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## FALL 2014

### MASSAGE THERAPY AT GREENWOOD WELLNESS CLINIC!

We are very pleased to announce that Laura Baer has joined our team as a Registered Massage Therapist. Laura graduated from the Canadian College of Massage Therapy with honours in June and is excited to start applying her knowledge as an RMT. She is a very passionate person and this shows in her approach to helping others. She believes the body has an incredible way of healing itself and with dedication and a good listener it can deepen one's experience of life through healthy and vibrant living. Laura is dedicated to facilitating and listening to the body in order to support it in making the changes it needs to attain the quality of life desired.

Laura uses a holistic and integrative approach by treating with all the systems of the body in mind – musculoskeletal, myofascial, lymphatic and visceral. Additionally, Laura is also trained in cranio-sacral therapy. From a young age, Laura has been seeing a cranio-sacral therapist and has always dreamed of sharing the health and rejuvenation she receives from this treatment.

Laura is currently in the office Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. To make an appointment, please call the office and speak with Mary Lou. *Book your 1<sup>st</sup> 30 minute massage before November 15<sup>th</sup> and get an automatic FREE 30 minute upgrade.*

### THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Although as fundamental to good health as proper eating and exercise, sleep is an often neglected factor. What we eat, our stress and our physical environment all play a role in how well we sleep. In turn, the quality and quantity of our sleep is a factor in our energy, responses to stress and immune systems.

#### DEFINITIONS

Loss of sleep is referred to as **insomnia**. There are 2 general categories of insomnia. *Sleep onset insomnia* refers to difficulty falling asleep while *sleep maintenance insomnia* refers to early, sustained or frequent awakening. Insomnia is also often categorized as primary (meaning it isn't a

symptom or side effect of another medical condition) or secondary (meaning another condition is responsible for it).

There are also separately categorized **primary sleep disorders**, in which the disorder is the main cause of insomnia. These disorders are common and include obstructive sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, periodic limb movements of sleep, circadian rhythm disorders and inadequate sleep hygiene. Many of these disorders can be addressed by identifying and correcting underlying factors.

#### SLEEP LOSS AND ILLNESS

Short sleepers, defined as less than 6 hours of sleep/night, are at

increased risk for viral infections, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic pain, arthritis and depression. There are many known associations between sleep and mood disorders. Anxiety greatly increases the risk for insomnia. Insomnia significantly increases the risk for depression. Sleep loss can also induce irritability, agitation, anxiety disorders and clinical depression on its own. Compromised cognitive function from lack of sleep can also cause ADD like symptoms, memory loss and compromised judgment. One bad night of sleep has been shown to cause insulin resistance the following day as well as hormonal changes which can lead to confusion between sleepiness and hunger signals, thus playing a role in obesity.

## **NATUROPATHIC TREATMENT**

Naturopathic medicine has much to offer in the aid of sleep disorders. Of course, the primary goal is to determine an underlying cause of insomnia or primary sleep disorder. Such causes may include nutrient deficiencies, stress, poor sleep hygiene or even pain.

### ***SLEEP HYGIENE***

Sleep hygiene refers to practices, habits and environmental factors that influence sleep. Unless there is an obvious underlying problem, correcting or improving sleep hygiene is usually the first step in treating a sleep disorder. Following is a list of common hygiene considerations.

1. Maintain a regular sleep wake schedule (i.e. try to go to bed and wake at similar times each day).
2. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, **minimum** of 4-6 hours before bed – although complete avoidance is best.
3. Exercise regularly, but not immediately before bed.
4. Avoid heavy, spicy or sugary foods 4-6 hours before bedtime (note that some night waking can be due to low blood sugar, so a light snack with some protein may be useful for some).

5. Evaluate sleep side effects of medications.
6. Get exposed to natural light in the morning.
7. Avoid napping until sleep improves.
8. Sleep in a dark room.
9. Use bed only for sleep and sex.
10. Block out distracting noises.
11. Optimal sleeping temperatures appear to be less than 20°C.

### ***ROLE OF MELATONIN AND LIGHT***

Many people have heard of and tried melatonin - a hormone that is closely related to sleep. Melatonin production is related to circadian rhythms (the daily physical, mental and emotional changes that follow a roughly 24 hour cycle) and sleep. When there is less light, the brain receives a message to produce more melatonin which causes you to get drowsy. When there is continual light stimulation (TV, street lights, alarm clocks etc.) the signal to produce melatonin is decreased. Many of the health problems related to poor sleep may be related to melatonin levels. This emphasizes the benefits of keeping your sleeping environment as dark as possible. In some cases supplemental melatonin is a useful sleep aid, (with perhaps the best benefits seen by shift workers) however it is wise to work with your health care practitioner to determine the optimum dose and timing.

### ***Additional Treatments***

Several herbs and nutrients have a positive influence on insomnia, such as valerian, passionflower, L-theanine and magnesium among others. The selection and dosage of specific agents depends on the underlying factors identified.

Homeopathy and acupuncture have also proven useful in many cases of insomnia, including those caused by pain. Other modalities such as chiropractic and massage therapy may also be useful to address underlying issues of pain and stress.