



Watch Super Bowl XLVIII live everywhere.
Only with Bell Mobile TV.

[Learn more](#)



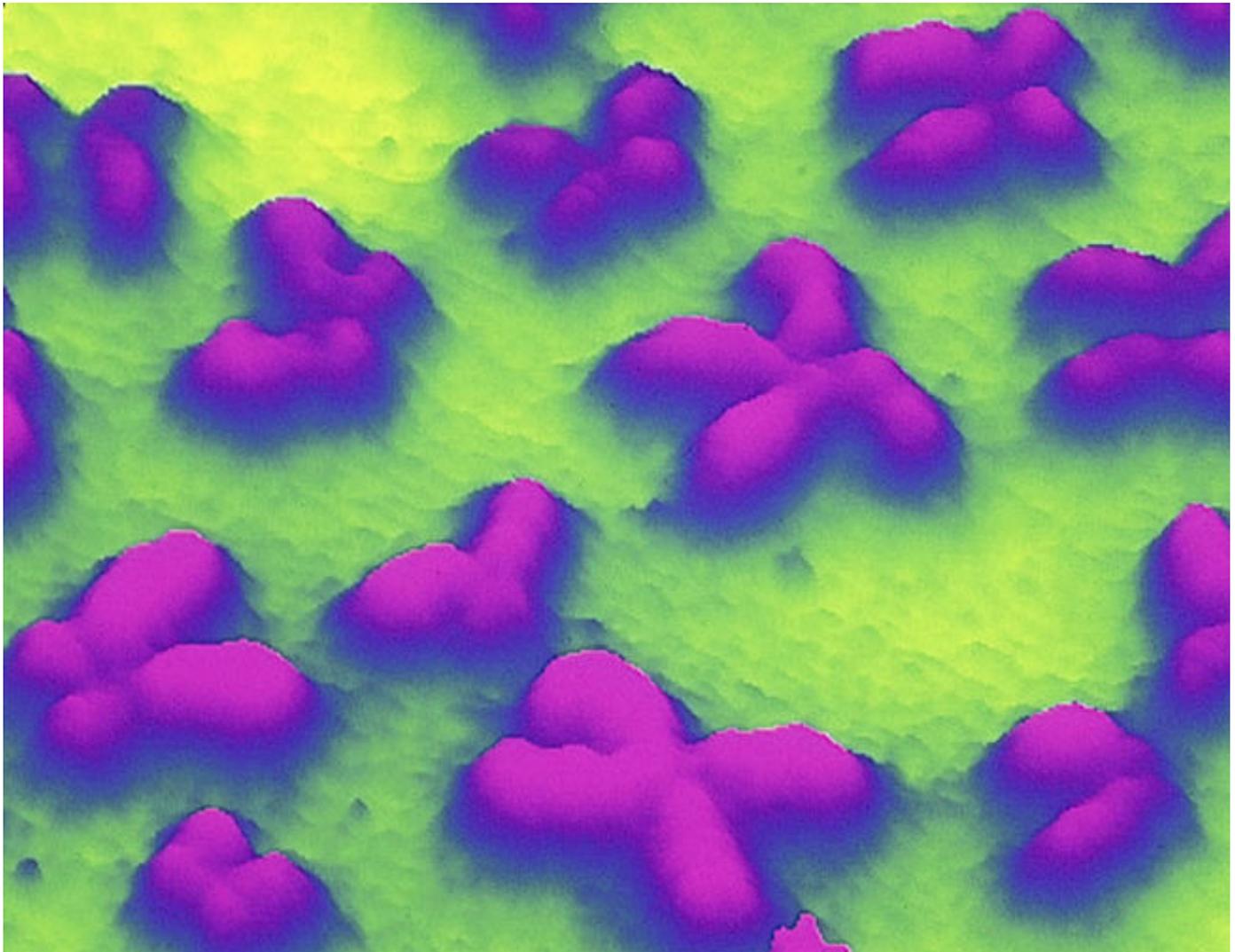
Bell | 
Proud sponsor of the NFL

OPINION COLUMN

Many benefits in holistic approach to health



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours
Thursday, December 19, 2013 3:45:23 PST PM



Chromosomes. (FILE PHOTO)

Whenever a year comes to a close, it's natural to review what has transpired over the last 12 months and try to predict what the future might bring.

You likely know that healthy lifestyle choices such as eating a whole foods, plant-based diet, exercising, practising yoga and meditation, and maintaining supportive social connections could lead to a longer life with fewer illnesses. But did you know that one of the causes for this might be the length of your telomeres?

What are telomeres, you ask? Telomeres help protect chromosomes from becoming unstable — the longer the telomere, the better the protection. Shorter telomeres are associated with age-related diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, dementia and stroke.

Several studies have demonstrated a connection between telomere length and cell aging. This year, a pilot study showed a 10 percent increase in telomere length for those men who made the aforementioned healthy lifestyle changes. The control group, who made no changes, had a three percent decrease in length.

Yoga, meditation and social support were included in the study, possibly as ways to help manage stress. It's no coincidence that the same diseases associated with shortened telomere length are also linked to chronic stress. Chronic stress — such as that caused by impending work deadlines, money troubles and challenging relationships — shortens telomeres. Healthcare providers have long talked to patients about the importance of stress management, noting its elimination is not always possible and how it is perceived is key.

Holistic medicine offers many ways to help reduce the negative effects of chronic stress. As it continues to gain acceptance around the globe, its many different forms, especially with the growing costs of pharmaceuticals and invasive procedures, and with the rising numbers of those suffering from chronic illnesses, have helped millions of new converts.

Acupuncture, one of the most popular forms, has been demonstrated as a cost-effective way to treat many types of pain, from osteoarthritis to back pain, headaches and sports injuries. But one of its major benefits that patients soon realize upon treatment is the deep sense of relaxation and feeling of wellness that occurs on the table and afterward.

Expect to hear more in the news in 2014 about telomeres and holistic therapies that can help you live well longer.

Melissa Carr is a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine, caring for patients in an integrative medicine clinic in Vancouver. www.activetcm.com

Reader's comments »

If you already have an account on this newspaper, you can login to the newspaper to add your comments.

By adding a comment on the site, you accept our terms and conditions and our netiquette rules.