

# remedies<sup>TM</sup>

SEPTEMBER 2008

for  
LIFE

## omega-3 capsules:

*easy and essential*

Need focus? Try a natural approach  
Holistic solutions for chronic pain  
Naturopathy and homeopathy in practice

EPA, DHA,  
and more



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# live

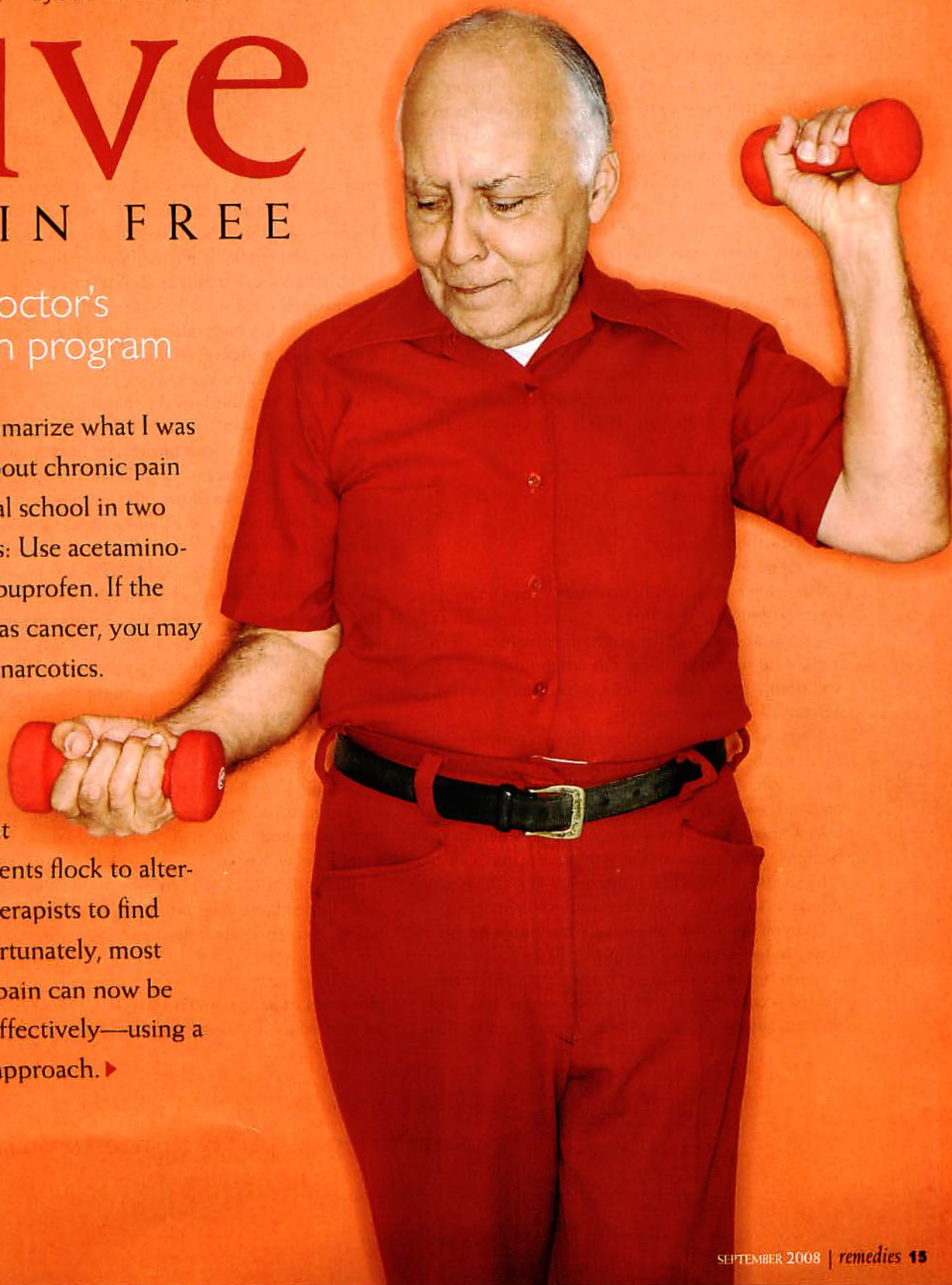
● By Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

## PAIN FREE

one doctor's  
proven program

I can summarize what I was taught about chronic pain in medical school in two sentences: Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If the patient has cancer, you may resort to narcotics.

It's no surprise, then, that pain patients flock to alternative therapists to find relief. Fortunately, most chronic pain can now be treated effectively—using a holistic approach. ▶



**Boswellia** (*B. serrata*), long used in Ayurvedic medicine, has powerful anti-inflammatory properties.



### Pain Is Not the Enemy

Instead, it's often an important indicator of underlying problems that need to be addressed. Think of pain as the red warning light on your car's dashboard telling you that something urgently requires attention. To simply mask pain with medication is like covering up your "low oil" light because it's annoying you.

In addition to turning off the pain signal, it's also crucial to understand what the pain is telling you about what your body needs. When these needs are addressed, pain may disappear. Here's how to find the source *and* relieve discomfort.

### What's the Underlying Problem?

Treating four key areas usually helps eliminate muscle/myofascial and nerve pain. It helps to remember the acronym SHINE:

- Sleep
- Hormonal support
- Infections
- Nutritional support
- Exercise

Pain patients frequently experience **insomnia**—often profoundly. Your body's repair cycle occurs during sleep, and you need eight to nine hours of sleep a night for optimal healing. Put differently, your pain will simply not go away until you regularly get this amount of deep sleep nightly.

Many natural remedies that effectively support sleep may also directly help pain. My favorite is a combination of valerian, passionflower, L-theanine (as Suntheanine), hops, wild lettuce, and other natural ingredients. Other remedies that may aid sleep when taken at bedtime include magnesium (100 to 300 mg), calcium (500 to 600 mg), 5-HTP (100 to 300 mg, which takes six weeks to work), and/or melatonin (0.3 to 1 mg).

Did you know that lab tests for **hormonal problems** can be unreliable? Hormonal status needs to be assessed by symptoms and physical exam and then treated accordingly. It may be necessary to treat with thyroid, adrenal (e.g., adrenal glandulars and DHEA),

and natural ovarian and/or testicular hormones

despite normal blood tests. When symptoms suggest the need for them, these *natural* hormones—especially thyroid—appear to be fairly safe and very beneficial for pain and energy when used in low doses.

Although there are many unusual infections, **yeast overgrowth** is the most important infection to address. Avoid sugar, use high-quality acidophilus supplements, and consider natural antifungals such as oregano oil or medications. When yeast is properly treated, chronic sinusitis and irritable bowel syndrome (sometimes called spastic colon) also tend to improve.

It's essential to correct **nutritional inadequacies** in order to heal. B vitamins, antioxidants, magnesium, zinc, selenium, and amino acids (proteins) are especially important. Powdered multinutrient products are an easy and affordable way to ensure you're getting the nutrients your body needs. (You'll want to take B-complex vitamins in capsule form since they're less than great tasting in a drink mix.) In addition, my colleagues' and my recent study showed ribose (5 g two times a day) to be helpful for pain while increasing energy by 45 percent after two to three weeks. We've seen some patients' chronic pain eliminated simply by using this nutritional support.

For arthritis, use glucosamine sulfate (750 mg two times a day) and MSM (1.5 to 3 g a day). Within six weeks, most people's arthritis markedly improves. For nerve pain, add lipoic acid (300 mg two times a day) for at least six weeks.

Finally, fight pain by exercising as much as you're able. This will maintain flexibility, function, and blood flow—decreasing discomfort and improving function.

### If Pain Persists

Hundreds of natural and prescription therapies can be tailored to your specific type of pain. Three of

Johns Hopkins researchers report that **tart cherry** extracts appear to reduce pain brought on by inflammation.

the most effective general pain herbals are willow bark, boswellia, and tart cherry—sometimes found in combination products. Studies suggest that they are as or more effective than ibuprofen and/or COX 2 inhibitors like Vioxx and Celebrex while being safer and cheaper.

Willow bark is the original source of aspirin, but when used as the entire herb, it may be gentler and more effective. Research consistently shows willow bark's usefulness in reducing pain. In two studies of 661 patients with severe chronic low back pain, willow bark extract with 240 mg of salicin left approxi-

**Evidence of Success** Using fibromyalgia as a model for widespread myofascial pain, the research team undertook a placebo-controlled study using the SHINE protocol. Following this intervention, the majority of patients no longer qualified for the diagnosis of fibromyalgia, and the average quality of life improvement was 90 percent. An editorial in the *Journal of the American Academy of Pain Management* called the treatment protocol an "excellent and highly effective part of the standard of practice for the treatment of fibromyalgia and myofascial pain syndrome."

mately 40 percent of individuals pain free after four weeks, with improvement evident after only one week of treatment. Among those receiving standard orthopedic care and Motrin for four weeks, 18 percent were pain free. No adverse effects on the stomach lining were observed with willow bark, in contrast to aspirin.

Willow bark extract also appears to be as effective as Vioxx for osteoarthritis.

Boswellia, also known as frankincense, has been used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine for centuries. Research finds it helpful for both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, with patients' pain index falling by 90 percent after eight weeks and a similarly dramatic increase in function. Boswellia also has significant anti-inflammatory properties, making it helpful in asthma and colitis, as well as pain. A common dose is 350 mg three times a day.

Tart cherry fruit contains compounds that inhibit COX-1 (inflammation) as effectively as ibuprofen, and these fruits possess both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

In addition, remember how powerful manipulative healing techniques such as acupuncture and body and/or energy work can be in treating pain—especially when combined with metabolic therapies. You no longer need to live with pain! ✨

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