



**RAMBAM**  
Health Care Campus

# Christian Friends of Rambam Newsletter

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**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!**

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## Jack Oppenhuizen: Overcomer

While working on this issue aimed at positive ways to deal with pain, we had a surprise visit from Jack Oppenhuizen. Jack was a patient at Rambam in 1984, following a fall that left him paralyzed from the waist down. Jack walked into our offices 30 years later to express his gratitude to the doctors and nurses who cared for him. He now uses a wheelchair and is able to walk with a cane. We hope you are encouraged by some of the things Jack shared with us. Pain and grief have been intense most days of his life since his accident 30 years ago, yet Jack is filled with hope.

*Jack Oppenhuizen shares:* If every person facing a Goliath of

trauma, disease, loss, or betrayal has: 1) loving friends with a sense of mission; 2) people with whom to laugh, love, and experience joy; and 3) a personal relationship with God—then the healing power of community creates new life. We cannot go back and undo the trauma itself, but we can emerge larger than the storm and its devastation. The power of a healing community transforms us.

God declares that His grace is sufficient for whatever we face. His strength is experienced when we don't have what it takes to get us through a crisis!

We hope that Jack's story, and these articles are an encouraging

reminder that we can all be overcomers, regardless the circumstances.

Thank you for your prayers. May this New Year be one of victory for you as well—whatever your battle.



**Jack standing on the balcony overlooking the beach behind Rambam, that inspired him.**

## 10 Tips for Healthy Pain-Free Living

*by Dr. Simon Vulfsons, Director, Pain Medicine Institute, Rambam HCC*

1. Learn to use your muscles in a skilled and relaxed manner throughout the day's activities.
2. Do not repeat a physical activity too often, without taking a break or change your posture and position.
3. Find time to rest your body, by lying on a carpet or an exercise mat with your legs raised on the seat of a chair, for 15 minutes at a time.
4. Practice a relaxation technique daily.
5. Laugh from your heart as often as possible: it releases endorphins—which help you feel good and increase your resistance to pain.
6. Walk as much as possible; park your car as far away as is comfortable to walk to your destination.
7. If possible, walk up steps instead of taking an elevator or escalator.
8. Contemplate the symbols of your spiritual strength, be they pictures or verses from your Bible, or paintings and photos of the amazing creativity in nature.
9. Engage in activities that strengthen you spiritually, such as regular attendance in your church and lovingly preparing dinner for your children.
10. Surround yourself with people who share your faith, and trust in them as God's gift to you—they will help you feel that you are not alone in your pain.





Thank you to  
**Mervyn Waldman, DO**  
Osteopath, and  
Alexander Technique  
Instructor, Pain  
Medicine Institute,  
Rambam HCC

## Understanding Back Pain

Back pain is a common cause of doctor visits and lost work days. It can be traced back to examinations of the bones of our ancient ancestors, and is common to all peoples, lifestyles, societies, and cultures. Gravity is a relentless force on our spines; combined with body weight, an increasing crushing force is exerted from the top down. Repeated occupational strains, occasional accidents, and the stresses of daily life take their toll—resulting in back pain.

If you or a friend have sought relief and an explanation for your pain or dysfunction, the following information may be helpful.

Back pain is often related to the soft tissue components of

the spine, including the muscles, ligaments, tendons, capsules, menisci, and discs. The pain itself is often the result of soft tissue irritation or inflammation. It helps to remember that any abnormal or sustained strain on any part of the body, including the spine, can harm the soft tissues, resulting in impairment and pain.

Over 100 years of clinical experience and research have led to the development of a conservative and often effective way to gain temporary relief from acute back pain. This involves applying gentle, extremely precise and controlled manual manipulation of the limbs and back, such as with Osteopathic Manual Treatment. This treatment

method can sedate irritated nerve reflexes, improve circulation, and reduce inflammation and swelling at or near the site of injury.

For the long-term, treatment aims at restoring normal movement and providing instruction in efficient posture—essentials for minimizing the strain or stress on any part of your body, so that damaged tissues can recover or repair.

Many, if not most, back pain patients respond well to such conservative treatment of the cause of the pain, and not just the symptoms. In these cases rehabilitation programs and surgery are usually not needed, except in extreme cases and medical emergency.

## Rambam's Pain Medicine Institute

The Pain Medicine Institute, directed by Dr. Simon Vulfsons, is a multidisciplinary institute composed of physicians, nurses, a physical and manual therapy team, and a psychosocial team. The institute's 45 staff members work together in an effort to bring pain-relief and even pain-cure to the patient population of Northern Israel. With over 4,000 patients a year and over 18,000 patient visits, the institute is the largest in Israel, receiving patients referred from throughout Israel and even from overseas!

The institute not only treats and manages patients with chronic pain, it also focusses on pain research and educa-

tion. The institute is home to a dedicated Pain Research Unit directed by Prof. Elon Eisenberg, one of the foremost researchers in his field in the world. Physician training is one of the institute's priorities. In 2010, Dr. Simon Vulfsons established the Rambam School of Pain Medicine, aimed at training physicians and allied health professionals in the best and most advanced pain therapies. To date more than 150 physicians, mostly family practitioners, have been trained in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of acute and chronic pain conditions. These physicians are now working in the community primary care setting, to the benefit of their patients.

Rambam has recently approved, under the leadership of its Director, Prof. Rafi Beyar, establishment of a National Center of Excellence for Pain Research, Education, and Rehabilitation, based in the Pain Medicine Institute. Currently in the fund-raising phase, this new center will further the mission of the Pain Medicine Institute—to further treatment, management, research, and education for the benefit of patients suffering from acute and particularly chronic pain.

Dr. Simon Vulfsons  
Director  
Pain Medicine Institute at  
Rambam HCC



For all too many people, this picture represents the daily fight to manage pain...

# Do Babies Feel Pain?

For hundreds of years, according to Jewish tradition, babies drink from the blessed wine before being circumcised. Yet, on the Sabbath and Feast days come, babies are not required to drink from the wine. In recent years this practice has become controversial, particularly for non-Jewish lay people and medical practitioners who consider it to be a cruel practice—getting the infant drunk and then cutting it at 8 days.

Circumcision is foundational to the Jewish faith. However, is the wine really necessary? Many rabbis have insisted on its importance. Interestingly, the Rambam (Maimonides) was silent on the matter. In the past, it was thought that infants did not experience pain as an adult does. However, with the advent of modern medicine, our understanding of pain has changed dramatically, not only for adults, but for infants. In a search to understand how pain is experienced by infants—unrelated

to the issue of circumcision—a medical study was recently performed at Rambam. The researchers wanted to observe how pain was experienced by infants, and to understand what could best relieve it. They tried to relieve pain in several ways, including sucking on pacifiers, having infants drink their mother's milk, various formulas or water sweetened with glucose—all while experiencing a needle-prick in their heel to obtain blood for standard blood tests. The conclusion was interesting: All babies that were sucking any type of liquid responded less to the painful stimulus (pricking of the needle).

Since other rabbis had commented on the need for infants to drink wine before circumcision, perhaps Maimonides felt there was no need to comment on what to him was obvious. When an 8-day-old infant sucks on a cloth dipped in wine, there is certainly not enough

alcohol to get him drunk; nevertheless the sensation of sucking on a liquid has been alleviating the pain of circumcision in infants for centuries.

Clearly there is a difference between the defining commands from the Tenach and tradition. Nevertheless, before casting tradition aside, it is wise to consider where it came from, why it was implemented, and to see if it does have relevance for today. As with the drinking of wine, there are many medical traditions that demand reevaluation, particularly with regard to treating pain. Here at Rambam, we are inspired to seek solutions that don't just relieve the pain, but deal with the cause.



**Moses Maimonides, also known as Rabbi Moshe Ben Mimon (the Rambam)**

Shraga Blazer, MD  
Director, Department of  
Neonatology & NICU  
Rambam Health Care Campus

*Language,*

*Culture,*

*and*

*Rambam*

## Pain—כַּאֵב

There are many instances of pain throughout the Bible. The original Hebrew employs several different words to denote pain, each one having a different connotation. For example, the word *ke'ev* (כַּאֵב) emphasizes physical pain, as can be seen in Genesis 34:25, which describes the pain of the men of Shechem who have undergone circumcision. One might expect *ke'ev* to describe the pain of a woman in labor, but in Isaiah 26:17, a pregnant woman who screams in her birth pangs, is said to be in *cheel* (חֵיל), best understood as "trembling," and often associated with terror or fear. Similarly, in Genesis 3:16,

God declares that women will give birth in *etsev* (עֲצֵב), which connotes sorrow or grief, even though physical pain is clearly part of that experience as well.

*Amal* (עֲמָל) is the word used in Psalm 25:18: "Look upon my affliction and my *pain*; and forgive all my sins." The Hebrew word *amal* can best be translated as "torment," which implies mental anguish.

We can see how the Bible addresses pain as an emotional and spiritual experience, not strictly a physical one. Chronic pain can cause spiritual crises, as it did for Jeremiah (15:18) when he cried out to God: "Why is my pain (*ke'ev*)

everlasting, and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?..." Yet, of great comfort to people of faith—the Bible gives room for the expression of all our pain.

At Rambam, we appreciate the Bible's wisdom: a person's pain is best confronted when his or her entirety is addressed—body and soul. We are proud to have the only Pain Clinic in Israel with a chaplain on staff whose job it is to address the spiritual needs and challenges of those dealing with chronic pain.

Rabbi Tsvi Landau  
Hospital Chaplain  
Rambam Health Care Campus



## RAMBAM Health Care Campus

Creating the future of medicine.

### Rambam Health Care Campus

P.O.B 9602  
Haifa 3109601  
Israel

Phone: +972-4-777-1285/2042  
Fax: +972-4-777-2657  
E-mail: [cfr@rambam.health.gov.il](mailto:cfr@rambam.health.gov.il)

**American Friends of Rambam Medical Center**  
[www.aforam.org](http://www.aforam.org) | [info@aforam.org](mailto:info@aforam.org)  
212-292-4499

**Canadian Friends of Rambam Medical Centre**  
[www.cfram.ca](http://www.cfram.ca) | [info@cfram.ca](mailto:info@cfram.ca)  
416-481-5552

**British Friends of Rambam Medical Centre**  
[www.rambamuk.co.uk](http://www.rambamuk.co.uk) | [anita@rambamuk.co.uk](mailto:anita@rambamuk.co.uk)  
208-371-1500

**French Friends of Rambam Medical Center**  
[amisfrancaisrambam.asso-web.com](http://amisfrancaisrambam.asso-web.com) | [joelleabitbol16@gmail.com](mailto:joelleabitbol16@gmail.com)  
609-580-268


**Spanish Friends of Rambam Medical Centre**  
[www.amigosderambam.org](http://www.amigosderambam.org) | [info@amigosderambam.org](mailto:info@amigosderambam.org)  
609-580-268

**Israeli Friends of Rambam Medical Center**  
[galit@rmc.gov.il](mailto:galit@rmc.gov.il)  
+972-4-852-0670

#### For more information:



[www.rambam.org.il](http://www.rambam.org.il)

 [rambambhospital](https://www.youtube.com/rambambhospital)



[Rambam Health Care Campus - Hospital](https://www.facebook.com/RambamHealthCareCampus-Hospital)



## You Can Help Current Needs at Rambam

We depend on people like you to help us replace old equipment, build new facilities, perform research, and care for our patients. Your gift counts—whatever the amount. Click on the links below for more information on how you can help support the people of Israel via Rambam Health Care Campus.

**Pray for Us and Tell Others About Us:** Visit our [Christian Friends of Rambam Facebook page](#) often for prayer requests and regular updates about what is happening at Rambam.

**Friends Organizations:** Tax-deductible donations can be made via a Friends organization near you (listed above).

**Giving:** Please [visit our webpage](#) for more information about how you can make a difference in the lives of the people served by Rambam Health Care Campus.

No one enjoys pain. However, as you have read in many of these articles—pain is part of life. People who battle with chronic pain find it an exhausting and overwhelming experience. Often, we can serve as God's hands to bring healing and relief to those who are hurting.

Modern research is just beginning to understand the physical and emotional dynamics of chronic pain. Hence, establishment of a National Center of Excellence for Pain Research, Education, and Rehabilitation at Rambam is essential. The center will expand the current facilities for pain research, raising up a new generation of physicians with the training needed to help patients struggling with pain. New chronic pain therapies will continue to be provided to the patients of Northern Israel, including:

- Pain management consultations
- Interventional pain management, such as image-guided injections and spinal cord stimulators
- Intramuscular stimulation
- Physical therapy modalities
- Occupational therapy
- Psychosocial therapies to improve pain management
- A rehabilitation package for chronic pain patients

Please pray for people struggling with pain. Your donation, in any amount, designated for the Pain Medicine Institute, will be gratefully acknowledged. Most importantly, your gift will make you a participant in the healing of people in Israel struggling with chronic pain.

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds...*

*Psalm 147:3*