

HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

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NETNEWS

UPDATED GUIDE FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS



“As a breast cancer survivor, I know how overwhelming it is to hear you have cancer...these words can truly stop your world.”

These are the words of Dr. Carolyn D. Runowicz, director of the University of Connecticut Health Center's Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center and a former breast cancer patient.

Newly diagnosed breast cancer patients can feel overwhelmed by their physician's news. They may also have a myriad of questions. Their questions may be related, not only to their medical treatment, but also to the many practical concerns that they now face.... related to nutrition, managing symptoms, retaining their job, stress management, and paying for treatment.

The newly updated 2009 edition of the Breast Cancer Resource Guide, published by the University of Connecticut Health Center Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center, and focused on the needs of recently diagnosed breast cancer patients, provides information on diagnosis, treatment, and managing the day-to-day challenges of treatment and recovery. Comprehensive and detailed, with many photographs and illustrations, it is written in clear, patient-focused language. It also provides guidance in formulating questions to ask doctors and other health providers.

Directed to Connecticut residents, it mentions relevant Connecticut laws and describes Connecticut and national resources, organizations, and agencies. Each chapter concludes with a select list of additional resources.

Intended to help breast cancer patients fill in information gaps, the sixty-eight page Guide provides an explanation of cancer, its detection, possible genetic mutations, therapy options, rehabilitation, side effects of treatment, clinical trial participation, financial and legal options, stress reduction, and prevention of recurrence.

The Guide concludes with an encouraging statement, directed to patients who have completed treatment, that congratulates them for being among the more than ten million Americans who have survived cancer.

The 2009 edition of the Breast Cancer Resource Guide may be viewed online at <http://cancer.uchc.edu/treatment/services/bcguide/bcguide.pdf> Free print copies are available from the UCONN Health Center by phoning 800/535-6232.

As updated information becomes available, it will be posted on the website of the University of Connecticut Health Center Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center at www.cancer.uchc.edu



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IS YOUR LIBRARY WELCOMING TO CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH AUTISM ?

When children and adults with autism visit your library, do they feel at home? Do you and other staff members feel comfortable communicating with children and adults with autism?

Individuals with autism may avoid eye contact and may not respond when you greet them warmly. They may exhibit repetitive behavior that seems irrelevant to the library environment. They may be disturbed by joyous children's voices from library programs. New displays and altered locations of library materials may be disconcerting to individuals who prefer familiarity and predictability.

Repetitive behavior patterns, language impairment, lack of social contact, and developmental delays are characteristic of individual with autism, a pervasive developmental disorder. Its characteristics often begin before a child is three years old and persist throughout the individual's lifetime. The diagnosis may sometimes be made as early as eighteen months of age. The cause of autism has not been determined. In 2007 data, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control stated that one out of one hundred fifty eight-year-olds were classified as having an autism spectrum disorder.

Despite the challenges of communicating with individuals with autism, "The Library can be a wonderful place for people with autism...with its cozy nooks and crannies...and books...and because it's not necessarily demanding anything socially, it's kind of perfect for someone with autism." A Customer Service Tips handout distributed to staff members of the Scotch Plains Public Library and the Fanwood Memorial Library made this encouraging statement.

As part of a partnership with Infolink: The Eastern New Jersey Regional Library Cooperative funded by the New Jersey State Library, these two New Jersey libraries produced a training video for library staff members about autism and about interacting effectively with children and adults with autism in a library setting. There is a link to this video and to other informative autism training materials for librarians on their joint website <http://www.thejointlibrary.org/autism/>

In addition to the training video, their website includes the components of a successful library training workshop: a Powerpoint presentation, a Customer Services Tips handout, a sample news release, and a workshop evaluation form, as well as resources that can be adapted to your library. Among the customizable resources are a Library Special Needs Communication Guide which may be used to assist in nonverbal communication through pictures and sign language and a template for a brief, very basic book that can be created using photos of your library to familiarize visitors with your library.

There are links to other sources of autism information on their website. Additional resources about autism appear in the Mental Health Resource Guide on the Healthnet website at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/mentresource.html#pervasive>

HOW MUCH TV AND COMPUTER USE IS TOO MUCH FOR CHILDREN?

How concerned should you be about children and their use of media?

How harmful is children's extended television watching, iPod, cell phone, and Internet use? Do media have positive, educational effects on growing children?



These questions are important ones for parents to consider since "young people spend more time using media—TV, movies, music, computers, Internet, cell phones, magazines, and video games—than engaging in any other single activity except sleep."

This statement is supported by research from the Center on Media and Child Health at <http://www.cmch.tv/> based at the Children's Hospital Boston, Harvard School of Public Health, and Harvard Medical Center. The Center seeks to gain understanding about the "effects of media on the physical, mental, and social health of children." The Center acknowledges "that it is unrealistic to shield children from all media."

The Center is currently engaged in research about Media and Sexual Image, Body Image and Reality TV, Media's Influence on Bullying, and Media and Risky Behavior, as well as many other related topics. It has published articles examining the effect of background TV noise on the play behavior of toddlers, the role of television food advertisements on children's food choices, and the effect of television violence on aggressive behavior in children.

The Center's website uses summaries of scientific research to examine the "upsides" and "downsides" of "Hot Topics" such as cell phone use, violent video games, television viewing and obesity, and smoking in the movies.

Its website offers parents, educators, and researchers detailed information about risks and benefits of the use of specific media types, stages of child development and their relation to media use, the effect of media on children's health and nutrition, and recommendations on developing media literacy in children. Brief, monthly online newsletters for parents provide updates.

A new online service, "Ask the Mediatrixian," at <http://cmch.typepad.com/mediatrixian/> allows parents to submit questions to pediatrician Dr. Michael Rich, director of the Center. Questions and answers are posted online. His responses are enriched by his experience as a filmmaker before he attended medical school.

The searchable CMCH Database of Research, including more than seven thousand citations, allows researchers to find information about Center on Media and Child Health research studies.

FINDING HEALTH CARE WHEN YOU HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE..

For many Americans who lack health insurance, finding a resource for medical treatment is stressful and challenging. Individuals recently laid off from jobs that provided health insurance for themselves and their families may suddenly be without coverage. They are seeking resources that provide health care for their families despite their lack of health insurance.

Fortunately, federally-funded health centers that provide treatment for individuals who have no health insurance do exist. These health centers provide medical treatment for sick adults and children, immunizations and well check-ups for children, health monitoring for pregnant women, dental care, prescription medications, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

These local health centers, searchable by location on the federal Health Resources and Service Administration website at <http://www.hrsa.gov/> provide "health care regardless of your ability to pay." Fees are based on a patient's income.

Federally-funded health centers are among the medical treatment search options on the federal government's "Find Help" web page at <http://www.hrsa.gov/help/default.htm>

A search for federally-funded community health centers in Connecticut on the website's "Find a Health Center" search screen at <http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/> yielded more than one hundred sixty health centers. The results list includes a link to each health center's web site, driving directions, and a map for the center's location.

Parents may contact the federally sponsored Husky Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth program in Connecticut at <http://www.huskyhealth.com/hh/site/default.asp> to learn about registering their children for this program. The Husky Plan "offers a full health insurance package for children and teenagers up to age 19, regardless of family income. HUSKY pays for doctor visits, prescriptions, vision and dental care" and other health services. These services include "mental health and substance abuse treatment services." Many enrollees are from working families.

Healthnet's online Resource Guide about "Navigating the Health Care System" at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/hcbib.html> offers additional information about financial assistance, obtaining health insurance, and organizations and agencies to contact for guidance. There is an article about "Paying for Health Care" in the Winter 2008/2009 issue of the Healthnet newsletter at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/winter0809.pdf>

SPANISH VERSION OF CONSUMER HEALTH MAGAZINE

Medlineplus.gov, the National Library of Medicine's website for health consumers, features a quarterly magazine at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/> which is also available by free subscription in print.

Recently, a pilot issue in Spanish was published at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/magazine/issues/winter09/toc.html>

The first issue of Medlineplus Salud discusses "Managing Diabetes," health problems of aging Hispanic Americans, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and includes links to a video series about Hispanic Pioneers in Science. Each Spanish article is followed by an English translation.

The Spanish language version of the Medlineplus website at <http://medlineplus.gov/esp/> includes most of the health topics in the English version. Links to additional Spanish language consumer health publications appear on the Healthnet website at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/inters.html#span> and in the Fall 2008 Healthnet newsletter at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/fall08.pdf>



WHICH HEALTH TOPICS ARE LIBRARY USERS SEARCHING FOR?

Health topics follow trends, just as interest in celebrities, clothing styles, television shows, movies, and travel destinations do.

Some health topics are currently quite popular and many information seekers are selecting them. However, topics such as swine flu, autism, cholesterol, and fibromyalgia may not remain among the most frequently searched topics in future months.

How can you determine which health topics your library's users will likely find important in the near future?

A new, graphical, online health information feature can help you keep up-to-date on search trends. Medlineplus, the National Library of Medicine's free, authoritative online consumer health resource at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>, has added a Search Cloud to its website at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/cloud.html>. Each day, the Search Cloud displays, in alphabetical order, the one hundred topics searched most frequently on its website ...and the one hundred most frequently searched topics in Spanish on Medlineplus' Spanish language version at <http://medlineplus.gov/spanish/>. The Spanish search cloud appears at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/cloud.html>.

The terms' type sizes vary. The most popular topics appear in progressively larger type faces. Exact rankings for each term appear when you position your cursor over a search term. Out of the one hundred terms appearing in the Cloud, "seizures" was recently the second most frequently searched topic. Terms are added, deleted, and modified in size nearly each week day, reflecting changes in popularity.

You may search Medlineplus directly for information on any of the one hundred subjects in the Cloud by clicking on that term. Depending on the topic and the availability of current information, you may find information related to health topics such as diabetes, lupus, multiple sclerosis, depression, genetic testing, and pesticides, under subcategories such as diagnosis/symptoms, treatment, prevention/screening, nutrition, alternative therapy, latest news, and research.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following titles are recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services. They are not part of the UConn Health Center Library collection.

Cataract Surgery. A Patient's Guide to Cataract Treatment. Uday Devgan. Addicus Books, 2008. 123 p. (ISBN 978-1-886039-94-0 paperback), \$19.95.

Since two types of surgery are current options for treating cataracts, patients experiencing clouding of the eyes lens and resulting blurry vision, fading color vision, and poor night vision from cataracts, may be faced with the prospect of cataract surgery. More than half of Americans experience cataracts by age 80.

Dr. Uday Devgan, chief of ophthalmology at Olive View UCLA Medical Center and an associate clinical professor at the Jules Stein Eye Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, provides a basic explanation of eye anatomy, cataract formation, the surgical procedure, and possible risks and complications of the surgery.



Especially helpful to a concerned patient approaching surgery is the brief, easy-to-read, detailed description of the cataract surgery process. The explanation includes descriptions of the patient's preparation for surgery ("your eyelid, eyelashes, and face will be cleaned with an antibacterial iodine solution"...the anesthesiologist will place small heart monitors at the top of your chest.."), and the patient's experience during surgery ("can take as little as five minutes"...you might feel a few drops of cool water running down your face..water is used during surgery to keep the eye cool.")

The book is enhanced by a glossary, color illustrations of the eye with normal vision and of an eye affected by a cataract, as well as drawings of the surgical procedure.

Know Your Chances. Understanding Health Statistics. Steven Woloshin, Lisa M. Schwartz, H. Gilbert Welch. University of California Press, 2008. 142 p. (ISBN 978-0-520-23222-6 paperback), \$16.95.

"How to see through the hype in medical news, ads, and public service announcements."

Health messages surround us daily. We have become accustomed to surprising announcements of medical breakthroughs in media reports. Will a new research finding offer a definite cure for a disease you have contracted? Or will a recently reported prediction of your chances of being stricken by a life-threatening disorder cause alarming concern?

Experts in evaluating medical reports in the media, physicians Steven Woloshin, Lisa M. Schwartz, and H. Gilbert Welch of Dartmouth Medical School in New Hampshire help health consumers understand how to evaluate health risks and benefits by "teaching...about the numbers behind the messages" and helping readers to "develop a healthy skepticism." Their clearly written, consumer-friendly explanations are enhanced by a glossary, one-question quizzes to assess understanding (with clarifications of the answers), added information in "Learn More" boxes, risk charts to help put news reports about "health concerns in perspective," and suggestions for additional informational resources.

The book's coherent explanations make it accessible for readers with no statistical background. Each chapter takes readers step-by-step through understanding of concepts such as "starting" and "modified" risk, risk reduction, "surrogate" and "patient" outcomes, survival statistics, judging benefits and downsides of a treatment, survival rates, and preliminary findings. The authors have also added a touch of humor to make the sometimes intangible concepts palatable.

Long-Term Care. How to Plan and Pay for It. Joseph Matthews. Nolo Press, 2008. 402 p. (ISBN 1-4133-0898-8 paperback), \$24.99.

Nolo Press, known since the early 1970's for straightforward consumer guides to the legal system, has published a seventh, updated edition of Long-Term Care. How to Plan and Pay for It.

Written by Attorney Joseph Matthews, this consumer-friendly guide focuses on planning for long-term care needs, assessing an individual's medical situation, deciding among the increasing types of at-home and residential facility options, evaluating nursing facilities, becoming aware of the realities of long-term care insurance, determining eligibility for Medicaid, Medicare, and veterans' benefits, and protecting elders against fraud.

Planning Parenthood. Strategies for Success in Fertility Assistance, Adoption, and Surrogacy. Rebecca A. Clark, Gloria Richard-Davis, Jill Hayes, Michelle Murphy, Katherine Pucheu Theall. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 237 p. (ISBN 0-8018-9111-6 hardcover, ISBN 0-8018-9112-4 paperback).

The decision to become a parent is a happy and hopeful one for many men and women. But for a number of couples planning pregnancy, the path to becoming parents is a long and frustrating one. After a year of unsuccessful attempts to become pregnant, a couple is often urged to seek medical help in determining the cause of infertility.

The current options for achieving parenthood are many. A number of diagnostic tests are available for determining the cause of infertility. The range of treatments for fertility has increased dramatically.

Coping with this challenge may require understanding and psychological help as well as medical treatment. The effort may involve a great deal of expense, time, and frustration as well as medical and psychological assistance. The solutions discussed in this book include surrogacy and domestic and international adoption, as well as medical treatments to achieve pregnancy. The advantages and disadvantages of specific fertility treatments are discussed as well as the emotional and financial costs of each. Options for nontraditional families...single individuals, gay and lesbian couples, and individuals with blood infections such as AIDS and hepatitis... are addressed. Each chapter concludes with a personal account of an individual's efforts to become a parent.

The five authors of this comprehensive guide to achieving parenthood are not only physicians. Among the writers are also an epidemiologist, an attorney, and a psychologist. Some have faced difficulty themselves in achieving parenthood.



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle and Judith Kronick.
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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