

WYOMING FOCUS

DEMENTIA DESERTS & NEXT STEPS FOR WYOMING

BY ALLEN GEE & REGINA GEE

[“Dementia Deserts”](#) are geographic areas with limited access to neurology expertise evaluating and treating cognitive dysfunction and diseases. Limited access leads to less evaluations, less disease diagnosis, and less management. By 2025, Wyoming is projected to have five or less adult Neurologists per ten thousand individuals with Alzheimer’s and related dementias. This ratio places Wyoming as the leading dementia desert in the nation. Added to this challenge is a national neurology deficit (12% projected to be 19% in the next 5 years) Only 3% of Neurology residents are going into general neurology. Solving the problem of dementia deserts will not be to just recruit more Neurologists, rather in Wyoming it will require a collaboration of governmental, technological, and medical collaboration.

Tom Forslund, former director of the Wyoming Department of Health, presented elder care health-cost data at the Wyoming Global Technology Summit. At that time three years ago, the State of Wyoming was spending \$137M/year as the states 20% responsibility for the elderly living in care facilities. The cost was projected to triple in 12 years. People in dementia deserts are admitted to care facilities sooner than in places with adequate neurological care. The Wyoming government has the resources and the financial incentive to address problems in dementia to help lower the cost of healthcare and provide better care for its citizens.

Wyoming has significant geographic challenges and while we can claim to have the medical expertise one would expect in a community of 568,000, access is not always convenient. Digital assessments are expanding our abilities to remotely assess and monitor patients. In conjunction with the Wyoming Health Innovation Living Laboratory, Frontier NeuroHealth is applying technologies to assess cognition and mobility. Working with digital assessments and physician extenders, I am able to reach more patients, participate in their evaluation and management, and help address the dearth of Neurology services in WY. Reimbursement for virtual care driven by Covid-19 has transformed all healthcare and specifically the delivery of Neurology services in WY. Financially viable virtual care connects medical expertise with patients when & where they are.

Wyoming is facing a real problem with our lack of dementia resources and are growing population of concern. Combining the resources of the state including financial backing and accessibility with technological innovation and medical intervention has the ability for a productive initiative for dementia care in Wyoming.



FRONTIER WELLNESS TIP

BREATHE THROUGH YOUR NOSE

So much of a healing journey is about returning to the basics, one such fundamental is breathing. James Nestor’s book *Breathe: The New Science of a Lost Art* revitalizes the discussion about breathing and why it is so important. Simply put, healthy breathing isn’t something we are inherently good at. Many of us breathe through our mouths, which contributes to us being chronically stressed and exhausted. Mouth breathing dehydrates us, gives our teeth cavities, inflames our gums, and perpetuates jaw misalignment.

On the other hand, breathing through our nose purifies, heats, moistens, and pressurizes the air. This helps filter allergens and dust, boosts our oxygen uptake, lowers our blood pressure, helps maintain a steady heart rate, and even helps with memory consolidation. Nestor encourages us to breathe through our nose and to also occasionally hum with the exhale or make a noise in the back of our throat when nasal breathing.

The way we breathe has profound effects on every aspect of our body. Learning to breathe through our nose is a small and powerful homecoming for health, promoting wellbeing from the foundation of our respiration.

JHTP SUMMIT: RURAL HEALTHCARE PANEL

BY REGINA GEE

The 8th Annual Wyoming Global Technology Summit is being held on October 7th, 2021 in Jackson Hole. This summit is part of the Jackson Hole Technology Partnership (JHTP), whose mission is to “Identify cutting edge technologies relevant for rural population and accelerate global accessibility.” Dr. Allen Gee created the Wyoming Health Innovation Living Laboratory (WHILL) to continue the impact of using cutting edge tech to help rural populations.

Dr. Gee will be moderating the “Rural Healthcare Panel: Taking on Challenges & Producing Outcomes” discussion. This panel will include [Austin Walters](#) from Spring Tide Ventures, [Jamie Stirling](#) from Secours, and [Scott Lien](#) from Grandpad. These panelists will be speaking about blockchain based dementia patient trust, safety and resilience issues, use of video and information management to deliver supportive social interactions to isolated populations, and how a WY native lead investment fund supports digital healthcare start-ups. Additionally, this panel will present the progress WHILL has made in integrating digital technologies into a state-wide clinical and virtual Neurology practice.

Solving problems on the Frontier impacts the world, and the goal for this panel is to continue to move theory into practice. Combining the brain power of people like Austin, Jamie, Scott, and Allen with the framework of WHILL has the power to birth productive projects. These projects can impact the lived experience of thousands, change the way we spend our healthcare dollars, and move forward better technology. Check back with us to learn more about the outcomes of this panel.

WE'RE READING:

IN DEFENSE OF FOOD
BY MICHAEL POLLEN

WE'RE LISTENING:

ARMCHAIR EXPERT WITH
ANDREW HUBERMAN
DAX SHEPARD

WE'RE WATCHING:

SURVIVOR SEASON 41



DISFLUENCY

BY REGINA GEE

We live in a world of big data, including our perception and sensation of our everyday lives. Our bodies are built for data perception with millions of ways to receive the data all around us, baroreceptors, nociceptors, sensory organs, millions of processing pathways, etc. It is important that our conscious minds are poised to make sense of all this, that we train our awareness to make the most of our subconscious processing. What we are learning is that we can have all the data in the world, but it doesn't mean a thing unless

we are able to absorb it and do something with it.

Charles Duhigg writes about what he calls disfluency. Typically, disfluency (noun) is defined as a stutter; a pause in speech. Duhigg expands this definition by implementing disfluency as a way to absorb and apply life experience data. Disfluency is about making data harder to process at first so that it becomes stickier when really understood. Duhigg shows that in order to absorb data, to understand it and really do something with it, we have to get granular; we have to slow down enough to really think; we have to probe/process/analyze the data in order to embody it. Duhigg writes, “The people who are most successful at learning – those who are able to digest the data surrounding them,

who absorb insights embedded in their experiences and take advantage of information flowing past – are the ones who know how to use disfluency to their advantage. They transform what life throws at them, rather than just taking it as it comes.”

If we want to succeed in our healing, we have to digest our health data. We have to learn about our bodies. We have to absorb the insights in our life experiences, something that comes from getting off of autopilot and consciously engaging with our lives. We have to take advantage of the onslaught of information coming our way. We have to transform what life throws at us, connecting the somatic, mental, and spiritual realities of our life. We need to “work patiently through the raw materials of our lives,” (Krista Tippett).