

FertilityCare for young women

A newsletter of the Pope Paul VI Institute
dedicated to helping women appreciate their fertility

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REFLECTIONS ON OUR WORK AND ITS IMPACT ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF HUMANAE VITAE

Alice Sales, Education Program Coordinator

ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF MY JOB I ENJOY THE MOST is working with physicians going through their own conversion experiences. I can relate to them, this work has changed my life personally in a very deep way as well as my relationships with my family and friends. Every member of my family was inspired to convert based entirely on my experiences in working here. I have learned how to build strong and healthy relationships with all those in my life using SPICE. SPICE stands for Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Communicative, and Emotional. SPICE has proven to be an amazing way for me to build relationships and even in raising my children to be confident in their life choices and most importantly to respect themselves and their bodies.

As a mother of three NaPro-babies myself, I understand the education program's critical role in supporting the mission of the Pope Paul VI Institute. This work has grown into being my passion because we are promoting stronger marriages and healthier families, educating and challenging people to protect the gift of fertility and not destroy it. Empowering women to understand how their bodies work and how to play an active role in monitoring and maintaining their gynecologic health is something every woman deserves.



Alice Sales, Education
Program Coordinator

In my 24 years at the Institute, I have seen the education programs grow tremendously. The Institute offers a two-phase Education Program, which we hold annually in Omaha, NE and have taken to Poland and Mexico in recent years. These programs have gone from an average of 46 students per class to well over 100 consistently for the last 5 plus years. We also host the Women's Health Care Matters: Love and Life Unlimited Conference each year designed to ponder, promote and proclaim the Catholic vision of women's healthcare. All interested in supporting this work are invited to attend the Women's Healthcare Matters: Love and Life Unlimited Conference including priests and other religious, family life directors,

RCIA team members, pro-life directors, marriage preparation instructors, supporters, benefactors and others. To date, more than 3000 individuals have completed the education programs and/or the Women's Healthcare Matters: Love and Life Unlimited Conference. Due to these efforts, Creighton Model FertilityCare System and NaProTechnology are now represented on all continents except for Antarctica.

The Pope Paul VI Institute Education Department is the hub of growth in the Creighton Model FertilityCare System and NaProTechnology around the world. As the Education Program Coordinator at the Pope Paul VI Institute and under the direction of the Program Director Dr. Thomas Hilgers, I am responsible for coordinating and overseeing the sponsorship, maintenance and implementation of Omaha Education Programs; servicing and support of Satellite and Non-Omaha Education Programs around; Final Certification Examination

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and Program Completion for all Programs, support for Graduates and Students in the field from all Programs as well as the promotion and recruiting of the Creighton Model Fertility-Care System and NaProTechnology.

The programs leave a lasting impact on the participants, one which extends well beyond the training they receive. I have seen so many grown men and women literally cry because the Creighton Model FertilityCare System and

NaProTechnology allow them to practice their faith through their medical practices.

There is such a strong need today to educate Catholics and non-Catholics alike about the faith relative to reproductive health, and that is the major reason why I love working at the Institute. It gives me the chance to evangelize and to have a positive impact on the world.

WELCOME TO SANDY BRICHACEK, LPN

Sandy Brichacek, LPN

JOGGING DOWN A COUNTRY ROAD ONE FRIDAY AFTERNOON, looking mighty grungy, a car with three beautiful women with Omaha plates drove past me. They stopped to ask for directions to a cemetery. Surely they thought, “Yup, country hicks live around here!”

That very evening, I began a three-day retreat at St. Benedict Center by Schuyler, Nebraska, where I also worked part-time. As I helped with check-in, I was surprised to see the three same beautiful ladies also coming to the retreat. It obviously was God’s plan since through that retreat weekend those three ladies became lifelong friends.

How God’s plan unfolds in life is truly a miracle. When you are working, studying and teaching, it can feel as if you are doing things without a purpose. I have learned this is not true. God truly wants you where you are, all the days of your life, if you rely and trust in Him. I believe that nothing you do is without purpose or preparation, and although the process can be hidden, in time God reveals his plan for our lives.

The Lord gave me a strong desire to teach youth through CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine), classes that dealt with life issues. About 40 years ago, I had a dear priest friend in Norfolk, Nebraska whom I met on early mornings before work to say a prayer with him. He encouraged me to start teaching Youth by giving me books, articles, and the support I needed to begin. In my continued search for truth, I attended Dr. Hilgers’ 25th Anniversary *Humanae Vitae* Conference in Omaha in 1993. Little did I know what God was planning ahead. I taught every Wednesday for 35 years, while being a mom of six children and the Director of a Children’s and Youth Choir, singing and playing weekly for Masses with my daughters and the youth. We used the gifts God gave us, and listening to the youth and children sing gave me great joy! Working as



Sandy Brichacek, LPN

a para and music teacher for an Elementary Catholic School for 10 years, I was able to further understand how the media, peers, and culture form the young minds at an early age.

After researching hours and hours on the lessons of *Humanae Vitae* and Pope Paul VI, I began writing my own lessons. A few years ago, a priest gave me the opportunity to attend classes on the *Theology of the Body* by St. Pope John Paul II. I realized how tied together the message of *Humanae Vitae* and Pope Paul VI is with St. John Paul the Great and the work of Pope Paul VI Institute, especially NaProTechnology.

Last spring, I continued my college courses and graduated as an LPN from the College of St. Mary in Omaha. My country road and retreat friend, Laurie, encouraged me to apply for a position as nurse at the Pope Paul VI Institute. I started my position in May, and Laurie, who has ended up being an incredibly compassionate and knowledgeable teacher, is helping me train and learn. We never need to search for answers, nor ask God “why?” He leads us through special missions throughout our life. We can only learn His will as our lives unfold. God prepared me through late nights of studying, getting help from priests and teachers, books and research, and mostly working faithfully with the youth. I realize now that we cannot fully understand our mission and goals except through the eyes of God, because we are working for Him, not for man. Faith, trust, and prayer will lead us. I am honored, proud, and excited to be working for the Pope Paul VI Institute, Dr. Hilgers, and his amazing team of doctors, nurses, and staff. I cannot imagine working anywhere else because this is where my heart is and God has been preparing me for my whole life. May we bring joy and hope to women and men through God’s greatest gift of LIFE!

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PAINFUL MENSTRUAL CYCLES

By Teresa Kenney, WHNP

A QUESTION I OFTEN GET IS, “how do I help bad cramps with my period?” I have found as a nurse practitioner that women have several healthy and holistic options to make those few uncomfortable days much more comfortable.

First, let’s talk about what causes period cramps. When the body is having a menses it is essentially shedding off the inner lining of the uterus, to start the cycle over. This process can only happen by the production of inflammatory chemicals called prostaglandins. The hormone-like chemicals causes mini uterine contractions which allow the uterus to expel the tissue from the uterus. Women experience discomfort from this process.

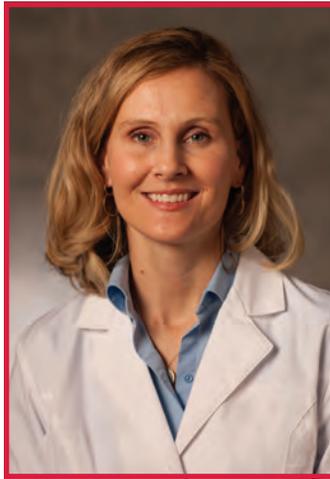
More moderate cramping related to prostaglandins and the sensitivity to them leads to a condition called dysmenorrhea or painful menstrual cycles. Dysmenorrhea affects a large group of reproductive age women. Studies show this affects anywhere from 20 to 90 percent in this subgroup, up to 20 percent of women have symptoms severe enough to affect the quality of their life.

Dysmenorrhea not only causes cramping, it can lead to other symptoms like low back pain, bloating, nausea, leg pain, diarrhea and fatigue. These symptoms certainly can make a woman want to crawl back into bed with a heating pad instead of jumping into a productive day at work, school or home.

Traditional treatment for menstrual cramps focuses on the cause of the cramps, which is inflammation. The goal of treatment is to tame or quiet the inflammatory response caused by the inflammatory chemicals being produced by our bodies.

There are conventional and non-conventional treatments for cramps. The easiest and sometimes most effective conventional treatment is the use of non-steroid anti-inflammatory medicines. I like ibuprofen since it is readily available over the counter and works very well. In order to really get on top of the pain, women need to understand how to take ibuprofen effectively to reduce pain and bleeding. Yes, not only can ibuprofen decrease cramps but if taken effectively can reduce the flow 20–30 percent. That is a bonus most women will take!

In order to get the effect of reduced pain and bleeding with ibuprofen you must take a higher dose and take it more consistently. I tell my patients to take either 600 (3 tablets) or 800 mg (4 tablets) every 6 to 8 hours around the clock as soon as their cramps start or flow starts to pick up to heavy. If



Teresa Kenney, WHNP

you take the ibuprofen without missing doses for that first day or two during the worst part of the period, you have essentially tamed the prostaglandins and decreased inflammation making your period much happier to live with. Remember that you should check with your doctor if you have any concerns about taking ibuprofen, especially if you have digestive issues.

If you do not like the idea of using ibuprofen, there are other more natural options to reduce inflammation. For example, fish oil in some studies improved pain similar to ibuprofen if taken during the period. Fish oil is also an anti-inflammatory and is tolerated very well. You can take one 1000–1200 mg fish oil capsule three times a day starting right at the very beginning of the period all the way through the first few days of the menses.

I often use other supplements that are very beneficial to cramps and other premenstrual symptoms like fatigue, bloating and headaches. Magnesium glycinate 400 mg is very helpful for all these symptoms, particularly headaches, and can be taken once to twice daily starting several days before the period starts, all the way through the period. Vitamin E is also found to be effective for relieving breast tenderness and period discomfort, 400 iu two to three times a day, one week before your period and through the heavier days can make a significant improvement.

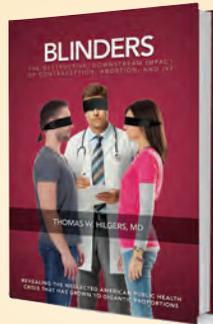
Another natural solution to reducing pain with menstrual cramps is diet focused on reducing inflammation, otherwise known as an anti-inflammatory diet. If you rid your diet of prostaglandin promoting foods, you can reduce inflammation and essentially reduce pain with your period. You will also lessen PMS and feel great in so many other ways as well. What does this entail? You will need to decrease sugar and your carbohydrates from bread, pasta and processed foods significantly. You also want to avoid dairy products which can also lead to inflammation. Use these principles of what to eat including a diet high in healthy fats such as olive oil, avocados, coconut oil and grass-fed butter. Try adding raw ground flax, walnuts, and pumpkin seeds to salads, snacks, or entrées. Eat more cold-water fish like wild-caught salmon. Get anti-inflammatory nutrients from veggies and fruits. Carrots, sweet potatoes, and dark leafy greens, apples, coconut, citrus fruits, berries, beans, artichokes, asparagus, and broccoli are all healthy options.

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BLINDERS: The Destructive, Downstream Impact of Contraception, Abortion, and IVF

Over the last 50 or 60 years, there has appeared a directional shift in the medical and social culture of the United States. We see it in the news programs every night, sometimes several times a night. Often there are generic reasons given for these changes such as "poverty and hopelessness."

But could there be other reasons? Could the medical profession be playing an important role in the violence and destructiveness of this cultural shift? Has there been any critical self-examination by the medical profession which usually demands evidence-based conclusions to be assessed? Or are there some questions that are



too difficult for individuals to investigate, not because it's impossible to investigate them, but because it can be painful and because the attitudes of a collective group of colleagues may be preventing these questions from being asked. It is as if we have BLINDERS on!

This book makes an attempt to address some new questions that have rarely been asked but should be. This book takes an objective look at data that has been produced by mostly government-based statistical gathering systems, some published in peer-reviewed medical journals and even some in news reports.

Learn more at www.popepaulvi.com/blinders

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You can read much more about anti-inflammatory diets on the internet as well.

Lastly, exercise can also be a beneficial way to reduce discomfort with your period. A recent study found that core strengthening exercises and stretching significantly reduced duration of pain and the intensity of pain with the period. We know that exercise not only increases blood flow throughout the body, but it also releases endorphins which are positive immune system chemicals that can influence the perception of pain by interacting with opiate receptors in our brains. Other physical interventions that have been found in studies to improve menstrual pain are both acupressure and acupuncture. These can be provided by trained individuals who have experience in women's health issues.

Let's also not forget how important sleep is and keeping our stress levels in check. This can be difficult since as women we can be so busy caring for others, we will forget to take care of ourselves. You should be getting a full night of sleep,

meaning at least 7–8 hours and spending time daily to relax and restore your mental health. Prayer is a great way to reconnect us with our spiritual health. By adding 10–15 minutes of daily prayer you will decrease stress and improve your overall health through the mind body connection.

There are several holistic and effective ways to make your cramps and the whole menstrual period experience more comfortable. As a last note, remember that not all cramps are normal. Those of you in the severe category, where these methods are not effective, should be evaluated by a doctor. The most common disease that causes severe pain with periods is endometriosis. This disease truly needs a trained physician and specialized treatment for a cure. Our doctors at Pope Paul VI Institute are world renowned for evaluating, diagnosing and treating this disease, if you are concerned about the severity of your pain, please go to fertilitycare.org to find doctor trained in NaProTechnology or call the Pope Paul VI Institute at (402) 390-6600 for help.

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