

# Kegel exercises can tame bladder problems

MAKING CHANGES in everyday behavior is the first line of therapy for an overactive bladder (OAB), said Dr. Victor Federico B. Acepcion, a urologist and chair of the department of surgery of Capiz Emmanuel Hospital.

You may need to modify what you drink and eat, lose extra weight, or stop smoking, he said at an Aug. 11 session organized by UP Med Webinars.

OAB is the frequent and urgent need to empty one's bladder. The symptoms of OAB are urinary urgency (a sudden and overwhelming urge to urinate immediately); urinary frequency (urinating more than eight

times a day); urge incontinence (urine leakage or wetting accidents that follow a sudden urge to urinate); and nocturia (waking up two or more times at night to urinate).

People with OAB practice bathroom mapping so they know where to go when they feel the symptoms of voiding. They also tend to feel reluctant to travel by car or use public transport — even for short distances.

Many individuals with OAB limit their fluid intake in the hope of alleviating their symptoms, Dr. Acepcion said. Not drinking enough fluids, however, can make one's urine concentrated, thereby

irritating the bladder and causing urinary urgency, urinary frequency, urinary tract infections, dehydration, and constipation.

Dr. Acepcion advised avoiding drinking large amounts at one time — such as with meals — and drinking the majority of one's fluid intake during the first half of the day, while cutting back as evening approaches.

“During the evening, I advise patients to drink just one glass, maybe for their maintenance medications,” he said.

Also to be avoided are food and beverages that contain bladder irritants, the most common of which is caffeine.

Dr. Acepcion recommended consuming fiber-rich fare, like whole grain bread and fresh fruits, instead of OAB contributors like carbonated drinks, tomato-based products, and alcohol.

## BLADDER RETRAINING

Bladder retraining, or the gradual conditioning of the bladder to hold urine for longer periods, is another prescribed therapy, according to Dr. Acepcion.

Because the bladder is controlled by muscles, it can be trained, the National Association for Continence (NAFC) said.

The NAFC advised using a bladder diary to keep a log of de-

tails such as one's fluid intake, the number of times one urinates, the number of wetting accidents and what happens when they occur (e.g., while laughing or sneezing), and diet information.

Specific bladder retraining techniques include visiting the bathroom later than your scheduled time (e.g., going to the bathroom every hour and fifteen minutes instead of every hour) and performing Kegel exercises (which strengthen the pelvic muscles that support the bladder).

A technique for patients to locate their pelvic muscles is by pretending to avoid passing gas,

per Harvard Health Publishing. Patients can start doing Kegel exercises by contracting their pelvic muscles for three to five seconds, and then relaxing them for three to five seconds, before repeating the cycle for a total of 10 times.

Harvard Health recommends gradually increasing the length of contractions and relaxations to 10 seconds.

Do not tighten your abdominal muscles at the same time, Dr. Acepcion added, noting that abdominal muscles push urine out rather than hold it in. “When done correctly, all other muscles should relax,” he said. — **Patricia B. Mirasol**

## OPINION

# Leading amid global uncertainty

Leadership in a time of global uncertainty is not about perfect anticipation; it's about seeing the possibilities and acting on them before others do, said Emmanuel P. “Manny” Maceda, worldwide managing partner at Bain & Company.

Mr. Maceda spoke at the launch of this year's edition of Makati Business Club's signature series *Leading in Extraordinary Times*, in partnership with *BusinessWorld*.

In its third year, the series highlights the practices of global and Philippine executives, and aims to accelerate job creation and economic growth.

In his speech, Mr. Maceda outlined the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and other global events on digital transformation; environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives; and the future of industries.

The world responded to the pandemic with varying success. At the start of 2022, things were looking up as companies and societies learned to operate in a hybrid world. Economies were rebounding and markets were up.

Another surge driven by the highly infectious Omicron variant caused supply chain shortages but industries were reasonably optimistic. The top challenge for many companies was labor — there were many jobs but not enough people to fill them.

In February, Russia invaded Ukraine, creating another series of shocks to the system, with huge implications on global energy and food supplies, all of which has caused inflation.

“This is the most uncertain time we've ever experienced ... we must anticipate continued turbulence,” said Mr. Maceda at the launch this June.

Chief executive officers must possess three critical elements to help their company achieve full potential amid turbulence and uncertainty, he said: prediction, or the ability to anticipate change ahead of time; adaptability, or having the flexibility to course correct as the external environment evolves; and resilience, or the capacity to survive and recover from sudden shocks.

The biopharmaceutical industry demonstrated these qualities throughout its pandemic response. Years of investment in research and development (R&D) — even in the face of costly failures — laid the groundwork for shortened development timelines for the mRNA and viral vector vaccines now in use against SARS-CoV-2.

The development of the first vaccine approved for human use took less than a year, while the first batches of vaccines from research-based pharmaceutical companies came in early 2021.

Effective voluntary partnerships also accelerated R&D and manufacturing for COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines, and treatments. More than 330 partnerships bolstered manufacturing capacity, facilitated technology and knowledge transfer, and drove historically rapid R&D.

In close coordination with the government, regulatory flexibility and convergence helped ensure safety and speed of access. COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics were developed in record time due to the extraordinary degree of collaboration between industry and national and regional regulatory authorities.

Biopharmaceutical R&D is also about seeing possibilities. Pfizer, for example, has announced a next-generation bivalent COVID-19 vaccine candidate called BNT162b5, which consists of RNAs encoding enhanced prefusion spike proteins for the SARS-CoV-2 ancestral strain (wild-type) and an Omicron variant.

The company said that enhanced spike protein encoded from the mRNAs in BNT162b5 has been modified with the aim of increasing the magnitude and breadth of the immune response that could better protect against COVID-19.

Moderna, meanwhile, is advancing two bivalent candidates for utilization in global vaccination efforts. The mRNA-1273.214 bivalent booster candidate is based on the Omicron subvariant BA.1 and has demonstrated positive clinical data against variants of concern, including Omicron. Moderna said that the second bivalent booster candidate, mRNA 1273.222, is based on the BA.4/5 strain.

AstraZeneca earlier announced a preliminary analysis which said that data from a trial showed increased antibody response against

Delta, Alpha, and Gamma variants following a third dose of its vaccine. Another analysis of samples from the trial also showed higher antibody response to the Omicron variant.

Johnson & Johnson (J&J) also announced that preliminary data from a study demonstrated 85% effectiveness for the homologous booster shot of J&J against COVID-19 related hospitalization in South Africa where Omicron was then dominant.

For the biopharmaceutical industry, it's crucial to see the endless possibilities and to act on them immediately. Doing so could help save more lives and eventually jumpstart the economy.

TEODORO B. PADILLA is the executive director of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), which represents the biopharmaceutical medicines and vaccines industry in the country. Its members are at the forefront of research and development efforts for COVID-19 and other diseases that affect Filipinos.



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