

# HEALTHY LIVING for mind, body and soul

## Specialists, latest treatments help patients regain function



Photo/Hannah Wentworth

Catherine Yee, MD

Your pain from arthritis, injury or degenerative changes may now be under control, but you really wish you could get back to fly fishing, horseback riding or some other activity you once used to enjoy. It may be possible.

At Western Washington Medical Group's Orthopedic, Sports, Spine & Hand Center, board-certified orthopedic specialists use the latest treatments and protocols to help patients return to function and regain their quality of life.

"A return to activity can do wonderful things for the heart and soul," commented Catherine Yee, MD.

Yee, whose specialties include nonsurgical physical medicine and rehabilitation as well as pain medicine, joined the practice on Oct. 17. She

comes to Western Washington Medical Group after completing her fellowship at the University of Iowa.

"It's so rewarding when you're able to work with your patients and support them and get them back into the activities and relationships they find fulfilling and make their lives more meaningful. That's what drives me," she said.

The Orthopedic, Sports, Spine & Hand Center features a number of physicians, each with their own specialties and interests. One of Yee's specialties, physiatry, offers a nonsurgical approach in the treatment of things like chronic back or neck pain, joint pain, arthritis pain, muscle spasms or nerve-related pain.

"When patients have had pain for so long it can feel like you're at your wit's end or that you've run out of options," Yee said.

But that may not be the case. Yee urges patients to come in and get re-evaluated and find out what new options and procedures may be available.

"I think it's nice to have a physiatrist take a look because our approach is not only focusing on function but it also tends to look at a more holistic picture of how the patient is doing," she said.

The multi-disciplinary approach in terms of whole health and lifestyle. Sometimes lifestyle changes are needed to bring about change or improvement. But Yee and her fellow physiatrists tailor their approach to each individual, offering education and counseling so the patients know their options.

Treatments may include everything from gold standard epidural steroid injections to state-of-the-art procedures like radio-

frequency ablation. Both are same-day outpatient procedures.

But unlike epidural injections, radiofrequency ablation uses no steroids or medications. Instead it uses heat from radio waves to block the pain signals.

Sometimes a change in medication is all that is required to get people restored to full function. Yee works with patients' primary care physicians to ensure patients have the correct medication for their health issue.

"My goal in getting an extra year of sub-specialty training in pain medicine was so I could really take patients from injury to recovery and help them with medications, therapies and interventions," Yee explained.

In fact, many of Yee's patients have questions about their medications and medication manage-

ment. There are certain situations where narcotics are the appropriate choice, Yee explained, but it can be tricky. Narcotics can affect everything from cognitive function to your immune system.

There are non-narcotic medications that can be as effective, especially when combined with therapies and interventions. That's why it is important to see a specialist such as Yee who is focused on your individual case.

Western Washington Medical Group's Orthopedic, Sports, Spine & Hand Center is located in Everett's Gateway Plaza.

To learn more about Dr. Yee and her colleagues, go online at <http://www.wwmedgroup.com/specialties/orthopedic-sports-spine-hand/> or call (425) 317-9119.