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## May Issue

Bone Health and Osteoporosis

All information for this newsletter was obtained from:  
<http://www.menopause.org/docs/default-source/2015/mnsleepproblem.pdf>

And

<http://www.more.com/sleep- insomnia-perimenopause>

\*Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Is a short-term form of mental health therapy that teaches the person to identify the negative patterns in their thinking and learn to replace them with healthier patterns of thought.

## Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

Sleep... When we were younger we were invincible and able to live off of three hours per night. As the years pass, we now count the minutes until we can crawl into our comfortable beds for the night and rest. However, for some women in menopause, a good night's sleep (7-9 hours recommended each night) is pretty rare. Without enough sleep we are not able to function well, we lack focus, our memory is not as sharp, we cannot handle stress well, and our health may suffer.

During the menopause years few women have the luxury of a good night's sleep. If you suffer from lack of sleep or insomnia, you are not alone. According to the National Sleep Foundation, only 45%\* of women in peri-menopause regularly sleep well. Why are so many women getting so little sleep? The answer to that is hormones. During the menopause transition our hormones are constantly changing. In many women, that that results in hot flashes. The North American Menopause Society says that 75% of women have hot flashes. In order to sleep well, our body temperature must lower significantly while we are asleep. This cannot happen if we have hot flashes or night sweats throughout the night. Stress also plays a large part in sleep problems; racing thoughts most women have from daily stress make it harder to fall asleep.

### What Can We Do?

- ❖ Exercise every day.
- ❖ Avoid eating sweets and large meals right before bed.
- ❖ Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco all day. Stay away from some diet and allergy medications.
- ❖ Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex.
- ❖ Do not watch TV, read, or use other electronic devices in the bedroom. The blue light from cell phones, computers, and tablets actually disrupt sleep.
- ❖ Keep your room cool, dark, and quiet. Sleep in light clothes and few layers on the bed. If you have night sweats keep a fan by the bed, buy a pillow that stays cool or keep an ice pack under your pillow so that you can turn it over at night when you are warm.
- ❖ Follow a regular sleep routine. Go to sleep each day at the same time and wake up at the same time.
- ❖ Try deep breathing or relaxation techniques before falling asleep. There are many books and audio recordings on the topic.
- ❖ If after 15 minutes you are unable to fall asleep, leave the bedroom and do something relaxing such as reading or listening to music until you feel tired.
- ❖ If sleep problems continue contact your doctor. Medications such as anti-depressants, hormone therapy, herbal supplements, and sleep aides may be helpful. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy\* has shown some promise in helping with sleep. Do not try any over the counter medications or herbal supplements without first consulting your doctor as many of these have interactions with medications you are currently taking.

**Sweet Dreams!**

# Meet the Staff

## Panagiota Caralis, MD, JD



Dr. Panagiota “ Pat” Caralis is a triple graduate of the University of Miami, receiving her bachelor, medial and law degrees there. She has served the Miami VA for over 30 years where she currently holds the positions of Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Medical Director of the Women Veterans Health Program, and Integrated Ethics program officer. Dr. Caralis is Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami and served as Chief of the General Medicine Section and Acting Chief of Medicine at the Miami VA. She was also the former chair of the Bioethics

committee at Jackson Memorial Hospital .

Dr. Caralis has taught courses at both the medical and law school in ethics and health law and has published research on both topics. She was a co-investigator in one of the largest research studies to benefit women– the Women’s Health Initiative. She established a Medical Legal clinic to advise veterans and received national recognition for this service. She received the Department of Veterans Affairs Award for Academic Excellence in recognition of her outstanding contributions and achievement in the education of health care professionals. She has served as a member of the Dade County Domestic Violence Fatality review board and as a member of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council of Greater Miami.

## VA Links

[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

*This is the link to the My HealtheVet page. There you can learn all the ways it can help you stay connected to your healthcare team, how to enroll, reorder medications, etc. Once enrolled in the My HealtheVet you can participate in our MEANS program.*

## Contact Info:

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## Maribel Toro, PharmD

Maribel Toro graduated from Nova Southeastern University in 2009 with a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and then completed a pharmacy residency program at the Miami VA. Once her residency was completed, she remained at the Miami VA pharmacy service as a clinical pharmacist. She has worked in many areas of the pharmacy, including staffing outpatient and inpatient pharmacy, clinical pharmacist specialist for HIV primary care, Women’s Health, Hepatology and LGBT services. She has always wanted to give back to the veteran population and help improve their health. She enjoys working in women’s health because she sees a part of herself in each of them. She feels that she can relate to their problems and needs and all that motivates her to always provide the best patient care.

