

Neuro Sleuths

Putting together clues that resemble puzzle pieces, five specialists take the anxiety out of treatment for nervous-system disorders

Princeton resident Ursula Stephens-Alston always considered herself a survivor. She beat salivary gland cancer 15 years ago, persevering through painful radiation and devastating weight loss. A September 2009 car accident caused several serious injuries, but she had three surgeries—two for her neck and one for her rotator cuff—and bounced back to enjoy life as a newlywed. Yet the seemingly minor complication that arose following that third procedure nearly destroyed her. “I developed an involuntary muscle spasm in my right shoulder near the bicep, which caused my arm to constantly swing out as though trying to hit someone,” recalls the 50-year-old. “The rippling became so severe, you could see it through my clothes.”

Worst of all, the movement was continuous: 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, without reprieve. Restful sleep became impossible, chronic pain the norm. Soon Stephens-Alston couldn't function without potent ache-relieving drugs. Her career as a consultant suffered, and she was taken off important projects. Low spirits further plummeted, so antidepressants were added to the mix. Baffled as to what caused the palpitations, doctors couldn't decide how best to alleviate them. “I told my husband that if I didn't find relief, I'd either cut off my arm or sign myself into a mental institution,” Stephens-Alston remembers. “That's how bad my reality became.” At this blackest hour, hope finally came from doctors at Princeton Rutgers Neurology (PRN), a practice with offices in Somerset, Monroe Township and Princeton whose doctors are affiliated with Saint Peter's University Hospital.

Jeffrey Greenberg, M.D., managing partner of PRN and neurological division chief at Saint Peter's, correctly diagnosed her condition as spinal myoclonus, a rare movement disorder defined by the sudden, shocking contraction of a muscle cluster due to an event—such as surgery—within the central nervous system.

To treat it, he injected 50 units of an agent called Xeomin into the anterior (front) section of her right deltoid muscle, and 50 more into the lateral (middle) part of that shoulder. When Stephens-Alston learned that Xeomin is a close relative of Botox, she was baffled. “I asked Dr. Greenberg if he wouldn't rather shoot that stuff into my lips,” she remembers, laughing. But the expert knew what he was doing. In small doses, this family of drugs relaxes and smooths out muscles, which is why they work on wrinkles. “I cautioned her to wait a week before expecting results,” says Dr. Greenberg. Yet one day later, Stephens-Alston phoned back, ecstatic. “For the first time in two years, my arm wasn't convulsing,” she says. “Dr. Greenberg truly saved my life.”

Dr. Greenberg and his partners Roger Behar, M.D., Devin Friedlander, M.D., Joshua Hersh, M.D., and Seema Dixit, D.O. treat many ailments. Multiple sclerosis (MS), neuromuscular pain, migraines and other headaches, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, epilepsy and movement disorders, dizziness and balance issues are treated on an almost daily basis.

Between inpatient services at Saint Peter's and separate office appointments, hundreds of individuals are examined each week by the team. Thorough communication is priority because neurological problems can be difficult to diagnose—and to explain. “When a doctor checks for pneumonia, the procedure is relatively straightforward: listening to the patient's chest with a stethoscope and administering antibiotics,” says Dr. Behar, general neurologist at PRN and stroke director at Saint Peter's. “But our field is largely investigative, which means numerous questions are required to piece together clues that form a diagnosis.”

The patient relates a narrative, guided at times to provide additional detail via specific inquiries. It can take one hour or more to obtain this full history. “We then run through a series of activities that seem like party tricks, in which we ask the person to touch her nose with her finger or walk a straight line,” explains Dr. Greenberg. Perplexing to the untrained eye, these tests further help pinpoint where within the nervous system a problem may lie.

Once they've made their diagnosis, the specialists explain their conclusions in an easy-to-grasp, unthreatening way. “I see it as a collaborative effort in which all parties are on the same page, making joint decisions,” says Dr. Behar.

The doctors often establish lifelong relationships with their patients, including those who have Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, or MS, and potentially establish such a relationship with Stephens-Alston. Thus far she's due to return every four months for more injections because the muscle-soothing effects of Xeomin eventually wear off.

Adapted from a story by Francesca Moisinin for the Fall 2013 issue of Central Jersey Health & Life, The Good Living magazine of Saint Peter's Healthcare System.



Roger Behar, M.D.; Devin Friedlander, M.D.; Seema Dixit, D.O.; Jeffrey Greenberg, M.D.; and Joshua Hersh, M.D.

Call our physician referral line at 1-855-SP-MY-DOC or visit our website at saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician to find a neurologist.

All programs are designed for community members and are held at Saint Peter's University Hospital, unless otherwise noted. For more information or to register for a program, call the contact number listed or visit our Website at www.saintpetershcs.com/newsandevents

SUPPORT GROUPS

Autism Family Support Group
NOVEMBER 10, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
 877-886-9462

Alzheimer's Support Group/Monroe
NOVEMBER 12, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
 Saint Peter's Adult Day Center
 200 Overlook Drive, Monroe Township
 Rachel Kallish, CSW
 Lisa Sparaco, MSW, LSW
 609-655-6853

Bariatric Surgery Support Group
NOVEMBER 14, 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
 Lisa Lapinski, RD
 732-745-8600, x8159

Bereavement Support Group
NOVEMBER 7 & 21, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
 732-745-8565

Bereavement Support Group
NOVEMBER 5 & 19, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM
 For spouses and significant others 55 and older.
 Saint Peter's Adult Day Center
 200 Overlook Drive, Monroe Township
 Sean O'Brien, MSW, LSW
 Lisa Sparaco, MSW, LSW
 609-409-1363, option 5

Caregivers Support Group/Monroe
NOVEMBER 14, 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM
 Saint Peter's Adult Day Center
 200 Overlook Drive, Monroe Township
 Stephanie Fitzsimmons-Sexton, RN, NP
 609-655-2220

Pregnancy after Loss Support Group
(for pregnant women who have previously experienced a loss)
 Registration required.
 Dawn Brady, MSW
 732-745-8600, x8522

SHARE Support Group
(pregnancy and infant loss support group)
NOVEMBER 14, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
 732-745-8600, x8522

CANCER SERVICES

The **American Cancer Society** offers daily information and support to cancer patients and their families. Call **1-800-227-2345** to talk to a cancer information specialist 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week or visit us online at www.cancer.org.

Breast Cancer Support Group
NOVEMBER 4 & 18, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
 Guest speaker and open discussion.
 Registration required.
 Cancer Institute of New Jersey
 Deborah Leif, MSW, LCSW
 732-235-7011

Gynecologic Cancer Support Group
NOVEMBER 12, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
 Cancer Institute of New Jersey
 732-235-6792

Latina Women with Cancer Support Group
NOVEMBER 9, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
 Sister Marie de Pazzi Conference Center
 Light lunch will be served. Free, but registration requested. Sessions conducted in Spanish. Call 908-658-5400 for more information.

Living with Cancer Support Group
NOVEMBER 13, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
 Cancer Institute of New Jersey
 Barbara Hale, LCSW
 732-235-7557

COMMUNITY MOBILE HEALTH SERVICES

For more information about screenings and educational programs, or the CMHS **corporate flu shot** program, please call 732-745-8600, x8903.

Blood Sugar Screening
NOVEMBER 14, 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM
 Quailbrook Senior Center, Franklin

Bone Density Screening
NOVEMBER 18, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
 Old Bridge Senior Center, Old Bridge

Health Fairs
NOVEMBER 4, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
 Princeton University, Princeton
 Employee Health Fair

NOVEMBER 6, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
 Canal Walk Adult Community, Franklin
 Residents only.

NOVEMBER 7, 11:15 AM – 1:45 PM
 Clergy Health Fair of the Priests
 Diocese of Metuchen, Long Branch

NOVEMBER 8, 9:00 AM – NOON
 SS White
 Employees only.

Nutrition Education and Body Mass Index Measurement
NOVEMBER 14, 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM
 Spotswood Senior Center, Spotswood

NOVEMBER 20, 10:45 AM – 11:45 AM
 Warrenbrook Senior Center, Warren

Teen Breast Health Awareness
NOVEMBER 21, 8:15 AM – NOON
 Dunellen High School Wellness Fair, Dunellen

FREE COMMUNITY LECTURES

Dizziness: Causes and Care
NOVEMBER 4, 1:00 PM
 Presenter: Seema Dixit, DO
 Greenbriar@Whittingham Adult Community,
 Monroe Township. Residents only.

Neuropathy - What Is It?
NOVEMBER 12, 3:00 PM
 Presenter: Joshua Hersh, MD
 Clearbrook Adult Community, Monroe Township.
 Residents only.

Healthcare Reform: "What Obama Care Means for Seniors & Families"
NOVEMBER 12, 1:30 PM
 Presenter: Mary McGeary, State Health Insurance
 Concordia Adult Community, Monroe Township
 Residents only.



PARENT EDUCATION

For information, fees and registration, call Parent Education at 732-745-8579, unless otherwise indicated.

Baby Care
NOVEMBER 4 & 11, 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

NOVEMBER 16, 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Breastfeeding Class
NOVEMBER 16, 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Breastfeeding Support Group
NOVEMBER 1, 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
 732-745-8600, x8820

Grandparents Class
NOVEMBER 7, 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Infant Massage
NOVEMBER 6, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Marvelous Multiples
NOVEMBER 4, 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

New Mom Support Group
NOVEMBER 1, NOON – 1:00 PM
 Light lunch will be served at noon.
 Registration required.

Postnatal Yoga and Exercise Class
(four-week sessions)
HELD FRIDAYS, 6:00 PM – 7:15 PM
 Registration required.

Prenatal Nutrition Class and Tour
NOVEMBER 19, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
 Registration required.
 Linda Hudak, MS, RD
 732-745-7930

Prenatal Yoga and Exercise Class
(four-week sessions)
HELD WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS
7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
 Registration required.

Prepared Childbirth Classes
MONDAYS, THURSDAYS, OR ALL-DAY
SESSIONS SECOND AND FOURTH WEEKENDS
 Registration required.

Sibling Class
NOVEMBER 16, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

DIABETES EDUCATION

Children's Insulin Pump Group
NOVEMBER 12, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM
 Donna Dziedzic, RN, MSN, CDE
 732-745-8600, x8751. Call for more information.

NEW MONTHLY Diabetes Education and Support Group
NOVEMBER 26, 11:00 AM – NOON
 Saint Peter's Adult Day Center
 200 Overlook Drive, Monroe Township
 Lisa Sparaco, MSW, LSW
 Therese Wyman, RD
 609-409-1363, option 6

Diabetes Self-Management Education
HELD MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS
 Registration and doctor's prescription required.
 732-745-6667

Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Class
HELD WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
 Registration and a doctor's prescription required.
 732-745-6667

SPECIAL EVENTS

BARIATRIC WEIGHT LOSS SEMINAR
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14
7:15 PM – 9:30 PM
 For more information, and to register, call Lisa Lapinski at **732-745-8600, x8159**.

AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION DIABETES DAY
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16
11:00 AM – 3:00 PM
 North Brunswick High School. Screenings and health education provided by Community Mobile Health Services staff. Call **732-469-7979** for more information. Free but must register.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
 The Imperia, Somerset. Presented by the Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce. Blood sugar and blood pressure screenings and online breast cancer risk assessment by Community Mobile Health Services staff. For more information and to register call **732-745-8090, x209**.

EMS EDUCATION SERIES
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21
7:00 PM
TOPIC: BODY MODIFICATION
 Free; refreshments served. CEU credits. Call **908-238-3254** to register.

SAVE THE DATE

DIABETES EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUP
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM
MEETS QUARTERLY
 Center for Ambulatory Resources (CARES), fourth floor conference room. Free but registration is required. Call **732-339-7630**. Meets few times a year.

ANNOUNCING

Individuals who receive flu shots at Walgreens' pharmacies will also receive free health education provided by the Saint Peter's Community Mobile Health Services staff.

Central Jersey *Health and Life*, published quarterly, features stories about Saint Peter's Healthcare System. To subscribe, call 201-573-5541.

Opt-in to receive the Saint Peter's Community Calendar and other eNewsletters via email every month by visiting www.saintpetershcs.com/eNewsletter

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.



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 Regional medical campus of Drexel University College of Medicine | Affiliate of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia