

February 2022 Classic/Basic sharing summary

Member households in Classic/Basic: 79,061

February bills: \$29,761,835

February Shares: \$28,243,340

Classic and Basic online Share-increase votes to occur in March

In December, we indicated a Classic Share increase would be proposed by the Board of Directors the next time we prorated. Classic continues to have significantly more bills than Shares, and we have delayed proration in an attempt to see whether this is a seasonal or long-term trend. It is clear that we have a long-term trend and need a Share increase to avoid further proration and be able to share members' Needs in full.

The Board of Directors is also proposing a Share increase in Basic for the first time since its inception to avoid proration and keep up with increased medical costs. While this month's bill submissions do not indicate that Basic will be prorated next month, we are intentionally being proactive in recommending an increase, as we recently came close to needing to prorate Basic.

Eligible bills continue to outpace Shares

As we have mentioned in recent months, bills submitted in Samaritan's programs continue to outpace available Shares, reflecting higher health care costs caused by increased medical inflation and spending.

Our goal with Share increases is to provide as modest an increase as necessary to meet members' submission of eligible bills. For all Samaritan programs, we are also trying to prorate less frequently than we have historically because of the uncertainty it causes for members who are facing daunting medical situations. Share increase votes do not impact the Initial Unshareable Amount (IUA), which is chosen separately by the Board. Currently, there are no changes to the IUA in Classic or Basic.

If approved, Share changes will take effect with May Shares.

The member-led Board of Directors has proposed the following Share amounts for both Classic and Basic programs:

Classic Proposal

Member Group	Current Share	Proposed Share
1 person under age 30	\$160	\$177
1 person age 30 or older	\$227	\$263
2 persons	\$454	\$511
3- to 7-person families	\$530	\$596
8+ persons	\$555	\$682
Widowed/divorced with children	\$330	\$408

Basic Proposal

Member Group	Current Share	Proposed Share
1 person under age 30	\$100	\$99
1 person age 30-44	\$120	\$126
1 person age 45-59	\$140	\$147
1 person age 60 or over	\$160	\$168
2 persons under age 30	\$200	\$209
2 persons age 30-44	\$240	\$251
2 persons age 45-59	\$280	\$293
2 persons age 60 or over	\$320	\$337
3+ persons, under age 30*	\$250	\$263
3+ persons, age 30-44*	\$300	\$314
3+ persons, age 45-59*	\$350	\$368
3+ persons, age 60 or over*	\$400	\$421

Continued on back

* Age is that of oldest participant in household

New cost containment is saving millions of dollars but is not enough

Amidst the challenge of a proposed Share increase, we are grateful to God that three new cost-containment efforts over the past 18 months have saved Samaritan's membership more than \$5 million each month—that's equivalent to a 19 percent Share increase! The \$250 Fair Price Reward and the change to Classic's IUA are each saving \$1 million each month. Our new Provider Relations Team began negotiating on Needs in 2020 and is now saving \$3 million per month. And yet, even this \$5 million in new monthly savings is not enough to stave off a Share amount increase.

Last Share increase was two years ago

By God's provision and the stewardship efforts of this community, it has been 2.5 years since our last Share increase. Classic's last Share increase was September 2019, while Basic and Given™ Beta have never had a Share increase since their launches in October 2017 and October 2019, respectively.

Voting will be online

To reduce mailing expenses and hopefully increase member participation, voting will be conducted using a unique link sent to the email addresses members use to log into Dash. Members who do not currently have a Dash account will receive a postal mail letter with instructions on how to create one. The letter will also explain another way to vote for those members who are unable to create a Dash account.

Samaritan community coming together, sharing burdens

Our goal is to balance each member's responsibility for their health care with our mission to enable the Body of Christ to bear one another's burdens. That is why we review varying factors for each membership group and not all share adjustments are the same. We understand that some increases may not be feasible for some budgets and encourage each household to review both Classic and Basic's share amounts and Guidelines to determine what may be their family's best option.

Finally, may we all remain in prayer for the members of Samaritan Ministries and remember our God's faithfulness: "... my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Tax season is upon us!

This year, the IRS tax season officially started on January 24. We want to remind you that it is no longer necessary to fill out specific tax forms at the federal level indicating that as a member of a health care sharing ministry you are exempt from the ACA mandate to have insurance. Furthermore, you are not required to claim an exemption, provide documentation of your membership, make a shared responsibility payment, or obtain an Exemption Certificate Number for your federal tax return.

For a list of FAQs and states with special tax considerations, see samaritanministries.org/tax. Here you will find more information, including links to access sample tax forms and instructions. For states where the finalized information has not been released, we will update the website as soon as the information becomes available.

Pregnancy By Design giveaway

Pregnancy By Design, led by Samaritan Ministries members Ryan and Chandra Lattig, is offering 30 percent off all courses for Samaritan members through the end of March. See SamaritanMinistries.org/pbd-discount for details.

February 2022 Save to Share™ Need

Hudson (12), son of Dustin and Elizabeth, was treated for two rattlesnake bites to the sole of his foot.

This Need was assigned to members who participate in Save to Share™ for Needs greater than \$250,000. It has already been shared, so no additional giving is necessary. It is listed to enable all members to pray.

FEBRUARY 2022

Christian Health Care Newsletter

The enemy's weapons are illusion and fear, so keep your eyes on Jesus!

By Will Cooper, Chief Operating Officer



(David Nielsen/Samaritan Ministries)

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days (Genesis 37:31-34, KJV).

A LOT OF us enjoy a good illusionist. Even though we're tricked into seeing things that aren't really happening—someone or something

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Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

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Facing persecution

Member Letters:

'I THANK GOD FOR EACH OF YOU'

This ministry is such a blessing and I thank God for each of you. Submitting a Need was so easy and the process was wonderful. Getting the bills was simple and I was able to share about the Lord and Samaritan to everyone I talked to. The letters, prayers, and Scripture verses sent along with the Shares were such a blessing. Knowing that there are people around the country praying for me was wonderful. No doubt, God is pleased by our faithful stewardship of His money.

Leslie
FLORIDA

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Noteworthy | From the Editors

Are you struggling to feel God's presence in your current circumstances? No matter what fear is telling you right now, you are not alone! All throughout the Bible, the Lord tells us that He doesn't abandon His children. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5b). Your heart may be cast down. Your circumstances may be dire. You may be stuck in the trenches of worry about health, financial hardships, job frustrations, the death of loved ones, an unfaithful spouse, wayward children, or corrupt governments, or you may have the fear of not knowing what calamity will happen next in this fallen world. Even so, the Lord is with you. Look up, friends. Trust the Lord to see you through what you are facing. "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).



Julia Ekstrom
MANAGING EDITOR

Helpful Resources

► Facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Reach out to other members in our Facebook Group.

► Important emails

Medical Needs: needs@samaritanministries.org
Sending or receiving Shares: membership@samaritanministries.org
Your membership: membership@samaritanministries.org

► Health Resources App | Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org

- 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.

► Writers guidelines: samaritanministries.org/writers-guidelines

mysteriously disappearing or appearing, an amazing escape—it's entertaining, nonetheless.

But one illusionist outdoes David Copperfield, David Blaine, and Criss Angel. That one is satan.

Human illusionists divert your attention away from what's really happening. They distract you so they can implement their smoke-and-mirrors tricks. When you look back at what you thought was real, you realize it was different altogether.

That happens sometimes in our lives. The enemy specializes in making something that's not real appear real. He makes you think that something that's not really there is there. He takes a real situation and, through falsehood and deception, makes it appear to be something it's really not.

Satan has always been this way.

The first time we see him, in the book of Genesis, it's as a serpent. By the time we read 1 Peter 5, he's a lion. By the end of the Bible, in Revelation 12, he's a dragon!

All those things can be scary, because satan deals in fear, which someone once said was an acronym for "False Evidence Appearing Real."

In fact, fear is his only weapon, as we read in Scripture, since he has no real power over a child of God.

[A]nd having spoiled principalities and powers, He [God] made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:15, KJV).

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14, KJV).

Fix your eyes upon Jesus. Believe His report. Seek His strength, and you won't be tricked anymore.

In reality, God is the one Who has power and dominion over satan.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matthew 6:13, KJV).

If we serve God, we have the dominion and power over sin, whether we use it or not!

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you (Luke 10:19, KJV).

But let's get back to our original text, with Joseph's brothers playing the part of the illusionists.

Joseph's brothers had thrown him into a pit, sold him into slavery, and essentially rid themselves of the problem of having a younger brother who was so much more highly favored than they were. But notice their tactics. They dipped their brother's distinctive coat into the blood of an animal and brought it back to their father. Notice what they say: Here is a coat we found, we don't know if it's your son's or not, only you know!

And notice Jacob's response: "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath

devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

Notice the power of the optical illusion that the text reveals.

The enemies of Jacob—in this case, his own sons!—presented False Evidence Appearing Real, and Jacob made his own assumptions. I feel like I want to talk to Jacob thousands of years later and tell him, "Jacob! It's not what it looks like! God's promise to you is not dead. In fact, it's in the process of being fulfilled so it can save your life later! Your dream is not over. It's just beginning. What God has promised you is not dead. It's alive and in the process of bringing about a victory that you can't even imagine!"

What I feel like saying to Jacob, and to you, is don't let your enemy make you jump to conclusions when presented with a disturbing or anxious situation. Stand on the promise God has given you. It's not over!

It's an illusion!

The enemy desires to get our attention off what's really happening and make us believe what's not real. We can see that happening when Jesus called Peter to get out of the boat and walk with Him. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was all right. But something distracted him.

Maybe it was criticism from his fellow apostles in the boat. Maybe it was the howl of the wind breaking through his euphoria. Or maybe he was doused with water from a rebel wave.

Something caused his steady gaze to falter. Something happened

to destroy his focus on the Master. And suddenly, as though for the first time since getting out of the boat, he noticed the storm, he heard the wind, he felt the waves.

And, when Peter's focus turned from the Master of the storm to the storm itself, he began to sink!

I feel like yelling, "Peter, if you're going to walk on water, you can't watch the wind! You must watch Jesus! Peter, if you're going to move in a new realm of the Spirit, you can't listen to the critics. You must listen to Jesus!"

Or how about when Elisha was in Dothan and was being tracked down by the king of Syria, who wanted to kill him? The prophet was sleeping soundly, but his poor servant was a basket case!

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings 6:15-17, KJV).

In other words, the reality wasn't what the servant thought it was!

Another famous example of illusion was David confronting Goliath. By the time he arrived on the scene, Goliath had already been stepping out into that valley

and breathing threats against the people of God for 40 days. And for 40 days, the gaze of Saul and his mighty warriors would focus on the Philistine giant. The evidence, to their eyes, was that this giant was going to conquer Israel and no one would do anything about it.

The problem was that they could never get their gaze above the valley, above the problem. It filled their horizon. That's where their focus, hope, faith, and courage stopped!

But this 17-year-old boy comes along who's either too naive or too full of the Spirit of God to bow to this problem, no matter how big it is.

And notice in the text that David never calls Goliath a "giant." Saul and his army and David were looking at the same problem, and Saul decided that the "giant" was too large to eliminate, but David never called him a "giant."

Saul's gaze stopped on Goliath, but David said, "I'm gonna look a little higher!" It was like he told Saul, "You can stop with the problem, but I'm going to proceed to the Problem Solver."

Saul's gaze stopped on Goliath. Fear kept him in his tent. But David said, "This is just an optical illusion. I will not look at the uncircumcised Philistine in the valley. I will lift up my eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help!"

Sometimes, things in this life aren't what they look like. For us to see past the illusion, we have to get our eyes on Jesus and off the false evidence. The enemy wants to get us to focus on the problems, the current circumstances—on the giant, on the waves, on the army.

But what may look like a daunting situation shouldn't trick us. The devil's report says that you're sick and there's no way you'll ever recover, but the report of the Lord says, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5, KJV).

The devil's report says that you're broke, and that God has forsaken you, that you're going to lose everything, but the report of the Lord says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

The devil's report says that you're bound by your addiction and that you'll never be free, but the report of the Lord says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2, KJV).

Whatever the situation is in your life right now, whatever fear you're facing, whatever false evidence has been placed in front of you, you need to remember that God is faithful, and that promise He made to you has not died. It's alive! It may appear to be dead, but it's in process, and you're going to see the fulfillment of that promise, because God cannot lie.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus. Believe His report. Seek His strength and you won't be tricked anymore. ♦♦♦

Will Cooper is Chief Operating Officer of Samaritan Ministries.

Three suggestions for a better birth

Early, wise decisions in pregnancy will have a positive impact



by Chandra Lattig of
Pregnancy By Design

Last in a series.

I'LL NEVER FORGET the excitement I felt upon learning that I was pregnant with my first child. It didn't occur to me at that moment, though, just how many decisions I would be making during my pregnancy that would impact my delivery and, later, motherhood. As I think back to that time, I am ever so grateful to God for all the ways He used people around me to help guide me toward wise decisions during my pregnancy.

Those early decisions truly had a huge impact on my life as a young mother and were the catalyst to becoming an advocate for educating women about God's design for pregnancy and birth. Over the years, my husband and I have spent countless hours with expectant friends answering questions, encouraging them, and debunking fears with evidence. We came to realize that most people are naive about just how medicalized maternity care has become in the U.S. This all led us to create a space where pregnant women could gain information in a simple way to help them make informed choices rooted in evidence, and so



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Pregnancy by Design (PregnancyByDesign.com) was born.

Here are three things we have learned that you can do to positively impact birth.

1. Your choice of birth provider is a bigger deal than you think!

I've come to understand that God's design for birth (beyond being an awesome and physiologic miracle) is intended to be a way of bonding mother, father, and child. Many women think they will receive this care by default, but unfortunately that is not the case. Standard U.S. maternity care is problematic (with 1 out of 3 women having a cesarean birth). We know that being well-cared for during birth is important and sets the tone for how you step

into motherhood—and we desire that to be a time of strength and encouragement for all moms.

Two models of care exist: the medical model and the midwifery model.

Providers, generally obstetricians, who practice within the medical model of care view birth as precisely that—a medical event. Within the medical model, interventions are typically used at higher rates, and a similar or standard approach to care is given to every woman. On the other hand, providers, generally midwives, practicing within the midwifery model of care view pregnancy and birth as normal, physiologic processes. The midwifery model

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works to minimize interventions and provides a more individualized approach to care.

By understanding how these two very different models view birth, you can begin to see how you might receive different care based on your provider's view of birth. To help our clients, we have developed the Birth Profile Assessment, which helps women discover which type of provider is the best fit for them personally. It also provides information that all pregnant women can benefit from, including how your personality traits can be best used to help you prepare for labor.

In most circumstances, your choice of provider will make a difference in what birth choices you have, the amount of autonomy you are afforded, and how likely it is that your birth will involve interventions like cesarean section.

2. Be aware of the cascade of interventions.

You may be thinking, "What exactly is the cascade of interventions?" As a quick background: routine maternity care practices in the United States tend to be intervention heavy. Often, the reason the first intervention is employed is because it makes it easier for the hospital staff and/or your provider to manage multiple patients at one time and stay on a timeline. The trouble is that once one intervention is utilized, it will often have side effects leading to another intervention, referred to as the cascade of interventions.

Think of it like taking a medication with unwanted side effects that require you to take another

I am ever so grateful to God for all the ways He used people around me to help guide me toward wise decisions.

medication to counteract the initial one.

The top interventions that lead to a cascade of interventions are:

- Labor induction.
- Epidural.
- Pitocin/oxytocin use in labor.
- Stationary labor in bed.
- Breaking the water (also known as artificially breaking the membranes).
- Continuous electronic fetal monitoring (EFM).

Induction of labor is the number one preventable intervention leading to other interventions. Four out of every 10 births (41 percent) are medically induced¹. Most women are induced because either they are getting close to their due date or their provider is concerned about them being overdue.

All methods of medical induction require labor to be monitored. (If you must be induced, request intermittent auscultation, which is not only less invasive than electronic fetal monitoring but also means you will have a 39 percent lower risk of a cesarean than with EFM.²)

Inducing labor when your body

or baby are not ready for labor has consequences. Many couples who desire a natural birth and prepare to handle the intensity of labor without medication end up having to change their plans after induction. Labor induction is almost always harder on the body and the baby and very often leads to the need for pharmacological pain relief, which leads to its own cascade of interventions.

3. Learn as much as you can about childbirth.

If there was ever a time to be a student, it's during pregnancy! If you're ambitious, start learning even before you become pregnant. I say this because the more you know about how God designed the body to work in birth, the easier it will become for you to believe that you were made to do the hard and rewarding work of labor. The Bible encourages us to seek wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 3:13, 4:5). I believe this applies in every area of our lives as believers, including childbirth.

There are a host of resources available for childbirth, but you will want to be sure that you tap into good, physiologic sources that are rooted in evidence. It is also very helpful to talk to friends that have had positive birth experiences as a way of encouragement and to build confidence.

Learn about your options and choices for your birth. Birthing author Diana Korte's saying that "If I don't know my options, I don't have any" rings true. For instance, did you know that having a continuous support person such as a doula lowers your risk of cesarean

by 25 percent? So, first learn about your options such as birth settings (homebirth, birth center, hospital birth) and labor comforts/support (waterbirth/hydrotherapy, peanut ball, hiring a doula, etc.). Next, you'll want to create a birth plan, using a guide such as Pregnancy By Design's Complete Guide to Writing a Birth Plan. You can then discuss your birth plan with your provider to see if they will accommodate and support your birth choices. This is best done early on in your pregnancy if possible.

Lastly—and I cannot stress this enough—while choosing a provider and writing a birth plan are important, remember that YOU are the most important aspect of how

your birth will go. Think of it like training for a marathon: You can hire an amazing coach and have a great support team, but ultimately you are the one actually running the race.

Similar to training for a race, getting ready to give birth takes both mental and physical preparation as well as a good understanding of yourself in order to be best prepared.

The single best way to do this is by taking a thorough childbirth class that supports the physiologic design of birth, such as our comprehensive online Beyond the Birth Plan Childbirth Course. We are all uniquely designed by God, and so we designed this course to

help each of you individually.

I hope you have found this information encouraging and helpful as you prepare to meet your new little one. I am confident that the time you put into your birth preparation will be well worth it. ♦♦♦

Samaritan Ministries member Chandra Lattig is the creator of the Pregnancy by Design program (PregnancyByDesign.com).

The information provided in this article is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice. It is the opinion of the writer. The information is not meant to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified health professional.

¹ Declercq ER, Sakala C, Corry MP, Applebaum S, Herrlich A. Listening to MothersSM III: Pregnancy and Birth. New York: Childbirth Connection, May 2013.

² Dekker, R. (2021, October 20). The ARRIVE study. Evidence Based Birth[®]. <https://evidencebasedbirth.com/arrive/>

30% off Pregnancy By Design courses for SMI members

Pregnancy By Design is offering 30 percent off all their courses for Samaritan Ministries members.
Use Code: SMTHIRTYOFF

Beyond the Birth Plan Childbirth Course
A comprehensive childbirth course focuses on you, the laboring person, instead of a one-size-fits-all method for birth. View PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/beyond-the-birth-plan-childbirth-course

Breech Baby Options Course
Looking to get your baby to turn or reduce your chances of your baby being breech? Take the Breech Baby Options course to get your questions answered and walk through your options. View PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/breech-baby-options-course

Postpartum Recovery Course
Our Postpartum Recovery Course will give you all the tips and tools necessary for the many unexpected physical postpartum changes and challenges. View PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/postpartum-recovery

Birth Profile Assessment
A personal childbirth questionnaire helps you make more informed choices in your birth care. View PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/birth-profile-assessment

After-Baby Essentials Course
This guide optimizes healing while you work through the top three postpartum recovery barriers. View PregnancyByDesign.com/courses/after-baby-essentials-course ♦♦♦

Member Letters

Stephen and Susan
RHODE ISLAND



We have struggled through the past two years with Steve's hip pain, surgeries, and slow recovery. To receive help with our medical expenses is a comfort and joy—a reassurance of God's provision. The cards and words of encouragement from God's people reassure the soul and remind us we are not alone in the trial.

Daryl
OKLAHOMA



My wife battled cancer for almost four years. Although her fight is over and she is with our Savior, the challenges were formidable, and the financial burden would have been overwhelming if not for the help of Samaritan. ... The hospital price was staggering, but equally staggering was the discount for cash. When the dust settled at the end of the day, we paid only 6-10% of what they billed. I am so grateful for Samaritan. Never, ever doubt the fact that you are making the world a better place.

Ann
WISCONSIN



Getting cards and checks in the mail eases so much stress! We are self-employed, so our income is all over the map and we sometimes must wait several months to get paid. God is always faithful! Always! We have not been disappointed. He uses His people to care for others and that to me personally is how the Church is supposed to work.

Heather
MINNESOTA



Samaritan Ministries is encouraging, helpful, and filled with God's love. My daughter enjoyed getting the notes of love and encouragement. It is amazing to see the Body of Christ work together to meet financial needs of others, and what a blessing to see this unity in the world today. The ministry feels like family. Thank you for being here, Samaritan!

Member Letters

Emily
TENNESSEE



What a blessing to be a part of a Christian community committed to truth, love, and service. I look forward every month to writing a check and note to a fellow believer, and being on the receiving end of this ministry has been equally as life-giving. Nothing could ever make us leave Samaritan. It is a privilege beyond compare.

Maria
OHIO



Samaritan Ministries has been such a blessing to our family. We so appreciate the loving notes and cards received with the financial gifts—it is mindboggling to receive so much from complete strangers! It is humbling and heartwarming to be a part of the Body of Christ in this way. Thank you, Samaritan Ministries, for providing a service that allows Christians a way to support each other.

Julie
SOUTH CAROLINA



Thank you to all those who work at Samaritan Ministries. The staff is always patient and caring, ready to explain even the “small stuff.” Their heart for people is evident and so appreciated when we are in need. It was also a blessing to receive gifts from people in our own town. One person sent a Bible verse in their card, which happened to be the camp verse used for our children’s camp that we have attended for years. God makes it personal!

Bonnie
TENNESSEE



The Lord has blessed us with continued good health and being a part of Samaritan Ministries. As we send our Shares and pray through the prayer list, we feel more and more connected to the Body of Christ. So blessed that the Lord has provided this opportunity.

Physical therapy can help patients in a variety of ways

Those in the field try to provide prevention, wellness, and injury recovery



by Jonathan Hamm,
MOOSE Physical
Therapy

Physical therapy (PT) is an area of medicine that is poorly understood, even in the medical community.

I can't begin to tell you how many patients come for their first appointment and say something like, "'PT' stands for 'pain and torture,' right?" Others say, "I don't know why I'm here, but my doctor wanted me to come, so here I am."

To take it a step further, I have spoken with several medical staff who think that physical therapists perform the same treatment with every patient or only see patients after post-op joint replacements.

None of these ideas fairly represent the scope of physical therapy. By definition, physical therapists are experts in the musculoskeletal and neuromuscular systems of the body and desire to use that knowledge for prevention, wellness, and injury recovery.

You already know that you need physical therapy after having had a stroke or very involved surgeries like rotator cuff repair, ACL repair, or knee replacement. But, did you know that there is PT to treat vertigo, headaches coming from



(iStock)

neck strain, jaw popping and clicking, male and female reproductive health, incontinence, chronic muscle spasms, running injuries, Parkinson's disease symptoms, osteoporosis, fluid retention in the extremities (lymphedema), poor posture, neck pain, back pain, and more? In fact, the primary reason that people come to see me for physical therapy is because they have some lasting pain and they don't know what they did to cause it.

In most of these cases, the cause is biomechanical or postural in nature. The individual is either performing a repetitive motion or position that causes an abnormal amount of stress or strain on joint,

muscle, ligament, or nerve tissue that is not able to withstand the load. It may be caused by working at a desk job, driving with poor mechanics, or always raking the yard or holding a baby the same way every time without giving each side of your body equal opportunity, thereby forming an imbalance.

If you have been to a physical therapist who is doing the same thing over and over with no results, that's unfortunate and doesn't need to be the case. Most physical therapists that have graduated since the early 2000s have a doctorate of physical therapy degree. To be sure, our expertise is in the musculoskeletal and neuromuscular systems of the

body (although some have sought advanced training in other systems as post-doctorate specialty training), but our entry-level skills allow us to evaluate and assess multiple systems of the body, including the cardiopulmonary system, nervous system, integumentary system (skin), etc., to look for signs that indicate whether a person's need is within or outside our scope of practice. If it is outside, then we can quickly refer the patient on to the medical provider who can best treat their non-PT-related issue.

Being a physical therapist

I love my job as a physical therapist for many reasons.

For one thing, we can bring healing to people suffering from a variety of symptoms: A sore leg you're trying to ignore while keeping up with your running routine. Headaches that start in your neck. A sore back from sitting too long at a desk or driving. A sore neck from using your phone or computer so much.

Additionally, unlike many medical professionals that are limited to only a few minutes with their patients per appointment, physical therapists typically get at least 30 minutes with their patients (and usually more, but this depends on many factors) per session. This

means that we get to know our patients through conversation, enabling us to connect on a level that allows greater trust. With that trust comes an environment that is ideal for promoting healing. Once you walk through our door, we treat you like family, and then you are part of our clinic's family forever.

Choosing a physical therapist

How do you know that you're going to the PT who is right for you? As with most things in life:

- Ask your friends and family who they recommend.
- Look up reviews online.
- Check the bio on their company's website.
- Search for a specialist (orthopedics, geriatrics, neurology, etc.) on the American Physical Therapy Association's Certified Specialist Directory at bit.ly/APTAspecialist.

Final encouragement

Let me leave you with a few verses that we at MOOSE Physical Therapy strive to keep as our mission as we look not only to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather, train

yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe (1 Timothy 4:7-10).

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isaiah 40:30-31, NIV).

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

I pray that you're encouraged!
May the Lord bless you with good health. ♦♦♦

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Unlike many medical professionals that are limited to only a few minutes with their patients per appointment, physical therapists typically get at least 30 minutes with their patients.

Post-mastectomy breast implant decision is a challenge for patients

by Kathryn Nielson

Two Samaritan members share how they made their choices

A breast cancer diagnosis opens the door to a world of decisions patients never dreamed they would have to make. One of those decisions is how to handle a post-mastectomy body. Many choose breast implants, but fewer women are making that choice with an increasing number of patients claiming adverse side effects from the implants.

Every year in the United States, 400,000 women choose breast augmentation—75 percent for cosmetic reasons and the other 25 percent after mastectomy. According to The Aesthetic Society, an organization of 2,600 board-certified plastic surgeons, 2019-2020 saw a 14.9 percent decrease in breast augmentation and a 34.4 percent increase in breast implant removal (explantation),¹ citing breast implant illness (BII).

Though not officially recognized as a medical diagnosis, BII is becoming more common and manifests itself differently depending on the patient. Symptoms include joint and muscle pain, chronic fatigue, memory loss and difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, headaches, and gastrointestinal problems.

Implants are sacs placed under

the chest muscle to restore breast shape and are filled with either saline or silicone. The question of what happens if the implant leaks is a common one, according to Dr. Colleen McCarthy, reconstructive surgeon at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City.²

If the implant is filled with saline or saltwater and starts leaking, the liquid gets absorbed into the body, and the implant deflates. If that happens, the patient goes back into surgery to have the implant replaced.

Leakage from a silicone implant is not apparent, because it is semi-solid and doesn't change. It's also not detectable by physical examination, so regular monitoring with MRI or ultrasound is needed to make sure it's still intact.

It's important to note that the tear rate for either silicone or saline implants is the same, and, according to McCarthy, there is a 90 percent chance that in 10 years the original implant will be intact.

Once the patient has decided on implants and chosen saline or silicone, she then has the choice between a textured or smooth exterior. Implants with a textured exterior adhere to tissue, ensuring less slippage than a smooth-textured implant, but it's the textured

implants that have created much of the controversy. In 2019, the FDA issued a recall for any textured implants manufactured by Allergan, the manufacturer of a specific type of textured implant. At the time of the recall, there were 573 cases of breast-implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma (BIA-ALCL), of which 481 were attributed to the Allergan implants.³ Allergan is no longer allowed to sell these devices worldwide.

Deciding to have implants isn't a one-time decision, either. Implants wear out and need to be replaced at some point. Most silicone and saline implants have been FDA-confirmed to last 10 to 20 years, but patients may need them to be replaced earlier, or they may be able to go more than 20 years.⁴

With all of this in mind, patients not only face a life-or-death disease, but they have to make decisions quickly, as Samaritan Ministries member Kelsie recalls. Her diagnosis was in December 2018, and her doctors really wanted her to have surgery right away. However, she opted to wait a couple months because of other circumstances.

"Even then, that's just two months to acclimate yourself to the idea that you have cancer and

that you need to have either one or both of your breasts removed, let alone deciding how you are going to handle it afterwards," Kelsie says, adding that the timeline is frequently what is so difficult for most women.

Kelsie's doctors assumed she would have reconstruction, she says. By the time she left the appointment at which her diagnosis was given, the doctor's office had scheduled a series of five or six other appointments for her. They had planned out who she was going to meet with and in what order—including meeting with a plastic surgeon to discuss implants. The visit with the plastic surgeon was not to discuss if she was going to get implants, but rather what kind, what size, the effects and risks of the two types, and other issues.

After doing some of her own research and finding someone online who had decided against implants, she began to reconsider and realized there was another way.

"It seems to be rare that surgeons are even telling breast cancer patients they have a choice to have reconstruction or not," Kelsie says. "It has become such a common practice that it is assumed each patient wants reconstructive surgery with their own tissue or implants."

Because Kelsie's cancer was limited to one breast only and was not considered genetic, the risks of recurrence in the other breast were low, which meant that a double mastectomy was not warranted as a preventive measure. The decision then became whether to have an implant, which brought up questions like how a future spouse



(iStock)

would feel about her only having one breast. If she did get implants, how would she feel about two completely different breasts? Or should she wear prosthetics?

She chose the latter.

"I don't think people even realize that prosthetics are out there and are even an option," Kelsie says.

For Kelsie, the decision to not go with implants was a final one. She had a complete mastectomy on

one side, which meant portions of muscle and tissue were removed. At this point, some people will have an expander put in, which acts as a sort of placeholder, enabling doctors to go in later and place an implant. That was not an option that was presented to Kelsie, however. At that point, she had already decided against implants.

Continued on page 14

Not everyone makes the same choice. Of the 400,000 patients choosing breast implants, over 90 percent of them are happy with the results and experience no health problems, according to plastic surgeon Dr. Alan Matarasso.⁵

Fellow Samaritan member and cancer survivor Kristen decided to get implants. Cancer runs in Kristen's family. Her mom was diagnosed in her late 40s and her aunt in her late 50s. Kristen started screening at age 32 rather than the recommended 35 for those with family history because of tenderness in her left breast. She was eventually diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer, an aggressive form of breast cancer that tests positive for human epidermal growth factor receptor, a protein that promotes the growth of cancer cells.

Because of the aggressive nature of Kristen's cancer, she went through chemo first before her double mastectomy, giving her six months to research implants and ask questions. The decision to get implants was filled with trepidation based on what she had heard from other people. Initially, she decided against implants, but, as her surgery date grew closer, she began to feel more uneasy with her decision. At the same time, she felt she needed to stick with her original plan rather than change her mind.

"I was in distress. I felt backed into a corner," Kristen says.

She decided that if she really cared about research the way she said she did, she was going to challenge herself in this area and get more information before making a final decision. She also realized she

wouldn't second-guess a kidney transplant or hip replacement if she needed one of those, so why question breast reconstruction?

"I was in one sense prioritizing my physical well-being around something that may or may not happen and letting my sexual health, emotional health, and mental health take a back seat," Kristen says. "If I really believe that we are holistic beings—body, mind, and spirit—which I do, then why am I glorifying one aspect over the other? You really have to make the best decision for yourself."

Her providers were very safety-driven and wanted her to make that decision. She spent hours talking with them about both the risks and the benefits of implants.

"An important aspect of this whole journey is finding medical providers who are truly able to give you all of the options and let you make the decision," Kristen says. "I feel like, honestly, the Lord provided that for me."

In the end, she chose to go with smooth-textured silicone implants with the knowledge that, if she changed her mind or started to experience negative effects, they could always be removed.

Both Kristen and Kelsie emphasize the need for women to do what is best for them in the situation. Everyone is different, and there is not a one-size-fits-all answer.

"This is a deeply personal decision that everybody has to weigh," Kristen says. "I want to help encourage other people going through this that if your provider is not listening to you or is pushing something and you don't feel comfortable," you can seek other help.

Kelsie says that she wants "people to know that they have a choice, and, if they do decide to have (implants), be very aware of your body and whether it's being affected by the foreign substance."

Modern medicine has come a long way, but the reality is that no matter how good a hip replacement or breast implant or any other replacement part might be, none of them will ever measure up to the original parts put there by our Creator. But God has given us the ability to think, ask questions, and to seek guidance from Him in situations like these. ♦♦♦

Kathryn Nielson is a Communications Specialist at Samaritan Ministries.

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¹ "New Data From The Aesthetic Society Indicates Decrease in Breast Augmentation Surgery." The Aesthetic Society, 20 May 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qTZhTB>.

² "Information Sessions: Breast Reconstruction." Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, <https://bit.ly/3HLY5Zn>.

³ "FDA Takes Action to Protect Patients from Risk of Certain Textured Breast Implants; Requests Allergan Voluntarily Recall Certain Breast Implants and Tissue Expanders from Market." U.S. Food and Drug Administration, FDA, 24 July 2019, <https://bit.ly/3HBA86F>.

⁴ Ortiz, J. (2021, November 2). How Often Should Breast Implants Be Replaced? | Learn more. North Raleigh Plastic Surgery, <https://bit.ly/3mYtyzz>.

⁵ Canning, K. (2020, August 8). The Number Of Women Having Their Breast Implants Removed Is On The Rise. Women's Health, <https://bit.ly/3pYF3sG>.

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

China announces new religious censorship

A government department in Communist China is taking new steps to restrict all forms of online religious activities, International Christian Concern (ICC) reports. The new measures, announced on December 20, will go into effect on March 1. Only organizations or individuals who have obtained religious service permits will be allowed to communicate religious teaching. Religious ceremonies are not being allowed to be broadcast or recorded online. Also, no fundraising "in the name of religion" will be allowed. Opposition to the Communist Party also is forbidden. *Pray that Christians in China will find ways to communicate the Gospel without detection by Communist officials.*

Nigerian Christian hostages released

Praise God that all hostages taken captive in a raid on a Baptist school in Nigeria in October were released on December 3! Voice of the Martyrs-Canada (VOMC) says 61 students and others were released after a ransom was paid. *Pray for the former captives' spiritual, physical, and emotional recovery, and for safety for Christians in Nigeria.*

Buddhists injure pastor, three others

Buddhists beat a pastor in Polgolia, Sri Lanka, as he tried to intervene on behalf of a Christian woman who was being harassed by a crowd on November 20, VOMC reports. The pastor and three of his congregants were treated for injuries. *Pray for a full spiritual and physical recovery for the pastor and the others as well as for the woman who was being harassed.*

Nigerian Christian family kidnapped

A mother and her four children were kidnapped by Fulani militants in Nigeria on December 11 during an attack on several Christian villages, ICC reports. Several homes were also set on fire. *Pray for the kidnapped family's release, for those who lost homes, and for the safety of all Nigerians from militants.*

Myanmar junta members loot churches

The Burmese Army shelled several churches in Myanmar's Chin state in early December, looted them, and then planted landmines in their compounds, ICC says. *Pray for safety and provision for members of these churches.* ♦♦♦



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 and action.

Each month, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from a variety of sources. Please use them in your prayer time and possibly to seek other ways, small or large to supplement our prayers with action.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:

International Christian Concern
persecution.org
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor
worldwatchmonitor.org

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Matthew 5:10**

✂ Detach and place on your refrigerator

THE DOORPOST

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



Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

MATTHEW 5:10-12

IT IS NOT UNUSUAL for followers of Jesus Christ to face opposition, persecution, even imprisonment and death. What is unusual from a human perspective is how Jesus tells us to respond.

He says being reviled and persecuted because of Him is a blessing. He says we should rejoice and be glad because our reward is great in heaven.

We see this perspective frequently throughout Scripture.

In Acts 5:41, after the apostles had been beaten by the Jewish leaders, they left the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.

In Psalm 27, David says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

In Philippians 4:4, Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

When we are treated unjustly, rejoice and be glad. Rejoice in the Lord. Our reward is great in heaven.



For The Kingdom,
Ray King