

## THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

# Stepping Out to Dance

Finding time for renewal is no easy task for full-time physician Shaun J. Gillis, a married mother of three children, aged 9, 6, and 3.

That's why she looks forward to her 2-hour dance rehearsals every Thursday night, which she began 3 years ago as an outlet for exercise and stress release.

Dancing "is almost like yoga for my mind or meditation—it's a chance to step away from what I do every day, all day," said 39-year-old Dr. Gillis, who practices ob.gyn. in Bozeman, Mont. "I'm not mom, and I'm not the doctor. I'm just dancing, minding what my feet are doing. It's relaxing mentally, a chance to step away."

A Montana native, Dr. Gillis started dancing competitively as a freshman in high school and went on to join the dance company at Montana State University in Bozeman, where she specialized in lyrical and tap dancing. Her dancing days were put on hold when she enrolled into medical school at the University of Washington, Seattle. "It was very sad," she recalled. "With medical school and residency, I was too busy."

When she relocated back to Bozeman, she joined Tanya's Dance Co. in Belgrade, Mont. ([www.tanyasdanceco.com](http://www.tanyasdanceco.com)) on referral from a friend and picked up dancing again after a 10-year break. Returning to dance "was very comfortable," she said. "Once I started moving, I realized I could do this again after taking a long break. I've



Dr. Shaun J. Gillis calls clogging "an American version of Irish folk dancing. It's all about the footwork."

COURTESY DR. SHAUN J. GILLIS

also had some really great teachers who have been encouraging and positive."

Tap dancing "has become my new favorite. But I also like lyrical dance; it's more expressionistic," Dr. Gillis said. She's also adept at clogging, which she described as "an American version of Irish folk dancing. It's all about the footwork. There is not a lot of arm movement or upper body motion, but the steps are quite different from Irish folk dancing."

She also admires the work of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, a New York City-based company that does extensive touring.

Tanya's Dance Co.—whose members range in age from 18 to their early 50s—

competes with other dance groups in Montana during March and April and stages a local performance in June. Right before the curtain went up at last year's performance someone's child yelled out, "Go, Mom!" which caused the dancers to erupt with laughter, she recalled.

In the spring of 2007, Dr. Gillis and her teammates received the honor of having the No. 1 tap routine in a statewide competition. Such events represent a chance "to take an individual talent and

turn it into a team sport because we compete as a team," she said. "The judges score you on costumes, makeup, and hair—so everything needs to be very uniform."

She said she enjoys such camaraderie with other women from all walks of life. "I interact with people that I would never interact with on a daily basis," she said. "Nobody else in my group is a physician or in the medical profession."

Dr. Gillis initially worried what her patients would think about their doctor performing dance routines in public, but she is over that now, and explained that many of her patients showered her with support and encouragement. In fact, some members of the dance team are her

patients. "This is a small town, so it happens," she said.

Her goal is to keep building her skills and to keep dancing as long as she is physically able. "There are some incredibly difficult tap moves that I watch my teacher do and I'm just in awe," she said. "I'm constantly striving to see if I can get my feet to move like that or learn a complicated series of steps. It's challenging," she added.

Dr. Gillis noted that it saddens her to think she went 10 years without dancing, "because it was such a joy to get back into. Being a physician you have to maintain balance and things that you enjoy outside of medicine." ■

By Doug Brunk, San Diego Bureau

### E-MAIL US YOUR STORIES

Do you trade in your lab coat on the weekends for two-wheeled transportation and leather? Is the highlight of your year bike week at the beach? Have you ever had the misfortune of suffering from road rash? Whether you enjoy taking leisurely rides on a cruiser or prefer the speed of a crotch rocket, we want to hear your stories. Send an e-mail to [d.brunk@elsevier.com](mailto:d.brunk@elsevier.com).

## INDICATIONS

### You're All Fighting for Second

We don't do a lot of book reviews (none, actually) here at the Bureau of Indications, but a book came across the desk that we just have to mention. The 20th-anniversary edition of "Kill as Few Patients as Possible—and Fifty-Six Other Essays on How to Be the World's Best Doctor," written by Dr. Oscar London (a pseudonym), contains such gems as "Don't be the last Doc on the block to own a plastic gallbladder" and "Call in death as a consultant." Kind of warms your heart, doesn't it? As the self-proclaimed "World's Best Doctor," Dr. London felt it was his duty to provide other physicians with the means to become the "world's second-best doctor." He goes about it in a decidedly non-politically correct manner that may be best exemplified by his dieting advice. High-fiber health food, he says, causes intestinal gas, and "I'd rather be carted out at 60 than farted out at 90."

### Organ Donors

Well, spring is here, and organs are busting out all over. The last couple of months have seen several advances in NOTES, or natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery. ("Orifice" is one of those words that just *sounds* funny, don't you think? Say it quietly to yourself: orifice. You chuckled a little, didn't you?) A team of surgeons from the Hospital Clinic de Barcelona was the first in Europe to remove a kidney through a patient's vagina. Only days before, surgeons at the

University of California, San Diego, were the first in the United States to remove a patient's appendix through her vagina. A couple of weeks earlier, UC San Diego had claimed the first oral appendix removal in the United States. The appendix patient, Jeff Scholz, a 42-year-old Californian, was happy to report that his pain was "a 2 on a scale of 1-10" a day after the surgery. When his mother heard about the surgery, she remarked, "I'm not surprised. You wouldn't believe some of the things that have come out of his mouth."

### Police Pursue Penis Purloiners

The latest report from the Democratic Republic of Congo suggests that surgeons may not be the only ones removing body parts these days. In Kinshasa, police recently arrested 13 sorcerers for allegedly using witchcraft to steal or shrink other men's penises. The arrests come after rumors of penis theft spread through the city, dominating radio call-in shows and leading to a number of attempted lynchings of people believed to be sorcerers. The victims, 14 of whom were also arrested, said that the sorcerers just touched them and made their penises either disappear or shrink. Kinshasa police chief Jean-Dieudonne Oleko said to Reuters, "I tell them, 'How do you know if you haven't gone home and tried it?'"

### New Botox Revenue Stream?

This month's Botox-related news comes to us from Italy, where investigators in-

jected a laboratory preparation of botulinum toxin A into a bunch of appearance-conscious rats to track its "long-distance retrograde effects." Within 3 days of being injected into rodents' whisker muscles, evidence of the toxin was detected in the brainstem, as reported in the *Journal of Neuroscience*. When the botulinum was injected in the hippocampus in one hemisphere, it migrated to the hippocampus in the opposite hemisphere. When it was injected into the superior colliculus, a visual center, it moved to the rats' eyes. These findings conflict with earlier studies showing that botulinum is broken down at the injection site and does not move through nerves. Maybe, though, the brain is not such a bad place for Botox to be. After all, brains are full of wrinkles.

### Anything for Charity

The organs may be busting out, but it's not really spring here in the Washington area

until the American Liver Foundation's local chapter holds its annual "Flavors of Northern Virginia" event. This year, guests enjoyed a five-course meal, complete with wine pairings, prepared by chefs from 11 local restaurants, including Fleming's Prime Steak House & Wine Bar and Ruth's Chris Steak House. Okay, let's see if we've got this right: People paid \$100 a person to fight liver disease by eating a calorie-laden, wine-accompanied meal that is the type of thing that *causes* fatty liver disease? What else would you expect from an organization that refers to itself as ALF in a press release? In that same vein, though—raising money by doing the thing you're trying to prevent—why not fight the spread of sexually transmitted diseases by having an orgy? Or the Sierra Club could auction off logging rights at Yellowstone. The possibilities are endless.

—Richard Franki

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