

MARCH 2021

Christian Health Care Newsletter

Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

This Month's Newsletter

- 5 Member Spotlight**
New Samaritan Board Member
Curt Zondervan
- 8 How God has provided through you**
Messages from our Facebook Group
- 10 Overcoming fear of childbirth**
by Chandra Lattig of Pregnancy By Design
- 13 Platelet-rich plasma therapy**
by Dr. Mark Wheaton of Lakeside Sports and Pain Clinic
- 15 Prayer for the Persecuted Church**
- 16 The Doorpost**
Waiting on the Lord in times of trouble

Member Letter:

'THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HIS HANDS AND FEET'

I was incredibly blessed by my brothers and sisters who sent me prayer cards and checks after my extended stay in ICU for pneumonia. Samaritan Ministries told me that I would receive 153 checks from other Christians to help with my Needs. The next day, I heard a radio preacher talk about how some apostles caught 153 fish after the Resurrection. I knew that Jesus was showing me that He was going to provide for my Needs just like He did for them! We serve an awesome God! Thank you all for being His hands and feet here on earth.

Paul
MISSOURI



David Nielsen

Using price transparency to improve health care one member at a time



by Bill Kampine
of Healthcare Bluebook

THE ABSENCE OF health care price transparency in the United States and the inability of consumers to compare provider prices and choose better value is costing both

consumers and plan sponsors billions of dollars annually. But the use of Healthcare Bluebook's fair-price tools is helping Samaritan Ministries members save hundreds of thousands of dollars a month.

In 2018 alone, the U.S. spent \$3.65 trillion (about \$11,000 per person in the U.S.) on health care, nearly 20% of GDP, which is much higher than what similar developed countries spend. Roughly \$1.5 trillion of the total is spent by non-governmental plan sponsors, consumers, and entities like sharing ministries. Conservatively, shoppable services account for one-third of that total, or \$500 billion. Based on Healthcare Bluebook analysis, when consumers have the tools to shop for care, compare

continued on page 3



Sharing Summary* | February 2021

NEEDS

\$27,032,070

MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS

78,374

SHARES

\$27,751,660

*Classic and Basic

Due to the Lord providing more Shares than bills, we were able to share some bills ahead of schedule. Praise God for His continued provision!

Contact Us | 877-764-2426 | Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

QUESTIONS ABOUT?

Your medical Need
Shares you are sending or receiving
Your membership

EMAIL

needs@samaritanministries.org
membership@samaritanministries.org
membership@samaritanministries.org

PHONE MENU

1-1
1-2
1-3

Have a Need? Use the Health Resources App on Dash



- Compare quality and cost of health care services in your area using Healthcare Bluebook. Receive a \$250 reward when you submit a screenshot showing you chose a green fair-price provider.
- Use MediBid to receive bids from doctors for tests or treatments you are seeking.
- Email a medical professional or call a nurse (*free*), or call a doctor who can write a prescription (\$25).
- Access discount tools for prescriptions and lab tests.

Send a note. Pay your share. Always stay alert in prayer.

EDITORS

Rob Waldo, Executive Editor
Michael Miller, Managing Editor
Ray King, Editor Emeritus

CONTACT US

newsletter@
samaritanministries.org

FOLLOW US

Facebook: Samaritan Ministries
Instagram: @samaritanmin
Twitter: @samaritanmin

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

PO Box 3618, Peoria, IL 61612
telephone: 309-689-0442
telephone (*toll free*): 877-764-2426
fax: 309-689-0764

providers on cost and quality, and choose better value providers, both consumers and plan sponsors can save 50% on these shoppable services, returning \$250 billion back to our economy.

When patients don't understand what care should cost and lack the ability to compare providers, they often overpay for common health care services. In fact, Bluebook data shows that prices between facilities in the same market can vary by 500 percent to 1,000 percent, or more, with no difference in quality. And it's not just health care costs that are hurting Americans. The third-leading cause of death in the U.S. is medical error—or poor-quality care. When patients don't have access to outcome-based quality information, they can choose poorly performing doctors or facilities, increasing their risk of complications, readmission, and death.

The cost to the U.S. economy is significant. Unwarranted and invisible price variability means employers and plan sponsors must continually increase premiums and deductibles to keep up with rising

health care costs. That's money that could otherwise be invested back into growing businesses, hiring new employees, or increasing employee wages. For consumers, our disposable income is reduced by ever-increasing premiums and out-of-pocket costs. When we unknowingly pay \$3,000 for a \$500 MRI, that's money that could have been put toward the purchase of a first home or saved for a child's college education.

We don't accept this absence of transparency in other service industries, and we shouldn't accept it in health care.

Indeed, state and federal policy makers are beginning to take small steps toward improving access to information for everyday consumers. In 2019, the federal government instituted new regulations that require hospitals to publish their cash prices for 300 services, effective January 2021. Also, in 2019 the Senate HELP committee proposed bipartisan legislation that would improve transparency, lower prescription drug costs, and end surprise bills for consumers. Most recently, through a series of executive orders, the Trump administration took steps to lower drug prices by easing reimportation of approved medications, among other initiatives.

While the legislative process takes time, the good news is that health care sharing ministry members don't need to wait to understand prices, compare providers, and lower their health care costs. Since 2017, Samaritan Ministries and Bluebook have cooperated to ensure that Samaritan members have access to our



While the legislative process takes time, the good news is that health care sharing ministry members don't need to wait to understand prices, compare providers, and lower their health care costs.

national pricing website, mobile app, and phone support to easily shop for the most cost-effective, highest quality care.

While Bluebook makes it easy to look up procedures, understand local prices, and compare providers, Samaritan has taken the program a step further to ensure that members have the personal help they need when shopping for complex care. As a bonus,



members are rewarded for making good, cost-effective choices on care. In the Bluebook CareConnect program, member concierges guide members through each step of the care process for high-cost, complex procedures, including finding the best provider and scheduling the procedure.

The program has made significant financial and personal impacts in the lives of ministry members.

Recently, a Samaritan member visited an urgent care clinic where he was diagnosed with an inguinal hernia that required surgery. The clinic recommended a surgeon who was able to quickly schedule the procedure. After making the arrangements, the member inquired about the cost and received a total quote of \$25,254, including a facility charge of \$23,518. Understandably, the member was shocked by the facility charges, checked the Samaritan Bluebook page, and called Bluebook CareConnect.

The member was connected with a member concierge who found a local surgery center that would do the surgery with the same surgeon and the same anesthesiologist for just \$3,400. Bluebook made all the arrangements with the surgery center, including scheduling the procedure and making the payment. The total cost of the successful surgery was \$5,522—a savings of nearly \$20,000 that not only affected the patient but also cascaded down to fellow members.

And the impact of price transparency is not just financial. A February 2020 Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that the single

greatest concern for patients was a surprise bill they couldn't afford. Understanding the fair price for care, having the ability to compare providers, and being able to agree on a fair price prior to care reduces stress.

In the words of a Samaritan member:

This experience has been nothing short of amazing. Bluebook found an excellent surgeon and surgical facility for me and arranged for payment prior to the procedure. They also helped with finding a reasonably priced doctor and facility for the pre-op testing I needed. The staff at the outpatient surgical center, the surgeon, and the anesthesiologist were all outstanding. I've never had such excellent medical care. I can't recommend Bluebook CareConnect highly enough. They took all the worry and work out of having to go through something like this.

The increasing amount that we spend on health care is not sustainable for plan sponsors, consumers, and the U.S. economy. The fact that price and quality remain hidden from the groups who primarily pay creates massive inefficiency and waste. However, our experience tells us, as in the example above, when consumers can easily compare price and quality and select cost-effective care, providers will compete on value—lowering overall costs for consumers.

Transparency, on a large scale, is coming to the health care delivery system and it will reshape the way

we shop for, consume, and pay for health care. The good news is that Samaritan members don't have to wait. Bluebook and Samaritan are leading the way to ensure that members have the tools they need to shop confidently and avoid overpaying for care. Partnering together, we can lead the way to a higher quality, cost-effective, and more fair health care system. ◆◆◆

Bill Kampine is a co-founder of and Senior Vice President, Analytics and Innovation, for Healthcare Bluebook.

Member Spotlight

Curt Zondervan | Board member

by Michael Miller

Newly elected member of the Samaritan Board of Directors is directed by and pays forward a Biblical worldview

CURT ZONDERVAN IS Samaritan Ministries' newest elected member of the Board of Directors. The Grand Rapids, Michigan-area resident and his wife, Shannon, have three children and are heavily involved in local ministries. He is related to the Zondervans who ran the Christian book publishing company before it was sold to HarperCollins Christian Publishing. But Curt's resume runs in a different direction. After working in the health care field, Curt is now an independent contractor with MTM Recognition, a company that creates awards and recognition solutions, such as the Heisman Trophy and Super Bowl championship rings.

A Biblical worldview directs the Zondervans' community service.

"I would say that Shannon and I have always been big on worldview, building a Biblical worldview within our children and within teens and young adults at our church," Curt says. "That has led us to connect with organizations like Bethany Christian Services, the right-to-life movement, and the free-market think-tank Acton Institute."

Curt says involvement in such ministries is his family's way of putting their worldview into action.



Curt and Shannon Zondervan (Credit: AV Photography)

"If we're really going to change the culture of America, we're not going to do it by electing a better president or a better senator or congressman," he says. "We've got to instill Biblical values in the American citizenry, as well as critical

thinking, which we appear to be at a loss for today."

In his family's pursuit of a Biblical worldview and critical thinking, they became engaged in a variety

Continued on page 6

of ministries. Curt has served on boards of several pro-life organizations and volunteered at their fund-raisers. The family has also volunteered at Acton Institute's week-long Acton University during summers. The event "looks at the correlation between free markets and freedom of religion, how if you're likely to lose one, you're likely to lose both."

Once he became a believer in Jesus, Curt "pivoted my passions" toward the Lord.

"From college on, I've consistently tried to grow my relationship with our Lord," he says. "I've tried to move the things I was passionate

about in college to being passionate about a relationship with God and how I can be His hands and feet to bring other people into a closer relationship with God."

The Zondervans are heavily engaged in their faith.

Shannon is an elementary school teacher in the inner city, "and she's passionate about that," Curt says. "She loves the kids. We're always adopting a family or two over Christmas, which ends up being more Christmas gifts for them than for ours, which is great as long as I don't have to wrap them!" Shannon is also "a wonderful friend," Curt says.

Their three children are:

- Emma, the oldest, a special education teacher married to a youth minister in Clarksville, Tennessee.
- Anna, a sophomore at Freed-Hardeman University.
- Jack, a junior at Calvin Christian High School who's involved in theater and likes to water ski.

"Most importantly, all three of them are very, very engaged in their faith, and not only engaged, but independent in their faith, which is the number one goal," Curt says.

Why Samaritan Ministries?

A biblical worldview is important to Curt Zondervan, and it was one of the things that attracted him first to health care sharing with Samaritan Ministries.

Curt knew about health care sharing.

When Curt left Medtronic, one of the largest medical companies in the world, he lost his health insurance but was offered COBRA for \$1,900 per month.

"I thought, 'Wow, now is the time to make the move to health care sharing,'" he says. "In comparing Samaritan with other options, I thought it was the best fit and love the concept of it being rooted in a Christian worldview where people are sharing Needs and people are praying for each other. It gives us another awesome oppor-

tunity to be the hands and feet of Christ, which health insurance doesn't offer.

"Not only that, but Samaritan's a much better stewardship of my resources. Or, I should say, God's resources that He has loaned to me for the time being, so that I have other opportunities to use them with the money I save with Samaritan."

Curt's experience with Samaritan has gone "wonderfully well."

"We've had fantastic notes with the Shares we've received," he said. "We have only had about three Needs. It's been more than I even hoped for as far as the support as well as any kind of member care from Samaritan's staff." ♦♦♦

Much of Curt's professional life has included the health care industry.

Curt started in business at age 10, when he became the youngest U.S. Racquet Stringers Association certified racquet stringer in the world, stringing 500 racquets in his age 12 year.

"I was always looking for ways to meet needs," he says. "That really continued after college."

Following college, Curt worked for the telecommunications company LCI International. Then he got a job working with Abbott Laboratories. "I was trying to work with doctors to find a way to help folks who maybe don't have insurance and can't afford a drug," Curt says.

After Abbott, he worked for Medtronic, which makes defibrillators, devices that send an electric current to the heart and restore its normal rhythm, such as when a person is suffering a heart attack. He spent 17 years working with ambulance and emergency department crews. "I studied how we can save lives with defibrillation and defib someone quicker and have more opportunity to save their lives, and other things like automated CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)," he says.

He hopes that 20 years of experience in the health care field will help him to better serve Samaritan members.

"Right now, health care for a lot of people is a big problem, and I think Samaritan is a fantastic solution to that as long as we can manage it in a way to keep costs down and give people a lot of independence and autonomy

around the care that they receive," Curt says.

"I'm excited to hear what members are interested in or concerned about, and how those questions can be successfully addressed and help Samaritan grow both spiritually as we try to be a blessing in people's walk with Christ as well as physically."

He's realistic about his learning curve on the Board.

"I'll be super interested to get a better handle on the demographics of the membership," he says.

"I would like to see how Need percentages break down. I'd also like to explore how we can extend Samaritan to other demographic groups that have not adopted Christian health care sharing yet."

As someone who likes to travel, COVID-19 restrictions have been "challenging."

"I've got a few vouchers with a few too many airlines right now," Curt says.

During their marriage, he and Shannon have visited Thailand, Vietnam, the Azores islands, Portugal, Hawaii, Spain, and Ireland.

"'Zondervan' means 'without a home,'" Curt says. "I guess that resonates with me a little bit."

How you can pray for Curt.

Curt would appreciate prayer as he serves on the Board of Directors "and, frankly, for really good ideas as we navigate public policy issues in the years ahead." ♦♦♦

Michael Miller is a Senior Communications Specialist for Samaritan Ministries.

"We've got to instill Biblical values in the American citizenry, as well as critical thinking, which we appear to be at a loss for today."

Here's how God has provided through you!

WE ARE BLESSED regularly with notes of encouragement in our Samaritan Ministries Community Facebook Group (facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin). Members also share information, suggestions, and prayer requests. The following are stories that were posted in the Facebook group of how God has provided through you. Praise Him as you read on!

Dean and Karen K. of Montana



Dear Samaritan Ministries and Samaritan Members,
Words cannot express how thankful I am for the assistance we have received for my wife's ongoing 13-month battle with stage 4 lung cancer. After payments of \$18,000 and \$15,000 dollars for Karen's drug treatment for the first few months, which you shared, I cannot believe the blessings and the prayers we have received from you and the members of Samaritan Ministries. God does answer prayer through you, my friends. He is still in control. He is still on the throne and He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is our hope and He is our healer!

Because of these blessings we have done everything in our power to get discounts for the drugs and the treatments. Today we are getting a 40 percent discount from the cancer center in our hometown and our medicine for Karen's treatment is free until next year. We can pass those savings on to other members who are struggling with health care needs.

We believe God has protected our finances by leading us away from our insurance company to Samaritan. Our health insurance went up twofold in price with super high deductibles which we could no longer afford. We did not know that after having Samaritan for a while my wife would be diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. Without our fellow Samaritan members, we would be literally out living on the streets right now and who knows if we would be able to get what Karen needed for treatment. I thank God for you every day. I stand amazed! If you are struggling with sickness or emotional heartache today, I just want to encourage you by saying there is always hope. Hang in there.

In Christ's love, Dean and Karen

Amy M. of Kansas

We are SO thankful for Samaritan Ministries! Hoping 2021 is full of sharing, and not needing. But, thankful that when we had great need, we were helped financially ... and in prayer. There is nothing like getting notes and prayers from strangers when you are walking through a dark medical trial.

I was in a wheelchair last Christmas (2019), and the doctors had basically told me to get my things in order and expect my body to deteriorate more. I was diagnosed with complex regional pain syndrome, "the Suicide Disease." Because I am a Samaritan member

(and not with a marketplace health insurance plan), I was able to look into a more holistic care plan.



I actually found one clinic in the United States that treats with intent to obtain remission, and I had success. I have a long road ahead, but I'm walking again and enjoying a life that last year I never thought I'd have a chance to lead. Perspective is everything. We are so blessed ... and so thankful for your ministry.

Johnna F. of Kansas

When we joined Samaritan 2½ years ago, we hadn't had a medical issue or claim for several years on our health insurance. However, since we joined, we've had one Need after another from rabies exposure to bacterial infection to broken bones. We welcomed our newest family member in December and, last night, our 11-year-old fractured 2 bones in her arm. We are getting pretty good about finding the best ways to reduce our costs, including getting X-rays at the chiropractor (only \$50), rejecting the sling last night (in the ER) as we knew we had one at home, and asking for same day pay discounts. At first, I was nervous every time we needed to see a doctor, but now, I love knowing our fellow believers have our back and we can focus on healing and not worry about the financial portion. Thanks to all who have shared in our Needs, and we know eventually we can return the gifts to other members.

Diana B. of Florida

When we switched from medical insurance to Samaritan Ministries in July, we never thought we would have to use it in October. We weren't sure how it would work with a Need.

It's one thing when an insurance company takes care of the negotiating, but when you have to do it, it's quite an experience.

Then this month, when we began receiving checks and paying one bill after another, it hit: this really works.

People usually pay their medical premiums without thinking about where their money goes. We did. Now that we're members of Samaritan, when we receive someone's Share, there is a name and a note from different families in different parts of the USA! Then one bill after another is paid off. We still have 3 to go but wanted to share how different and loved we feel instead of just being a number.



Praise God for His mighty provision!
If you're on Facebook and haven't joined the
Group yet, please consider doing so!

facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Overcoming fear of childbirth

Expectations can shape how a woman experiences labor; here are three ways to transform fear into confidence



by Chandra Lattig of
Pregnancy By Design

Second in a series

FEAR OF CHILDBIRTH is very common! Even the most fearless women may find themselves somewhat nervous as they get closer to the reality of giving birth.

Usually, fear about childbirth arises from 1) a lack of birth knowledge and 2) a woman's expectations about birth. These expectations may shape how a woman experiences labor, and even the birth outcome she's likely to have.

A mother who has negative expectations about birth, or a first-time mother who doesn't know a lot about the physiology of birth, is likely to have more fear than a mother who has positive expectations and is confident in the birth process.

Where do expectations about childbirth come from?

Expectations about childbirth are influenced by what we see in the media and stories from family and friends. Our past experiences can affect our expectations as well.

What we hear, see, and read about birth is significant in shaping how we think it will go for us, too.

"Oh, my mom went past her due date, had to be induced, and had a long labor ... it's probably going to go the same for me!" Many of us can identify with that type of thought as we try to predict how the birth might go. And, if we've been through birth before, that experience often guides our expectations for next time—for good or bad.

Your expectations about childbirth matter

Your expectations and level of fear about birth matter a lot! Research shows that negative expectations left unchecked lead to negative thoughts about birth, which often increases fear. Studies show that negative expectations may indicate childbirth complications.

Indeed, the more fearful thoughts a woman has about childbirth during pregnancy, the more it seems the birth becomes unpleasant in a self-fulfilling way. And having a negative birth experience can lead to a woman feeling more fear about future birth experiences, repeating the cycle.

Fear of labor pain also leads women to choose more interventions, especially pain relief such as epidural anesthesia. Women who have greater fear about childbirth sometimes have higher rates of C-sections. So, a woman's fear

about childbirth has a real, significant impact on her birth experience and outcome.

How does fear affect childbirth?

The connection between expectations, fear of birth, and how the birth ultimately goes makes a lot of sense. A higher level of fear leads to higher levels of stress hormones, which chase away oxytocin, the hormone that helps labor to progress. Feeling fear can stall your labor, which means interventions will likely be suggested.

For example, when a mother has fearful thoughts going through her mind, what do you think happens in her body? She tightens her muscles, often clenching her pelvic floor and her face as well as other muscle groups, known as the fear-pain-tension cycle.

Muscles that are clenched and tight get less oxygen and work against effective contractions. Tight muscles with less oxygen lead to more painful contractions. In turn, this greater pain increases the woman's level of distress and may take her fear up another notch. You can see how this could lead to medical interventions as she gets desperate for relief.

The cycle can even contribute to fetal distress if the mother isn't breathing or moving around well. Moving in labor is important. Being

tethered to a bed is not conducive to normal birth!

In contrast, a woman who feels less fear usually has an easier time relaxing the muscles in her body. Her fear is reduced by her knowledge that birth is normal and part of the human experience. Her calm mental state helps to loosen and open muscles, especially in her pelvic floor. Her mental acceptance of the sensations of labor helps oxytocin to flow well. Her relaxed, oxygen-rich muscles help her to feel less pain during each contraction.

In turn, she continues to feel calmer and more relaxed as labor progresses. We call this the “accept-relax-relief” cycle. God has specifically designed our

bodies and minds to cope with labor—and, though it is challenging, it is worthwhile! John 16:21 (NIV) says, “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.”

Transforming fear into confidence

The good news is that women are not stuck with their current level of fear or negative expectations about birth. They are not doomed to have a negative birth experience.

Here are three ways to reduce fear or anxiousness about giving birth:

Learn about how birth works.

You can reduce your level of fear by

learning about the process of birth and gaining mental and physical preparation tools for labor. Start by taking a good childbirth education course. A 2016 study showed that mothers who took childbirth education classes were 25 percent more likely to have a vaginal birth than those who didn't. Learning about the process of labor, how your body works, and preparing yourself mentally and physically can help reduce your anxiety and increase your chances of having a positive birth experience.

Pregnancy by Design offers comprehensive childbirth education called “Beyond the Birth Plan

Continued on page 12

Pregnancy by Design resources available to Samaritan members

Beyond the Birth Plan Childbirth Course

A comprehensive childbirth course that focuses on YOU, the laboring person, instead of a one-size-fits-all method for birth. Labor is a unique and individual experience for each woman. The best labor preparation happens on the inside, using many tools to help you relax, focus, and welcome your baby. For the month of March, Samaritan Members can take advantage of \$100 off the Beyond the Birth Plan Childbirth Course (one-year access) with code **SMbirth100** at PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/beyond-the-birth-plan-childbirth-course/

Birth Profile Assessment

A personal childbirth questionnaire designed to help you make more informed choices in your birth care. You will learn about the seven key ar-

eas that influence your birth experience—your personality, your beliefs about birth, your birth place, your health care provider and your birth knowledge. Go to pregnancybydesign.com/courses/birth-profile-assessment/

The Complete Guide to Writing a Birth Plan

A step by step walk-through of the most important aspects of creating an effective birth plan. pregnancybydesign.com/complete-guide-to-writing-your-birth-plan/

40 Weeks to a Better Birth

Weekly pregnancy tips, updates, encouragement, recipes, pregnancy exercises and more to help you have a happy and healthy pregnancy and birth! pregnancybydesign.com/40-weeks-to-a-better-birth/ ♦♦♦

Childbirth Course.” This self-paced course will help you identify specific fears about birth and will walk you through specific steps to challenge those fears. During the course, you will develop a birth affirmation (or a coping thought) that directly answers that fear. Usually, the birth affirmations focus on your strengths and thoughts instead of focusing on labor itself. For March, Samaritan members can take advantage of \$100 savings on the complete childbirth course with coupon code SMbirth100.

Be mindful of what you watch and listen to: It’s important to be mindful of what and who influences our thoughts during pregnancy. The Bible encourages “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8, NIV). That may mean skipping over a scene in a movie that paints birth as scary or kindly stopping a well-meaning friend from sharing her negative birth story with you. Instead, make time to read and watch positive birth stories. Be encouraged by the many women in the past who have given birth since the beginning.

Surround yourself with a strong support system: Your support system is important! Those who will have the biggest influence on your birth experience include your provider, your husband, closest family/friends, and your doula if you’ve hired one. You should feel comfortable sharing your feelings and any fears you have about birth with your provider. If you are not



(iStock)

comfortable doing so, you may want to switch to a new provider.

Also, be sure to talk through your fears and desires for your birth with your husband. Include your husband in your childbirth education so that you are both on the same page, which should help to reduce stress. A couple should understand the physiology of how God has designed your body to bring a baby into the world.

Lastly, consider hiring a doula. Birth doulas provide continuous labor support, which has been shown to lower the amount of time spent in labor, reduce a woman’s anxiety, decrease the rate of medical interventions (including C-sections), and improve mother-baby bonding.

The change in your expectations and fears doesn’t have to be drastic or unrealistic to help. You don’t have to change your fear into excitement or eagerness about birth to have a better birth.

If a woman can shift from intense fear to a realistic expectation that birth is hard but she can do it, she is likely to have a better birth. Realistic expectations have the best chance of being met. When realistic, positive expectations are met during birth, a mother tends to be happiest with her birth. For example, a woman who learns to view herself as flexible and expects to cope with whatever birth brings will probably be more satisfied than a woman who expects birth to unfold in an ideal way.

Remember, you were made to do this! ♦♦♦

The information provided in this article is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

Chandra Lattig is the creator of the Pregnancy by Design program (pregnancybydesign.com), which features many resources for expectant families. She works alongside a team of amazing Christian people, including her husband and co-creator Ryan Lattig as well as Dr. Elizabeth Pearce, PsyD., and Dr. Nicole Bringer, DPT.

Platelet-rich plasma therapy seen as helping chronic pain

PRP delivers concentrated platelets to source of pain, says physician



by Dr. Mark Wheaton
of Lakeside Sports
and Pain Clinic

THERE IS A line in an old hymn that goes, “There’s wonderful power in the blood,” referring to the saving blood of Jesus.

This, of course, is a spiritual reference to the saving work of Jesus when He died on the cross to save the souls of men. It is the promise of eternal life to all who believe in His death as payment for sins. That is the Gospel message: There is supernatural power in the blood.

There is also a natural power in the blood for people who suffer from chronic injuries and pain. It is found in the natural healing method called platelet-rich plasma or PRP. But it is one’s own blood that contains the power to heal.

Platelets are specialized blood cells made in the bone marrow that, along with red blood cells and white blood cells, circulate throughout the bloodstream. Platelets naturally contain many types of growth factors—some researchers say up to 100 different ones—that are sent out to heal and repair tissue damage and injury throughout the body. We witness the work of platelets when we see how a skin wound or

cut stops bleeding and eventually heals itself over time. The same thing occurs when joint tissues are injured. Platelets naturally infiltrate the injury site initially and with the attraction of tissue-rebuilding cells called fibroblasts, the injury and pain are finally gone. Unfortunately, many injuries do not heal completely on their own so that, in time, chronic joint pain, instability, and arthritis occur.

In recent years, PRP was developed as a way to deliver concentrated platelets to the source of pain to permanently heal joint structures, eliminate pain, and restore function. Joints are made up of bone, cartilage, ligaments, and tendons. Injuries to these tissues result in chronic sprains and strains of ligaments, muscles, and tendons of the joints of the arm and leg, such as occurs with rotator cuff tears (shoulder), tennis elbow, foot and ankle conditions, meniscal tears (knee), and loss of cartilage, which is commonly known as arthritis. Chronic pain and instability in the neck and back, often associated with headaches, pinched nerves, and disc problems, can be debilitating and not helped by standard treatments.

For many decades, if these problems did not improve with standard conservative therapies or relieved

with drugs known as anti-inflammatories, cortisone shots were the next step before resorting to arthroscopic surgery or total joint replacement. Because of the damaging effects of cortisone on joint tissues and the destructive nature of surgery to joints, however, an effective, natural approach was needed. And now, PRP, as well as prolotherapy, has filled that need.

Many years ago, surgeons discovered that putting platelets into the surgery site before finishing the operation seemed to assist healing and recovery. Arthroscopic surgery was developed to minimize scar tissue formed from surgery, and bone drilling then was utilized to cause bleeding to stimulate healing. It was not long before researchers theorized that the platelets in the blood had the potential to help patients avoid surgery that they assumed they needed. Thus, the method of PRP administered by injection has come to the forefront as the choice of many doctors and patients to heal injuries and joint tissues, avoiding cortisone injections and surgery.

The natural injection method of prolotherapy has for many decades utilized natural substances in solu-

Continued on page 14

tion to stimulate and successfully repair injured tissues. One may think of PRP as just prolotherapy using one's own blood since they both have the same goal: regenerating tissues to heal injuries and eliminate chronic pain naturally. Prolotherapy regenerates the healing with solutions and PRP regenerates healing with blood. The release of stem cells is thought to be the mechanism for healing with these methods.

The process for a PRP treatment is quite straightforward.

For example, you may have chronic knee pain. After a thorough evaluation to determine the source of pain, blood is drawn from your arm and spun down. The platelet portion is injected into the damaged and/or painful knee joint. All that is needed is a kit for the blood collection and a centrifuge that spins the blood at a high speed in under 15 minutes. The blood stays in a sealed container and, when the spinning time is over, it has automatically been separated into a compartment specifically for the platelets. Since it is your own blood being used to treat the injury, there is no chance of a cross-reaction as theoretically may occur with the use of another person's blood.

It is vitally important that a patient goes to a medical doctor trained in both the proper diagnosis of appropriate PRP cases and the skill to place the injection in the correct location. A well-trained physician with an independent practice in the musculoskeletal field and with years of clinical experience in prolotherapy and PRP injections is vital if the best outcome is desired. In the good

hands of a skilled prolotherapy and PRP physician, the injection takes about one minute in the clinic, is well-tolerated, and requires no sedation. The patient will be on his or her way home in minutes.

There will likely be some joint soreness for a day or two, but this varies with the patient and the body part that is treated. The soreness is expected and desired, indicating the wound-healing process has begun. Like prolotherapy, there is little downtime. Previous levels of activity can be resumed as tolerated. Simple heat or a dose or two of acetaminophen may be used for a day or so if desired. Prolotherapy can even be performed along with PRP to give a more pronounced effect, with the prolotherapy having a broader effect on stability and the PRP targeting a specific structure that is damaged.

It may seem overly simplistic to say that PRP can treat any joint problem from head to toe, but, when treating any appropriate joint condition or pain involving muscle, tendon, ligament, or cartilage, PRP and/or prolotherapy has the potential to permanently repair the damage, stabilize the joint, eliminate the pain, and improve one's daily activities.

Not all patients will get exceptional results and certain cases may still need to have surgery. But most patients treated with prolotherapy, PRP, and stem cells are pleased to find that they have improved their function, reduced their pain, and avoided potentially harmful effects of drugs, cortisone shots, and surgery.

It usually takes regular, monthly treatments for results. For some

patients it may only take four to six treatments to get a good to excellent result, but, for patients with more chronic problems, it may take more than six treatments to get a satisfactory outcome. Health insurance does not cover these natural injection techniques, but, since they have the freedom to choose their own providers, Samaritan Ministries members typically are able to have the cost of the treatments shared. The results are long-lasting and natural and can save thousands of dollars by avoiding the mainstream health care system, which utilizes drugs, physical therapy modalities, surgery, and other costly treatments.

The advent of these exciting and developing regenerative healing techniques has come at an opportune time, as health care costs have skyrocketed. Patients, now more than ever, are searching for effective alternatives that will not only give long-lasting benefits but will promote natural healing as well. By keeping the original tissues that a patient has but making them stronger and better over time, joints are preserved for an active, pain-free life. Future advancements will come with more research, but with the safe and effective track record of both PRP and prolotherapy there is no need to wait when results are so good already. ♦♦♦

The information provided in this article is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

Samaritan Ministries member Dr. Mark Wheaton lives in the Deephaven, Minnesota, area. If you have more questions about either PRP or prolotherapy, or if you are wondering whether you might be a good candidate for these procedures, call (952) 593-0500, visit DrMarkWheaton.com, or send email to info@drmarkwheaton.com.

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Pastor released after December 30 arrest

Pastor An Yankui of Xuncheng Reformed Church was arrested by Chinese authorities on December 30 and released on January 16, Voice of the Martyrs-Canada reports. He was arrested during a Bible study in his home. Five women arrested at the same time were released earlier. *Praise God for Pastor An's freedom. Pray for his church's witness and the spread of the Gospel in China.*



Pastor An Yankui is greeted by family and members of his church after his release. (Credit: Pray for Early Rain Covenant Church)

Iranian Christian blogger arrested again

Christian blogger Fatemeh (Mary) Mohammadi of Iran, who received a suspended sentence and 10 lashes in April 2020 for being a member of a house church, was arrested on January 18 by "morality police" for what they said was improper dress, VOM-C says. *Pray for safety for Mary and her quick release, and for other believers in Iran subject to harassment.*

Ugandan convert, pastor attacked

Two Ugandan Christians were recently attacked, with one of them dying from his injuries, VOM-C says. Yusuf Kintu, whose wife divorced him over his conversion, was ambushed and beaten by Muslim militants on December 7, dying a few days later. The pastor of a church where another former imam announced his conversion to Christ was beaten after a service on December 27. That former imam and his wife have been moved to a safe location. *Pray for both Ugandan church communities, for healing for Pastor Moses Nabwana and his wife, Naura, and for Yusuf's wife and children.* ♦♦♦



Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

HEBREWS 13:3

Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer.

Each month, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from a variety of sources. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time, and also as a reminder to encourage other believers to pray for the persecuted Church.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:

International Christian Concern
persecution.org
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor
worldwatchmonitor.org

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Psalm 37:7

✂ Detach and use as bookmark or on your refrigerator

THE DOORPOST DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9; 11:18-21



Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

PSALM 37:5-9

DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST always face opposition from evil powers (Ephesians 6:12). Even amidst societal turmoil, our response should be to wait on the Lord, not passively but actively, persevering in doing good, trusting in the Lord and taking delight in Him, confidently expecting His protection and provision.

The last two verses in Psalm 37 assure us, "The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him."

Don't fret about the seeming success of evildoers. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and do good. Take refuge in Him, waiting for Him with patient endurance. He will act. Take delight in the Lord, enjoying His provision of the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4).



For the Kingdom,
Ray King