

Health care misses the boat on stress management

Ever felt like you're in a crisis? You hear someone say, "Calm down, you're just stressed out. There's nothing more to it."

Believe me, there's a lot more to it. Stress is the underlying killer behind an astonishing number of cancer and heart disease cases. In fact, studies show that stress exacerbates heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the U.S.



BY RISHAB REVANKAR
STAFF WRITER

And while we can blame ourselves to a certain extent, we can also point a finger at a surefire culprit: the U.S. health care system.

Clinical institutions spend billions in research each year to determine the effectiveness of various blood pressure medications. While this doesn't hurt patients, it fails to promote healthy lifestyles.

"If I went to the doctor and he diagnosed high blood pressure, he would prescribe a pill," said Guilford's former Head Athletic

Trainer Mary Broos. "It would be a rare doctor who says, 'Mary, you need stress management.' The profession as a whole doesn't encompass stress because it isn't paid for."

With health insurance cutbacks today, even transplant patients have trouble getting the costs of their medications covered. Insurance for stress management? Forget it.

"Businesses are recognizing significant influences of stress. But the medical system and insurance aren't well structured to deal with that type of prevention," said Wake Forest's Behavioral Science Education Director Dr. William McCann to The Guilfordian.

"Although they know of a direct link between stress management and heart disease, I don't know any insurance company that covers (stress management) today," said Broos.

Our health care system is all about the big picture. Treatment is geared towards the symptoms of health problems and not always the causes.

"You show up, you have 15 minutes, and

the appointment's designed to look at acute problems," said Dr. McCann.

"Stress in America," a national study, found that only half of Americans concerned with their stress actually receive support from their health care providers.

"Health care in general is just awful in this country, and it's going to get worse," said Adjunct Lecturer of Sports Studies Aaron King. "Doctors can't spend time with patients because they're seeing a thousand of them a day."

Guilford's community is no exception to the list of victims of our health care system's structure.

In a randomly distributed survey, 40 of 50 total students identified themselves with a stress level of more than 5 on a 10-point scale with 1 being low and 10 being high.

Of the 40 stressed-out students, only eight reported satisfactory stress support from a health care provider.

"Students experience great levels of stress," said Professor of Sports Studies Kathleen Tritschler in an email interview.

"There is definitely a need to teach ways to cope positively with stress."

Below-par health care is hitting us hard. But in the light of a couple of stress-intervention techniques, it may not mean the end of the world.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Organization, any physical activity ranging from daily 10-minute walks to regular vigorous 45-minute workouts reduces likelihood of stress by 25 percent.

"The number one stress management intervention is exercise ... it doesn't have to be marathoning, even walking 15 to 20 minutes a day will do," said Dr. McCann.

While exercise provides stress relief through physical activity, meditation gets the job done through mental inactivity.

"Everyone should meditate for 15 minutes daily. People who say they are too busy to meditate — they need to meditate for 20 minutes," said Yoga Instructor and Ayurvedic Physician Dr. Vijaya Singh in a phone interview.

"I like to spend that extra time with those patients," told Internal Medicine Physician Dr. Nina Uppin to The Guilfordian. "I tell them that meditation can work miracles that modern treatment can't."

Access to excess: assault rifles

I am a gun owner.

I own a 20-gauge Browning Auto-5 shotgun, a Ruger 10/22 rifle and a Makarov service pistol, and I enjoy hunting and shooting.



BY ANTHONY HARRISON
STAFF WRITER

However, I've always found civilians owning military-grade rifles absurd.

Sophomore sports management major Stephen Wetherill spent six years in the military and trained with a wide array of weapons. In light of his training, Wetherill agreed with me.

"The want for these weapons obviously is high, but I don't find any feasible evidence for somebody who doesn't have some sort of military or law enforcement background to own them," Wetherill said.

Plenty of gun owners counter this opinion. Some use these tactical weapons for hunting, some for home defense, and some just own them. Their justifications do not sway my belief.

First, let's discuss hunting. I can't understand why you'd need 30, 20, or any more than 10 bullets in your rifle if you're riding around your ranch taking pot shots at coyotes and deer. You can't shoot twenty deer at a time, let alone two.

I understand the .223 Remington — the caliber of the AR15 and other assault rifles — is a popular cartridge for small- and medium-game hunting, but I don't see the logic in allowing hunters to own a gun with a magazine that holds 10-plus rounds at once.

Likewise, there's no point in your hunting rifle having a folding stock, flash suppressor or bayonet. None at all.

Still, some gun-rights activists maintain that an assault rifle equipped with such tactical attachments is the best choice for home defense. But I cannot accept that a firearm designed to hit targets at 100 yards is a practical weapon in the confines of a home.

"A handgun provides you with enough firepower in a ten-round magazine," Wetherill said. "You don't need any more."

"If you need ten rounds to engage an intruder in your home, you shouldn't own a weapon in the first place ... You need to reconsider how to defend your

home."

Some people own assault rifles simply because they're fun to shoot. I bet they are.

But Wetherill believes that these weapons are popular due to a romantic fascination with the military.

"It's more of an ego-boost, a testosterone-boost," Wetherill said. "They want to feel like they're a part and can defend themselves. But it requires a certain style of training from certified instructors to operate weapons at the level that the military operates."

"It turns into a mockery."

An AR15, with its Parkerized finish, pistol grip and picatinny rail, allows the user to fantasize on the target range that they're a soldier firing an M16 — which they are, when you get down to it: the AR15 was the basis for the M16.

An assault rifle's allure boils down to machismo. If you want a plinking rifle, get a .22.

Gun-rights activists present further counterpoints. For example, they claim that these firearms aren't true assault weapons because they lack a fully automatic firing mode. But Wetherill stated that soldiers often prefer semi-automatic to fully automatic fire.

"Semi-automatic ... provides a level of accuracy and quick re-engagement on a target, and that's the reason we enjoy it," Wetherill said.

Also, some entertain the notion that people with sufficient military or law enforcement training should be able to own these firearms. To me, access to these weapons by anyone poses a potential threat.

"What keeps (a veteran) from waking up one morning and having some sort of imbalance or switch flip and think, 'Know what, it's time to wreak havoc somewhere?'" said Wetherill.

"It's a matter of someone owning that deadly of a weapon."

Indeed; a law-abiding citizen abides the law until they don't. That is why something as dangerous as assault rifles cannot be in civilian hands. No practical need exists for them, so direct action must be taken to eliminate them from the civilian market.

"We should've cracked down after Columbine," said Wetherill. "Then Virginia Tech happened. Sandy Hook happened."

"The line's drawn, man. We have to take responsibility for our actions."

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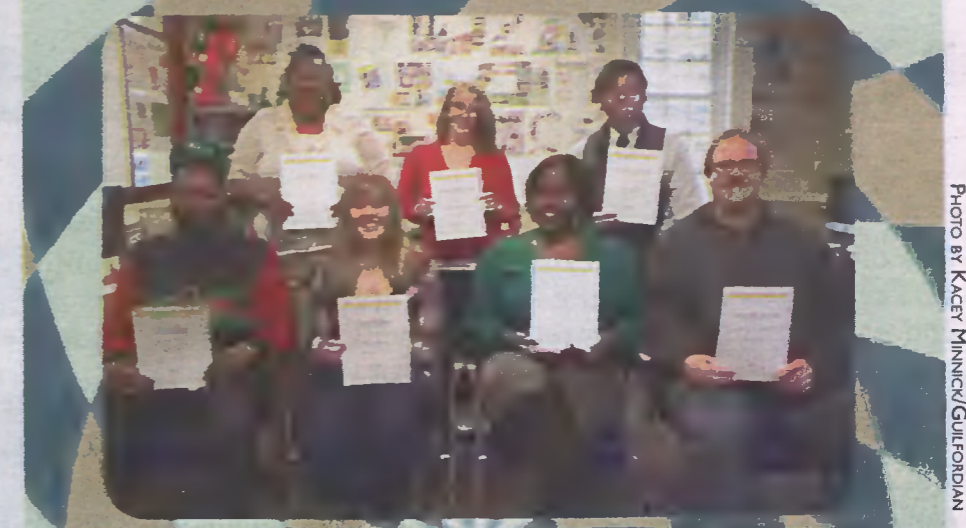


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Also, congratulations to the full staff of The Guilfordian for winning Best of Show for both the print edition and online website!

*In the under 6,000 students category