

Sat Oct 18, 2008

Great to see everyone today! The weather was spectacular.

NEW FACES

- Wayne and Julie Bacon
- Jim and Rochelle Smith

Wayne and Julie came with their 7-month-old girl Morgan. Great to see all of you, and we hope you can come again!

BECKIE STEWART NEXT MONTH

I forgot to mention at the meeting: Beckie Stewart, Stroke Coordinator from Northwest Hospital, was unable to speak to our group today due to family illness. She will be with us next month.

MEETING TIME

I'm trying to negotiate date, time, and room for our meetings for next year. The consensus today was that 11:00 or noon is a good starting time; it seems to be better on the early side like this rather than after noon. I will keep you all posted about the 2009 schedule.

DIANE KENDALL FROM UW

Diane Kendall from the Speech and Hearing Clinic at the UW introduced herself to us and brought up two subjects. First, she has an aphasia treatment study underway which is being offered at no cost, and second, she asked us to give some thought to what we would like in a new Stroke Center at the UW. Next month she and Nancy Alarcon will come to our meeting and brainstorm about this exciting new development. For further information contact Diane: dkendall@u.washington.edu or 206-897-1458.

ELEANOR GRIFFIN ACUPUNCTURE

Bernie and Eleanor report that her acupuncture seems to be helping. Note that Blue Cross and other insurance companies will cover this treatment.

BOOK REPORTS

I gave a presentation about two books I've read recently which are very exciting. They are both well-researched and reliable.

The Brain That Changes Itself, by Norman Doidge, MD

- Good news: The brain is much more plastic than we thought even a few years ago. People with significant brain damage are making amazing recoveries, even years later.
- Bad news: it takes tremendous effort and focus to achieve this brain regrowth. Hours a day for weeks, months, years? This is similar to immersion language learning, which is much more effective than the same amount of time in small pieces.
- Long-term plastic change occurs only when subjects pay close attention to what they are doing. (No listening to your iPod or watching TV while you rehabilitate.)
- From the brain's point of view, imagining an act and doing it are not very different. Imagining an activity changes the brain almost as effectively as actually doing it! Studies involve concentrated imagining of an activity, ~2 hours/day for several days straight. This may have tremendous implications for people who have lost function entirely. It might be possible to *imagine* yourself back into functionality!
- Some organizations involved in brain plasticity training: Scientific Learning (www.scilearn.com), Posit Science (www.positscience.com), the Arrowsmith School (www.arrowsmithschool.org).

My Stroke of Insight, by Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD

- Brain scientist who suffered a severe left hemisphere stroke. She lost all language and much of her cognitive abilities, also much right-side function.
- After 8 years of strenuous rehab, she has "completely recovered" in her words. Rehab examples: walking several miles/day 4 days/week with arm weights for arm strength and body balance. She was a strong believer in brain plasticity even before the stroke.
- She felt a strong sense of deep inner peace, Nirvana, when her left hemisphere was shut down. She learned that we can all uncover profound feelings of well-being and peace by quieting the chatter coming from our left brains. She says her stroke was "the best thing which ever happened to her".
- More information and some of her video presentations: www.drjilltaylor.com.

I will put both these books in our library, and I urge everyone to read them if they can. It is very exciting news for stroke recovery!

Next month we have nurse Beckie Stewart, Stroke Coordinator there at Northwest Hospital, coming to speak to us. Diane Kendall and Nancy Alarcon from the UW Speech and Hearing Clinic will also be there to hear our ideas about the upcoming Stroke Center. Put on your thinking caps and come with some great ideas!

See you next month,
Gerrit