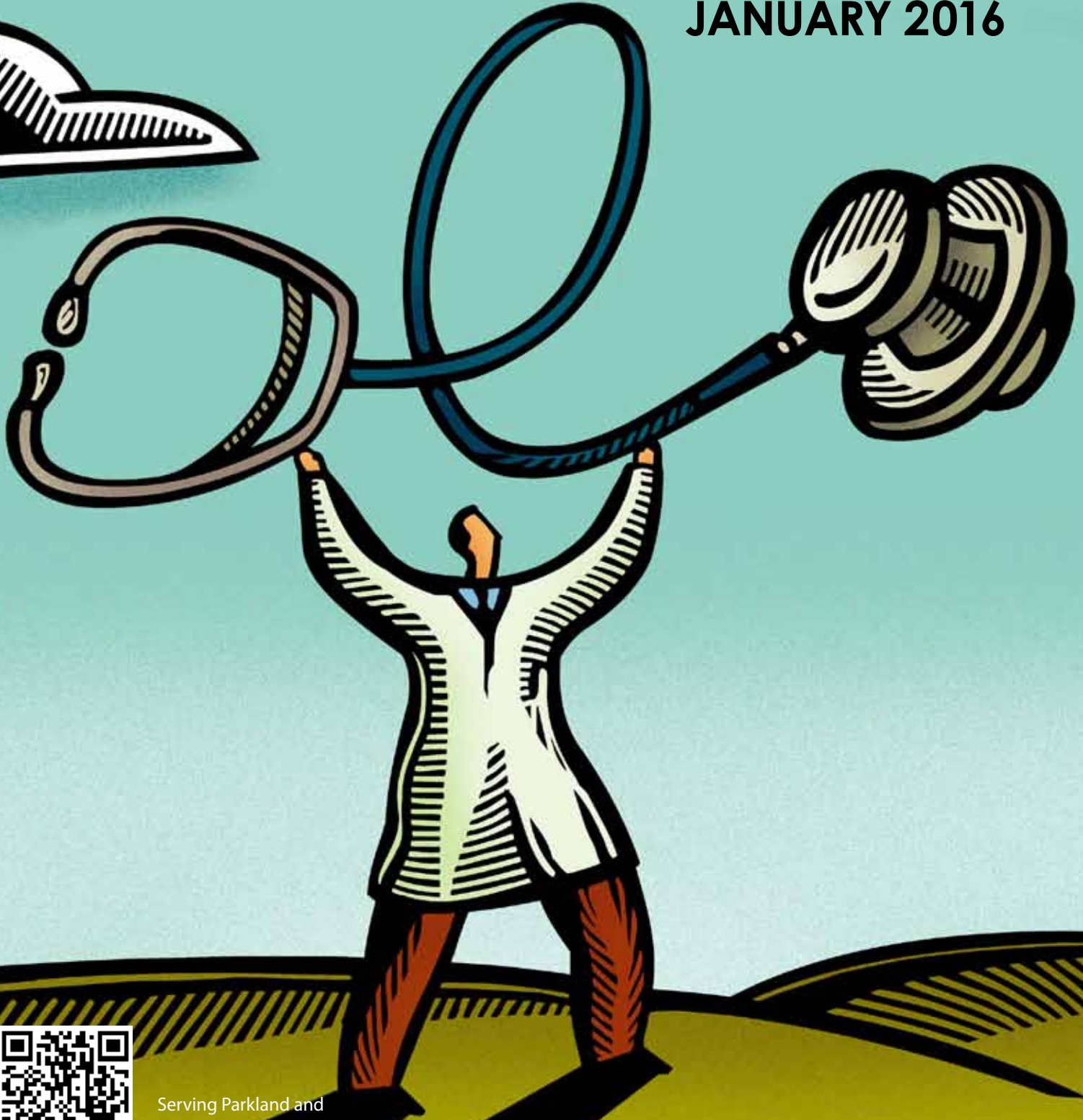


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# PILATES STRENGTHENS BOTH THE MIND & BODY

by Laura Simoncini

**P**ilates hits your core, or 'power-house', unlike any other workout. According to a study published in *Medical & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 36 weeks of Pilates training resulted in a 21% strength increase of the rectus abdominis, the muscle responsible for creating a 'six-pack'.

The study also showed that in addition to strength increase, Pilates also helped to eliminate muscle imbalances between the right and left sides of the core. People suffering from chronic back pain may also find relief with Pilates, as a stronger core equals a stronger back. According to a study published in the *Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy*, individuals with chronic back pain who practiced Pilates for just four weeks experienced significant pain relief lasting an entire year! Researchers believe that Pilates alleviates stress and increases mobility by stabilizing the lumbar-pelvic, or lower back, region.

The benefits of Pilates for overall health have been well documented. Neck aches, back aches, headaches, stomach aches, and many other issues can occur as a result of bad posture, or 'alignment' in Pilates terms. When the body is properly aligned, the postural muscles are not straining to hold your body upright. This results in the muscles working together more efficiently and reduces excess strain on one muscle group over another. As you correct

alignment, or posture, you will find that pressure on sensitive joints like the knees and hips is reduced. Proper alignment will also help to make you look better, taller, leaner, and more confident.

Other health benefits of Pilates are improved flexibility and range of motion. According to *Arthritis Today*, exercises such as Pilates have been proven to relieve arthritis pain and improve joint function. Stiff joints can be painful and difficult to use, but improving flexibility will definitely help to relieve those symptoms.

The Sports Injury Clinic states that Pilates will not make your arthritis joint pain worse, but will instead help to improve your pain and quality of life. The numerous benefits of Pilates make it a great exercise choice for those with arthritis.

Pilates can also help to improve brainpower and function. Joseph Pilates himself, the creator of Pilates, stated that his workout method was "the training man's exercise". Chinese researchers measured changes in the brain activity of

women following ten weeks of Pilates training. They found that there was an increase in the brain's alpha peak power, which is related to neural network activity, memory, performance, and other important cognitive functions. Researchers believe Pilates may even hold potential as a treatment option for people with various brain degeneration diseases and cognitive dysfunctions.

Perhaps one of the most important health benefits of Pilates is stress reduction. Everyone experiences stress at different levels and Pilates is a perfect way to help calm you. Pilates will help you become mindful of your breath, body, and muscles as it places much focus on controlled breathing. Because of this mindfulness, Pilates has actually been described as a form of meditation. Therefore, during your workout you are forced to forget about work, bills, and other drama for a full hour! Ahh..... 🧘

*Laura Simoncini is a certified Pilates Instructor. She is the owner of Laura's Ultimate Pilates in Parkland.*

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