniques so

that I was able to get my clients out of pain as easily as possible for myself and for the client,” D’Mico said.

Cupping does have a couple of drawbacks.

The first is visual. The red marks left behind on the body look similar to gigantic hickeys and can last for days or even a week or more. Depending on where one lives, people that see the marks on another person’s body might not understand why they are there. In the East, having cupping marks is nearly a status symbol, according to what D’Mico learned when she went to China to study healing arts.

Burns – when hot cupping is used – can occur as well as mild skin irritation and in rare cases, skin infections, according to WebMD.

While the official scientific jury is still out on cupping, some studies by Western researchers published in the Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine indicates patients report documentable pain relief.

WebMD advises readers to seek out a trained professional.

D’Mico agrees with that suggestion as well.

“Be sure to work with someone that has gone through the appropriate training and is able to assess what your body needs,” she said.

Learn more about cupping online at www.webmd.com/balance/guide/cupping-therapy#2.

Editor’s Note: Amy Armstrong is a co-owner of alaskafamilyfun.com.

KETO, CONTINUED

When I was introduced to Keto//OS my education became vastly more in depth on how human performance can be capitalized on by utilizing both fuel sources through out my day, or what we call “Dual Fuel”. After one serving of the Keto MAX formula I immediately noticed my natural vitality raise unlike I had ever felt, for the first time in a long time my body was being given a superior fuel source. Implementing in this into my own journey has been a blessing, allowing me to minimize my stimulant intake and save my adrenal glands from fatigue, also running off a more satiated fuel source like ketones made it much easier to tackle certain diet changes like intaking more healthy fats and less carbs.”

RJ: How often do you take the supplements?



Joshua Nelson, second from right, and others participating in Keto//OS Conventions around the country. (Submitted photo)

JN: “I currently take Keto//OS twice a day, once in the morning, and once during my workout in the afternoon/evening time. This allows me to stay in that optimal state all day and still utilize carbohydrates in and around my workout, also referred to as macro nutrient timing.”

RJ: For someone that is just starting, do you have to change your entire diet?

JN: “As far as changing everything to take this supplement, the answer is no. You are not required to change everything for Keto//OS to put you into that state of ketosis, however after taking the ketones exogenously it will inevitably propel you to start your own health journey to a better you, whatever that may look like. You see, everyone has different goals and different lifestyles that call for different things, and to say there is one way and one speed would be false. Taking Keto//OS allows you to take on those different obstacles as they come in your life. Such obstacles as a lack of energy to be more active, or hunger cravings that make it unbearable in between meals, or simply a lack of performance in your daily life due to a constant brain fog lingering. To eliminate these one by one opens up all sorts of doors for you to venture down different roads of a healthier lifestyle that you desire.”

RJ: What is the Keto Lifestyle?

JN: “The Keto lifestyle is that of a pursuit of better. As I stated before everyone’s journey looks very different from person to person, but the one underlying thread that ties us all together is our desire to be a little better each and everyday. Taking something like Keto//OS is truly just the beginning, because everyone longs to apart of a tribe and community where they can lock arms with those around them and help each other tackle their goals one by one. We thrive on being led in a direction that based in education and saturated in a culture that portrays a positive mindset.

The mindset of being in a positive state is a byproduct of feeling good. Feeling good about who you are, how you feel, and what you are achieving. Ultimately we live in a society that has led us in a different direction nutritionally. We also live in a day in age where people have begun to settle for much less than they are capable of, not just physically but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The mission and the culture of better is to break through those physical obstacles and shatter those mental roadblocks so that each person can step into their true potential and embrace how they were designed.

Josh explained to me that most people start with just a 5 or a 10 day supply of products, and that the majority of people notice the difference immediately and decide to

continue. A plan like Keto may seem to good to be true, but unlike other products there is still a good amount of work that goes into the lifestyle. From measuring food, to monitoring ketone levels, to using that extra energy to actually exercise, there are things that must be done in order to reap the benefits. For many people their reason for not staying with a healthy plan is because it takes so long to see and feel the first results. If there is acknowledgment that changes need to be made, and a person is willing to make those modifications to their life, perhaps a plan that also offers a head start is what we have all been searching for. For many people the motivation for continuing a workout or meal plan is when they begin to see results, or others comment on them. If a ketogenic lifestyle helps the results come faster, while also increasing health and keeping the mind sharp it could be the health trend that we really have all been waiting for.

Josh also needed me to mention that the Food and Drug Administration has not evaluated these statements. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Keto//OS is not a weight loss product and individual results for fat loss will vary depending upon the diet and exercise.