

# Transitions

2020 Spring  
Newsletter

## New Study Compares Memory Loss and Money Loss

Older adults in the U.S. lose millions of dollars each year to financial exploitation and scams. Many factors make older adults vulnerable to financial predators but declines in memory and other thinking skills may be chief. Even well before a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or other dementia, changes in cognition can change finances. Until recently, however, we didn't have a precise correlation between loss of memory and loss of money.

The multi-year Health & Retirement Survey of thousands of older adults has answered that question – with shocking results. Participants were given 10 words to remember from the

beginning to the end of a survey. Every two years, they took another word memory test. People who showed a 10% loss of memory over two years, dropping from remembering all 10 words to remembering 9, for example, reported a 15% to 20% drop in overall wealth.

“That’s a huge monetary loss,” said IOG Director Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, an expert on financial decision making in older adults. “I was curious about the details. The survey looked from 30,000 feet. What about ground level? Exactly how do people with early memory loss manage their finances? Are they losing money

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## Are You Loving on Empty?

Caring for an older adult, especially if they have Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, can drain us of energy and patience. Sometimes a little support at the right moment can “fill up our tank” and bring joy and love back into our daily duties.

The Institute of Gerontology created *Caregiver Connection*, a twice monthly e-newsletter full of caregiver resources and events, most of them free of charge. Learn about caregiver boot camps, reducing stress, and managing another person's finances, including how to know when your care partner needs help with financial decisions. All we need is your full name and email address.

Join our **Caregiver Information list** by visiting the IOG Facebook page and clicking *Join My List* in the lefthand column. Or email [cheryldeep@wayne.edu](mailto:cheryldeep@wayne.edu) with your full name, email address and phone number. Let us help you help others. Sign-up today.

## Yoga Strengthens Brain and Body

Researchers have long known that aerobic exercise is not only good for the body but also the brain. High intensity exercise drives blood and oxygen to brain cells to keep them healthy and stimulate the growth of neurons. A recent research review, however, co-authored by the IOG's Jessica Damoiseaux, PhD, found many of the same brain benefits seen in aerobic exercise after a few months of yoga practice. “The science is pointing to yoga being beneficial for healthy brain function,” Dr. Damoiseaux said, but more studies are needed.

The review, published in the journal *Brain Plasticity*, focused on 11 studies of yoga prac-

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*A research review finds evidence that yoga enhances many of the same brain structures and functions that benefit from aerobic exercise.*

## Money from page 1

because of poor financial decision making, financial exploitation, mismanagement, or a combination of all three?"

### The Science of Financial Decisions

Dr. Lichtenberg's new research study is called WALLET (Wealth Accumulations & Later-life Losses in Early cognitive Transitions). His team is recruiting men and women age 60 and older who manage their own household finances but feel like their memory is slipping or they have been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment.

Participants share their past year's primary checking account statements with Dr. Lichtenberg's team for analysis. **Due to Covid-19, all interviews are conducted by phone.** Participants receive recommendations for budgeting when needed.

### The Temptation of Feeling Entitled

Dr. Lichtenberg cautions that 60 to 65% of financial exploitation comes from people we know rather than from strangers. Adult children who provide care for parents can feel entitled to dip into mom and dad's money. Those who feel entitled often believe they should have access to their parent's money since at some point they will inherit it. This is financial exploitation and it causes serious harm.

*"If you have to pay money to secure affection, it isn't love."*

"I worked with a woman who was spending 40% of her very limited monthly income on cell phone bills. She had five other family members on her bill. They had asked for temporary help but never left the plan," he said. The woman had difficulty realizing just how much money she was losing and its impact on her lifestyle. She also didn't want to risk hurting family relationships by saying, "no."

He advises older adults to break the taboo and talk about money, especially with their children and ideally before memory issues occur. "Discuss budget, estate planning, gifts, bequests, housing wishes. If you have doubts about trustworthiness, have an independent person review expenses and provide oversight," he said. He warns older adults against supporting children into their 30s and 40s.

"Encouraging children to be financially independent, to live within their means, is one of our main responsibilities as a parent. Real love cannot be bought. If you have to pay money to secure affection, it isn't love."

## HELP FOR THOSE WHO GIVE CARE

Remote Help with Scams, Fraud, Identity Theft and Managing Money as a Caregiver



Successful Aging thru Financial Empowerment (SAFE) provides **FREE** financial coaching to older adults and their caregivers to help them manage money securely and accurately.

Schedule an appointment with Program Director LaToya Hall to talk by phone or computer now: [l.hall@wayne.edu](mailto:l.hall@wayne.edu) or 313-664-2608. Assistance is safe and confidential.



presented by

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY  
CAREGIVER EMPOWERMENT

Participants will be **compensated**

All financial records will be de-identified and information kept **confidential**

Interviews will take place **over the telephone**



WAYNE STATE  
Division of Research



Peter Lichtenberg, PhD  
Principal Investigator  
Director, Institute of Gerontology  
Wayne State University



## The WALLET Study: Memory Change and Money Management

Because the links between early memory loss and a decline in wealth are on the rise, the WSU Institute of Gerontology is seeking to interview older adults aged 60+ who have received a diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment or believe their memory to be declining.

The interview examines financial decision making and financial management and includes cognitive tests and other measures. During the Covid-19 shutdown, all interviews are conducted by phone. No in-person visits are needed. A review of financial records from a primary checking account is included. We anticipate the interview to take two hours and it will be scheduled at your convenience.



If interested, contact **Vanessa Rorai, MSW**, at 313-664-2604

## YOGA from page 1

tice and brain health. Five studies recruited individuals with no background in yoga to attend one or more yoga sessions per week for 10-24 weeks, comparing pre-yoga and post-yoga brain health. The other studies measured brain differences between individuals who regularly practice yoga and those who don't. Dr. Neha Gothe, professor of kinesiology and community health at the University of Illinois, led the research with Dr. Damoiseaux.

Studies showed an increase in the size of the brain's hippocampus which processes

memories and typically shrinks with age. "It is also the structure that is first affected in dementia and Alzheimer's disease," Dr. Gothe said. The study also points to important brain changes in the amygdala, which helps to regulate emotion, and the prefrontal cortex, "which is essential to planning, decision-making, multitasking, thinking about options and picking the right option," Dr. Damoiseaux said. Yoga has been shown to reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, a possible factor in improving brain functioning.

Both researchers agree that the results of their review warrant further study. "Yoga is

not aerobic in nature, so there must be other mechanisms leading to these brain changes," Dr. Gothe said. They recommend large intervention studies that engage participants in yoga for months, match yoga groups with active control groups, and measure brain changes and performance on cognitive tests that can be compared against other types of exercise. "We need more rigorous and well-controlled intervention studies to confirm these results," Dr. Damoiseaux said.

Their work appeared in media outlets across the country, including *US News & World Report*, *CNBC*, *Runner's World* and *WebMD*.

## PARTNERSHIP CORNER

### Caring from the Heart When You Need It the Most

Heart to Heart Hospice prides itself on offering personal and invaluable service during one of life's most difficult times. Caring and experienced staff provide end-of-life comfort, support and dignity to all patients and the people who love them. "Compassionate care from our heart to enhance the quality of life for those with life-limiting illnesses and their loved ones," is Heart to Heart's philosophy and a guiding principal for every member of its staff.

Founded in 2003, Heart to Heart Hospice is one of the largest providers of hospice services in the U.S. It is accredited by the Community Health Accreditation Partner under Hospice Standards of Excellence and a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. Heart to Heart has partnered with the IOG for several years to help educate health care professionals about end-of-life care. That trusted relationship has now been expanded. In 2020, the Heart to Heart Hospice Foundation provided a grant to create a new caregiver conference organized by the IOG and the Alzheimer's Association.

The fall conference, *Heart to Heart Caregiving: Loving on Empty*, will be a virtual webinar



*The Easter Bunny safely visits delighted residents at a Heart to Heart Hospice this spring*

for caregivers from across metro Detroit full of educational presentations and self-care strategies for support. Caregivers of all ages and backgrounds are encouraged to tune in. Whether the care partner has a physical disability, cognitive changes, or both, viewers will find useful and accurate information to ease their caregiver journey. The webinar on September 19, co-sponsored with Heart to Heart Hospice Foundation, will cover care strategies, self-care mechanisms like meditation, and inspirational stories from a fellow caregiver. Look for details in your inbox in July. "We applaud Heart to Heart Hospice for its generosity in sponsor-

ing this important webinar," said IOG Outreach Director Donna MacDonald. "The IOG and Heart to Heart recognize the paramount role caregivers play. It's a way to say, 'thank you' for making such a serious and meaningful difference in so many lives."



**HEART TO HEART  
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**Donate at:**  
[www.htohhfoundation.org](http://www.htohhfoundation.org)

# Caregivers & Finances: Educate, Empower, Protect

During nearly six decades of experience in gerontology outreach, education and research, the IOG has become skilled at spotting issues destined to have a major impact on older adults. We were one of the first institutes to recognize the importance of creativity in aging; our annual Art of Aging Successfully Conference has been a sell-out for 22 years. In the 1980s, we realized healthcare professionals needed education specific to caring for older adults. Our Issues in Aging conference and hundreds of CE programs continue to fill that serious knowledge gap.

Several years ago, IOG Director Peter Lichtenberg noted the pivotal role caregivers play in the health of older adults and that managing finances was an often under-recognized aspect of caregiving. Thanks to those insights, three new IOG programs were launched: SAFE (Successful Aging thru Financial Empowerment), the Older Adult Nest Egg website (online tools for financial decision-making), and the *Caregiver Connection* e-newsletter.

## Keeping Finances SAFE

SAFE workshops and one-on-one coaching have helped thousands of older adults handle finances, avoid scams and restore credit after identity theft. SAFE has now added Caregiver Empowerment to its mission to assist caregivers in the difficult task of handling their care partner's money. A new AARP report calculated that each U.S. victim of financial exploitation loses an average of \$120,000. The cost to caregivers of victims? An estimated \$36,000. Helping older adults and caregivers avoid financial scams and manage money protects the financial health of everyone involved.

SAFE has recovered more than \$60,000 for victims of fraud so far. "We offer several approaches to help with finances and fraud recovery," said SAFE Director LaToya Hall. "We've given workshops on budgeting, record

keeping, scams and how to protect yourself as well as one-on-one counseling for victims of exploitation." All SAFE programs and materials are free.

As in-person contacts have been suspended during the Covid-19 crisis, SAFE has transitioned to remote services. One-on-one coaching is now done securely by phone or web cam. SAFE's training booklets on key financial

scams and fraud, and how to manage someone else's money.

For Family & Friends offers downloadable booklets to build financial literacy, resources to understand and report scams, and quality organizations for caregivers. A Family & Friends Questionnaire will soon be available to help caregivers determine the soundness of their care partner's financial decisions and how vulnerable they might be to exploitation. As with all IOG programs for caregivers, materials and tools on the site are free. Visit [OlderAdultNestEgg.com](http://OlderAdultNestEgg.com) and click on the *For Family & Friends* tab.

## Connecting While Keeping Our Distance

*Caregiver Connection*, a twice monthly e-newsletter, debuted in March as a way to share tips and resources with caregivers throughout metro Detroit, including information on financial caregiving. All resources are free and most are from local organizations.

The social isolation of Covid-19 distancing is stressful for everyone but caregivers can be especially hard hit. With no respite available from friends, relatives or home care aides, the strains

of caregiving can magnify. *Caregiver Connection* provides ideas to stay stimulated while at home and personal stories of others coping with similar experiences. To receive *Caregiver Connection*, visit [www.IOG.wayne.edu](http://www.IOG.wayne.edu), and under Resources on the home page click Get Caregiver Information.

The IOG will launch a new free VIRTUAL caregiving conference on September 19. *Heart to Heart Caregiving: Loving on Empty*, co-sponsored with Heart to Heart Hospice Foundation, will offer webinar workshops for caregivers of all ages and backgrounds. Topics will include caregiver strategies to impact quality of life, self-care mechanisms like meditation, and inspirational stories from a fellow caregiver. Look for details in your inbox in late July.



areas can be downloaded from the IOG website under Resources/Handbooks & Publications. SAFE is also converting live workshop information to video and webinar format. Contact LaToya Hall at [l.hall@wayne.edu](mailto:l.hall@wayne.edu) or call 313-664-2608 for assistance.

## A Web-Based Approach to Sound Financial Decisions

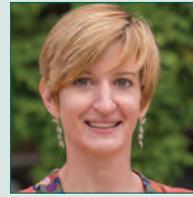
The IOG's Older Adult Nest Egg website ([olderadulthoodnestegg.com](http://olderadulthoodnestegg.com)) has been helping professionals assess the financial decision making of older adult clients since 2017. This year the website added a special section for informal caregivers. Called "For Family & Friends" it offers narrated trainings on early signs of dementia, difficult conversations about money,



**Contributions that Impact** – Dr. DeAnnah Byrd, an IOG fellow in WSU’s Postdoctoral to Faculty Transition program, won a Postdoctoral Research Award from the Graduate School. Her scientific work was cited as providing abundant and impactful contributions to the field of gerontology. “I hope others will join me in my efforts to not only address, but eliminate cognitive health disparities in older African Americans,” Dr. Byrd said. The WSU transition program selects exceptional candidates and provides resources and support to make them competitive for tenure-track faculty appointments.



**Career Development Award** – Dr. Noa Ofen, director of the Ofen Lab for Cognitive & Brain Development at the IOG, won a University Career Development Award. The program supports outstanding tenured faculty members as they work toward promotion to professor. No more than five awardees are chosen from across the university each year. The award includes an honorarium and funding for unrestricted research, which Dr. Ofen will use to investigate the relationships between changes in the brain and changes in children’s memory ability, and the neural basis of memory decisions in children and adolescents.



**“Do Tell!” Stories to Explain Health Challenges** – Communication between older adults and health care providers can easily go awry. Patients may face major hurdles in managing their disease while the physician believes all is going well. **Dr. Heather Fritz** has a \$300,000 grant from the National Institute on Aging to try a novel approach to bridging that communication gap. “Do Tell” will video a collection of stories highlighting the key issues older adults face in managing health issues, and pilot them as teaching tools for medical students.



**Quality of Life in Cancer Survivors** – IOG professor **Dr. Malcolm Cutchen** is co-principal investigator on a new five-year, \$3.1 million grant from the National Cancer Institute. Dr. Cutchen and colleagues will study how societal, community, interpersonal, and individual influences affect the health-related quality of life of African American cancer survivors. These survivors show substantial racial disparities in health compared to non-Hispanic white survivors. The team will recruit 600 participants from metro Detroit. They hope that identifying areas that can be modified will lead to interventions that improve survivors’ health-related quality of life.

## IOG Trainees Resilient and Positive During Tough COVID Times

While the world at large has been put on pause, IOG trainees have been diligently writing research papers for submission to journals, working on their dissertations, and trying to stay focused. The pause button became the fast forward button for **Dwana Bass**, an IOG trainee in nursing. Dwana has been working on the front lines of this pandemic in the Henry Ford Sterling Heights Emergency Room. Before COVID hit, she planned to help with several IOG outreach events.

Some trainees planned conference trips to present their research, but those were either canceled or converted to online formats. **Chaitali Anand** scheduled a west coast trip to interview for a postdoctoral position, but shelter-in-place orders meant Zooming instead.

Trainees collected money for the Senior Alliance Meals on Wheels program to provide free holiday dinners to older adults in need. **Ray Viviano** and **Rebecca Campbell** coordinated the fund-raising drive. Rebecca also helped conduct mental health screenings at Men’s Health Day at Ford Field in September.

Chaitali has taken responsibility for uploading her lab’s data to a public data

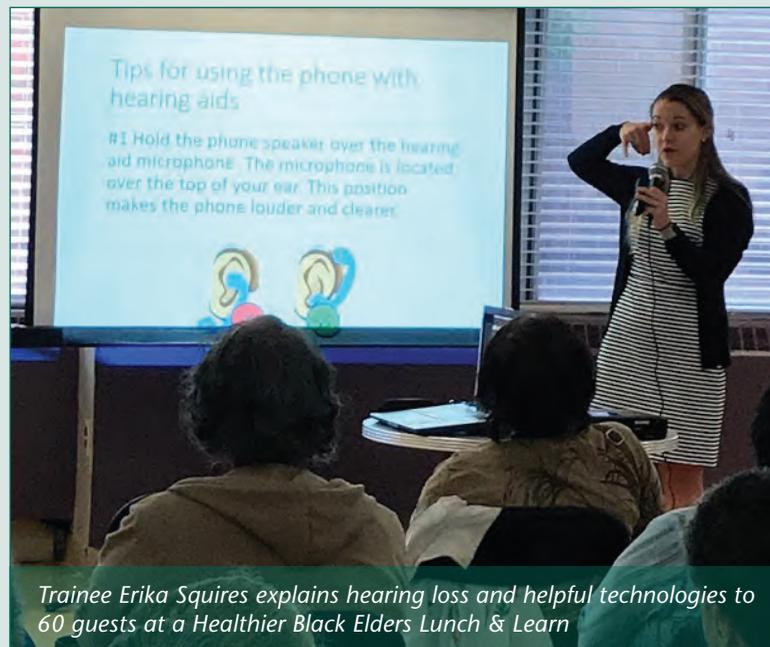
sharing site. The first wave has been uploaded and successfully made public. She will continue to ensure additional data is uploaded and shareable.

**Roya Homayouni, Youjin Jung** and **Erika Squires** volunteered at Brain Day in early March at the Michigan Science Center. Brain Day makes neuroscience fun with hands-on learning activi-

ties for children. Erika presented on Hearing Loss at a September HBEC Lunch & Learn and Youjin helped register attendees.

**Jonathan Lynn** is first author on a manuscript under review by the journal *Cerebral Cortex*.

**Kimberly Shay** helped with two outreach events before the COVID-19 crisis cancelled the others. Kim represented her home department, anthropology, by staffing a display table at Archeology Day in Lansing, attended by history and archeology groups from across Michigan. She was also an ambassador for WSU’s Grosscup Museum of Anthropology during Detroit’s Noel Night attended by more than 600 people. Kim even helped the IOG’s sister institute Merrill Palmer Skillman by facilitating a table of teens at its annual Giant Step Teen Conference.



Trainee Erika Squires explains hearing loss and helpful technologies to 60 guests at a Healthier Black Elders Lunch & Learn

*“All of our IOG students continue to amaze me,” said IOG Training Director Dr. Gail Summers. “We are so lucky to have them!”*



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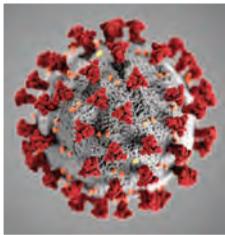
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## MESSAGE FROM IOG FACULTY, STUDENTS & STAFF



## Covid-19 Response

Though live events at the IOG have been cancelled or postponed this spring and summer, the important work of the IOG continues. We're connecting with older adults and healthcare professionals across the area through e-newsletters and this print issue of *Transitions*, mailed to each home. We created the new *Caregiver Connection*, full of free resources and true stories, emailed to 4,000 people who provide informal and formal care to older adults.

Our researchers are staying in touch with



study participants through video chats and phone calls. Many interviews are now conducted with no person-to-person contact needed. We continue to write grant proposals and apply for funding for new projects. And, as you'll see in these pages, our faculty continues to accrue awards and honors for the unparalleled quality of their work.

Our faculty experts remain ever available to journalists searching for the perspective of an institute dedicated to gerontology and needing

resources and recommendations to supplement a breaking story. At a more personal level, our staff members reach out regularly to the IOG volunteers who help us plan events, run programs, and sit on our board, to share a friendly connection and make sure they are well.

Through it all, our top priority is the safety and well-being of older adults in Detroit and around the world, as we cope with the frightening effects of Covid-19. May you and yours stay safe and well.