

Comprehensive, Integrated, Inclusive: *Dealing with All or Many of the Relevant Details*

At VIM we attempt to integrate all of the factors that make each of us, and our distress, unique: medical and family history; physical environment; daily stresses; eating patterns, as well as our emotions. In addition to outstanding medical, dental and vision care and coordinated case management, VIM goes the extra mile to restore our patients to the best physical and mental health possible. In this issue of VOICES we highlight some of these outstanding resources; **Mental Health, Nutritional Counseling and Acupuncture**, and salute our dedicated volunteer clinicians who offer all of the comprehensive services.

“Carol” was trying to take care of her family and her job, but had been feeling worse and worse – bringing her to tears. After assessing her physical concerns, her physician at VIM advised nutritional counseling; during her session with the VIM nutritional counselor, she was tearful and anxious – so she was also provided with

a session with the psychologist on staff – all working to help her manage her health and well-being.

Trying to find a truly comprehensive, “whole person” approach can be daunting for all of us; but for the uninsured, or underinsured, gaining access to such care is truly overwhelming.

For “Sam,” out of work and picking up odd jobs, it was more than a year since he had seen a doctor for the increasing pains in his side and back. They made life miserable and hindered his ability to find a new job and to be a good father. His assessment and treatment at VIM enabled him to again find employment and enjoy his family life.

Providing this exceptional environment for the uninsured or underinsured in Berkshire County for the last ten years, and the next ten years is only possible because of your generosity as donors and volunteers.



Gala Co-Chairs Hildi Black and Nancy Bernstein

The Gala Carnival Is Coming!

Thursday, August 21st

An evening of fun, excitement, surprise gifts, great food and dancing is planned for the VIM Gala Carnival to be held at Butternut Ski Lodge on August 21 at 6:30 pm. The Main Event is the live auction with many wonderful and exciting gifts and services to bid on.

The evening combines an opportunity to enjoy friends and fun while furthering VIM’s critical goals of “Caring freely for the uninsured.”

Chaired by Nancy Bernstein and Hildi Black, the enthusiastic and dedicated committee includes:

Sherrye Dantzker, Laura Friedman, Bonita Ganot, Elizabeth Goodman, Susan Grandt, Mara Handy, Lauren Hyde, Vicki Kay, Clara Londoner, Alice Lustig, Frani Rothman, Dianne Salamon, Jane Salamon, Judy Schnurr, Molly Sheriff, Marion Simon, Turbi Smilow, Carol Solomon, Lauren Spitz and Ruth Weinstein.

Plan to come and join the fun! Call the VIM office at 413-528-4014 for tickets and information.

Eating as a Pathway to Well-Being

Nancy Fernandez Mills, CHC

Nutrition Counselor & Certified Health Coach



“I want to help my husband eat better so he won’t be sick.” Angela had come with her husband Frank for his second nutrition appointment. Frank was being treated for high blood pressure and high cholesterol. He had been skipping breakfast, eating burgers and fries every day for lunch and a bowl of ice cream every evening after dinner. His wife wanted to learn how to help him eat healthier meals and I was thrilled to see her, since her support would be a crucial factor in Frank’s success.

At Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires, clinicians see the chronic illnesses found in any primary care medical office in America.

Obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular issues...our patients suffer from the so-called “lifestyle diseases” that are sadly so common in our country.

We offer nutrition counseling to every VIM patient. **What we eat and how much we eat can either support our well-being or contribute to poor health.** In the Berkshires as in most of the country, many adults live on the “typical American diet”...too many processed foods, too few fresh vegetables and fruit. Too much fast food...not enough home-cooked, “slow” meals.

Eating well is a challenge. VIM patients often find that the foods they can most easily af-

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Acupuncture Comes to VIM

Naomi Alson, Holly Leever, Michelle Manto, Regina Serkin



It may take a “village” to raise a child, but it surely takes the collaboration of a whole community of caring professionals and volunteers to assure the well-being of our patients. The most recent addition to the VIM community is acupuncture; a complementary therapy to help the individual achieve a balanced and harmonious flow of energy allowing the body to heal and reducing symptoms.

Regina Serkin and Michele Manto The World Health Organization recognizes the therapeutic efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of a number of symptoms and conditions. Among these are: psychological conditions (depression, anxiety, insomnia, stress); addictions; gynecological conditions; gastrointestinal issues; pain (headaches, back pain, sciatica, neck pain, dental pain, TMJ); circulatory conditions (hypertension, palpitations, arteriosclerosis, angina pectoris); treatment of the adverse effects of chemotherapy and as supportive treatment for chronic diseases.

“Jake”, a 53 year old man, complained of severe pain radiating throughout his body. He felt depressed and hopeless from dealing with the pain. In his initial visit to VIM, it was determined that a vitamin deficiency was creating the pain, weakness and numbness. In his initial visit to VIM it was determined that he had both a vitamin deficiency and arthritis. He was referred by the case manager for acupuncture. After four weekly treatments, integrating the basic tenets of Traditional Chinese Medicine, his overall outlook was positive and his pain was much improved.

At VIM, licensed acupuncturists work together to guide patients towards optimal health. Acupuncture, an essential component of Traditional Oriental Medicine, has a history of over 2000 years. The therapists evaluate the patients concerns, and initiate a treatment plan focused on assuring that the body’s energy is flowing in a balanced manner. Patients are referred by the Case Manager or other health professionals to the four acupuncturists who treat patients at the clinic: Michelle Manto, Regina Touhey Serkin, Naomi Alson and Holly Leever.

“Theresa” is another example of the power of integrating acupuncture with the medical and mental health teams. A middle aged woman, she came to VIM complaining of general body pain, lack of energy, hopelessness, high blood pressure and concern about her steady smoking. Appointments were scheduled with a mental health professional, the doctor, dentist and acupuncturist. After nearly a year and with support from the team at VIM, her pain disappeared, her blood pressure was stable and she quit smoking. Her energy returned, as did her positive outlook on life. At her six-month follow-up, she was still pain free.

Acupuncturists are certified through the National Certification Committee for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, as well as other related organizations. The VIM therapists, each of whom focus on some specific physical and emotional concerns, come to the organization with extensive training and experience from many parts of the world. The four volunteer acupuncturists also maintain private practices in the community. Their participation assures a comprehensive and holistic approach to wellness for our patients.



Holly Leever and Naomi Alson

Pathway to Well-Being

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ford aren’t good for them. We live in a toxic food environment, tempted by high sugar, high fat products at our gas station, the coffee shop, the shopping mall and the supermarket. We have to go out of our way to surround ourselves with tasty and nutritious food at home, at work and on the road. At VIM, we teach patients to become mindful of what they’re eating and to take more time to plan and prepare.

“I can’t believe I am losing weight,” said 38-year-old Michaela after the nurse weighed her. This was her third nutrition appointment and she was beaming as she stopped to tell her friend in the waiting room of her success. Michaela was losing an average of two pounds a week after changing her diet to include more fresh vegetables and fruits. She had a specific plan to follow for the first time in her life and she was determined to reverse her obesity and pre-diabetes, even if it meant spending more of her limited income on food.

A nutrition visit at VIM is tailored to each patient’s needs:

- One woman comes with the desire to lose weight but is also dealing with worries about infertility, so we teach her some stress-reducing deep breathing exercises and weight loss strategies.
- A middle-aged man asks for advice on how to gain weight after treatment for cancer and his girlfriend wants to know what kind of diet will help him fight the disease.
- A woman with pre-diabetes asks for a detailed plan of exactly which foods to eat at every meal and snack time because she’s been unable to change her diet after getting general advice about a “diabetes diet.”

The advantage we have at VIM is time. We take time to listen, to ask not just what people are eating, but to find out what’s going on in their lives. We might typically ask patients:

- Do you live in a place that has a kitchen? (Several do not.)
- Are you allowed to take breaks for lunch at work?
- How are you sleeping? (Most have sleep issues that impact their health.)
- Do you eat with family members or friends? (Many live and dine alone, separated from families in other countries.)

While we can’t change the challenging circumstances of everyone’s life, our goal at VIM is to treat the whole person, to see each patient as unique and to offer the comprehensive care they need to help them heal and thrive.

"Eating well is a challenge."

10th Anniversary Celebration Begins!

Opening VIM's 10th anniversary celebration was a "sold out" Chef's Dinner at the stunning Wheatleigh Hotel in Lenox, MA. Wheatleigh provided a beautiful backdrop for the evening, allowing guests to enjoy an exceptional view from the terrace and the beauty of the exquisite dining room and conservatory.

The exciting event was chaired by Vicki Bonnington, with the help of her committee members: Mara Handy, Catherine Mandel and Marion Simon. A spectacular meal, prepared under the direction of Chef Jeffrey Thompson, with

wines selected especially for the occasion and donated by Ed Domaney of Domaney's Liquors and Fine Wines, was accompanied by a musical interlude at the piano generously provided by Howard Lieberman.

The gracious and joyful evening was testimony to the generosity of donors in furthering VIM's mission to provide exceptional and comprehensive healthcare to the uninsured and underinsured of Berkshire County. **Thanks to Amy Krzanik and Rural Intelligence for allowing us to use their outstanding photos!**



Dinner Chair Vicki Bonnington and David Shecker



Photos Left to Right:
*Nancy Kalodner, Robin McGraw and Helice Pichney
 Marion Simon and Matt Mandel
 Rita Kasky and Jane Salamon
 Catherine Mandel and Lauren Spitz*

New Faces at VIM

Susan Minnich, Volunteer Coordinator

We are delighted to introduce new volunteers, some a bit belatedly, but nonetheless very appreciated.

VIM wouldn't exist without its dedicated, imaginative, and effective volunteers. We are gratified to know that our volunteers get a great deal of satisfaction working at VIM (see *Arthur Peisner's article in this issue*).

Our development volunteers help find critical funding; as we receive no automatic stream of funding, we are completely dependent upon their work to meet our budget. Special thanks go to **Mara Handy** and **Alice Lustig**, who have recently joined the development committee.

Planning for the annual VIM gala is in high gear. The committee is hard at work organizing the gala for August 21, to be held this year at Butternut Ski area. It promises to be a fun, carnival-themed party that raises a very important percentage of the VIM budget. Co-chaired by **Nancy Bernstein** and **Hildi Black** (both of whom were on last year's gala committee), it is a lively group with quite a few new faces. New members include **Sherrye Dantzker**, **Laura Friedman**, **Suzan Grandt**, **Lauren Hyde**, **Frani Rothman** and **Carol Solomon**.

We are happy to welcome several new clinical volunteers:

Two new doctors have joined the medical team: **Dr. Richard Levin** and **Dr. Walter Scott**.

Calla Delsignore volunteers as a nurse, and **Wendy Gomez** and **Alex Staropoli** are volunteering as medical assistants.

Dental hygienist **Whitney Smith** joined the dental team and **Caroline Vandervort**, who had been a receptionist, has moved into the dental department, where she is providing much needed help in the lab.

Don Cook joined our mental health group, and **Holly Leever** is a part of our acupuncture team (see *article in this newsletter*.)

We welcome **John Breasted**, **Allan Goldstein** and **Rachel Coopersmith**, who cover many of our reception shifts.

We are fortunate to have **Marieanne Deignan's** help in maximizing our use of the electronic medical records system. **Steve Kerner** is providing interpretation.

Finally, thanks to **Denyse Adler**, who has been volunteering for more than a year, most recently becoming editor of this newsletter and a new Board member.

Tributes

VIM is pleased to accept contributions recognizing special occasions in the lives of family, friends, and colleagues.



Volunteer Profile

VIM is delighted to welcome Denyse Adler as the new editor of *VOICES*, and as a newly elected member of the Board of Trustees. We asked her to give us some insight into her background and plans.

VIM: How did you come to volunteer for this special organization?

DA: I am a longtime Berkshire “seasonal” homeowner, as well as VIM supporter. When we moved to Otis full time last year, joining VIM as a volunteer was a natural progression from my life-long career in health care and educational services.

VIM: Tell us about your background.

DA: Initially an oncology social worker, I quickly began developing and expanding a broad range of services for cancer patients including integrated emotional and physical healthcare and outreach to underserved communities. Later I helped to develop a major cancer center in New Jersey, and then as a consultant, worked with multiple health and educational organizations in New York and New Jersey to expand the scope and reach of services.

VIM: How has healthcare changed since you started?

DA: As you might expect there have been monumental changes in the last 45 years. Of course medical and psychological advances have been stunning, and although slower, the understanding of the interplay of those elements has also made considerable progress. Patients are now considered more as partners in their own well-being, and there is more transparency in healthcare communications.

VIM: Where do we need to go from here?

DA: The delivery of care is highly fragmented, lacking integration, communication and coordination. Recent changes in healthcare legislation seem to be leading toward more universal insurance coverage – but the gaps are deep and wide, and we still see many disenfranchised and underserved populations – a high priority to promote well-being. The real advance will be when “evidence-based,” high-quality, rational care is delivered to the whole population – something I hope to see in my lifetime. **VIM’s integrated and coordinated system provides a model for the delivery of healthcare and I am looking forward to becoming part of the advance.**

VIM: In addition to VIM, what keeps you busy?

DA: With a family of 14 (including eight grandchildren) our lives are very full. We love theater, traveling, volunteering and enjoying all the benefits of the Berkshire “life-style.”

In Honor of Nancy Kalodner's Special Birthday

Matt & Catherine Mandel

In Honor of Matt & Catherine Mandel

Bertrand Pogrebin & Letty Cottin Pogrebin

In Honor of Gladis Rave & Ilana Steinhauer

Graham Peisner

In Honor of Marilyn Stamberg

Paul & Turbi Smilow

To Carol & Marvin Schwartzbard:

In Honor of Jeremy's 5th Grade Graduation

& Andrew's Bar Mitzvah

Linda & Lee Hertz

In Honor of Dr. Paul Smilow

Rose Z. Jick



In Memory of Jules Dahlman

Marion Simon

In Memory of Robert Fleury

Donald & Rachel Strauber

In Memory of Sidney Metzger

Marion Simon

In Memory of Bruce Miller

Nathan & Marilyn Schwartzberg

Lawrence & Phyllis Phillips

In Memory of Leonard Simon

Paul Levine

If you would like to honor someone by making a gift to VIM Berkshires, please call the clinic at 413-528-4014

SHOPPER ALERT!

SAVE THE DATES!

August 15-30

Evergreen Fine American Crafts, a well-known Great Barrington gem, is launching a “Give Back” to the community campaign to celebrate its 35th year in business, according to owner Barbara Watkins. **Mention VIM when you shop** at Evergreen from August 15 – 30, and 10% of your purchase will be donated to Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires. Evergreen is open daily at 291 Main Street, Great Barrington; (413) 528-0511.

Integrating Mental and Physical Health

Ellen Rowntree M.D., VIM Psychiatrist



Ellen Rowntree M.D., VIM Psychiatrist

“Maria” came to VIM complaining of depression with fatigue, low mood, lack of energy and increasing difficulties in her family and work relationships. She was feeling very discouraged about her life. She was referred to mental health for evaluation of depression. A medical workup showed that she had low thyroid hormones and she was started on hormone replacement therapy. Once she understood the medical underpinnings of her symptoms, she was motivated to work in psychotherapy on repairing her relationships with family and friends and she felt positive again about her life.

Integrating medical, dental, mental health, nutrition, optometry and acupuncture teams is a

critical concept at VIM. It is important for the medical and mental health teams to work together to determine the interplay between physical and emotional causes of illness. Patients who come to the clinic requesting help with anxiety and depression or relationship difficulties at work or home also receive medical evaluations. Our Clinical Care Coordinator/Case Manager, Ilana Steinhauer FNP, plays an integral role in assessing a patient’s need for a variety of services, assuring they are referred when appropriate and overseeing their care. Patients who are seen in the medical clinic may be referred for mental health evaluation and treatment if it is felt that emotional stresses are contributing factors.

“Andrea,” a young woman, came to the clinic complaining of abdominal and pelvic pain. Physical examination and laboratory tests revealed no apparent physical cause. Over time it became clear that she was trying to avoid becoming pregnant because she was convinced she would not be a good mother due to the poor relationship she had with her own mother. Recently her husband had talked about wanting to start a family. As her fears were further explored and she was encouraged to reconsider her view of herself as a potential mother, the pains disappeared entirely.

The mental health team includes two psychiatrists, two psychologists, a clinical therapist, a clinical social worker and a family mediator. Co-

ordination of our care with the other providers is extremely important because we know that emotional and psychological stresses impact physical well-being and similarly, medical problems may contribute to psychological problems, especially anxiety and depression.

We are fortunate that VIM is able to offer mental health services as part of our integrated care of patients.

A few years ago a VIM dentist on staff referred a patient to me because of severe chronic grinding of her teeth, related to stress. The dentist actually came to me with the mouth impressions so I would be aware of the severity of the problem—real integration of care! The patient’s work with the mental health and dental teams helped to alleviate that problem.

Recently, a middle-aged man who was being counseled by a VIM nutritionist for pre-diabetes and obesity stopped adhering to his diet and began to regain weight. He was crying all the time, not sleeping, and overeating when sad and lonely. His depression was related to the recent return of his family to South America. The patient was started on an antidepressant medication and followed by both the nutritionist and a psychiatrist until he improved.

Energized by Volunteering

Arthur Peisner, Board Chair

“I never realized volunteering at VIM could be so rewarding.” “I go home feeling so energized.” “The people here are so nice to work with.” “They really appreciate the time and effort I put in.” “This place is so much fun. I wish my paid job was half as rewarding.”

More than 70 volunteers participated in an online survey conducted by an outside consultant in connection with our strategic planning. We were gratified to learn that over 90% of VIM volunteers are satisfied with their experience. In fact, one-third of volunteers have been with us for more than five years and over 60% for at least three years.

But we also have many new volunteers. Almost 20% joined us within the last year. And we always have openings that need to be filled. Our major volunteer needs right now are for a Medical Director, dentists and dental hygienists.

- The Medical Director provides leadership and oversight for all medical services. Working with our full-time Clinical Care Coordinator, a Family Nurse Practitioner, the Medical Director supervises volunteer medical staff and support teams to ensure that all services are within current standards of practice.

- The demand for dental services continues to grow and we need additional dentists and hygienists to help fill the need. We provide our patients with a full range of restorative dental services in our two well-equipped offices. Nine dentists and two hygienists, all volunteers, participate in the program. Both retired and in-practice dentists are a vital part of our team and are supported by a full-time dental assistant and part time dental office assistant.

If you are retired and would like to maintain your skills while giving back to your community, this could be the perfect opportunity for you. Your contribution, in whatever role, bears directly on the lives of your neighbors.

Our team of volunteers and staff are dedicated to our core value of “caring,” not just for the patient, but for each other as well. That shared value and the feeling of working together for an urgent cause creates a camaraderie that is hard to match. Volunteering at VIM is not just doing a job without pay; it is much more than that and far more rewarding.

Please call our HR/Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Minnich, or stop in anytime to learn more about these and other volunteer opportunities.

