

HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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UPDATE

WORKSHOP SERIES

Save the dates. Healthnet is offering a series of workshops in June 2007 for public librarians.

June 12 with a repeat session on **June 19**

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. – a.m. session - **Introduction to PubMed** – the National Library of Medicine online index of medical journal articles; p.m. session; – **Introduction to the NLM gateway** and the **Clinical Trials** online database. The NLM Gateway is one-stop shopping for health information which allows you to search all of NLM's databases simultaneously. The Clinical Trials database provides regularly updated information about federally and privately supported clinical research in human volunteers. This class will be taught by Donna Berryman, Outreach Coordinator for the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, New England Region, University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

June 13 - 9 a.m. – Noon – **Navigating the Healthcare System**. This program will offer a review of websites with information on topics including Medicare, evaluating physicians and hospitals, health insurance, long term care plans, privacy rights, and end of life decisions. The program will be taught by Alberta Richetelle and Judith Kronick of Healthnet.

June 27 – 9:00 a.m. – Noon – **Health information for Older Adults**. This program will offer a review of websites aimed at older adults and will cover topics such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, communicating with your doctor, organizations and agencies that provide assistance, insurance information, and legal resources. This program will be taught by Alberta Richetelle and Judith Kronick of Healthnet.

All of the above programs will be held at the Middletown Library Service Center. Registration is free and details and registration information will be made available in April.

HEALTH CENTER "PATIENT SCHOOL"

The University of Connecticut Health Center has scheduled another session of its popular "Patient School". Offered through the UConn School of Medicine, the school takes place over five consecutive Thursday evenings, from 6:30 to 8:45 p.m. at the Health Center in Farmington. Topics covered in the weekly sessions include communicating with your doctor, things to know when you are hospitalized, how to find reliable health information on the Internet, privacy issues, how to make better health decisions, legal and ethical issues at the end of life, and advanced directives. The individual sessions are taught by members of UConn School of Medicine faculty and staff. There is a nominal registration fee of \$59.00 which includes a binder with all materials related to each of the sessions.



For more detailed information and to register for the Spring session which begins on Thursday, March 1, go to <http://patientschool.uhc.edu/programdetails.html> or call 1-800-535-6232 or 860-679-7692.



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NETNEWS

VISION CARE



Three websites offer a wide array of consumer-focused information about eye care, LASIK eye surgery, contact lenses and glasses, and eye diseases.

All About Vision at <http://www.allaboutvision.com> includes brief articles about such topics as the pros and cons of purchasing drugstore reading glasses, how progressive lenses work, teens and contact lens wear, risk factors for macular degeneration, as well as many strategically- placed advertisements. Articles are reviewed by members of an advisory board of optometrists, ophthalmologists, and opticians.

The website of the **National Eye Institute**, part of the National Institutes of Health at <http://www.nei.nih.gov> includes a clinical trials database, searchable by condition, location, age group, and recruitment status, as well as health information in English and Spanish about eye disorders such as glaucoma, amblyopia, vitreous detachment, and macular degeneration. There are also an interactive eye diagram and simulations of vision as experienced by individuals with eye diseases.

Eye Resources on the Internet at <http://webeve.opth.uiowa.edu/dept/websites/everes.htm> , compiled for the Association of Vision Science Librarians for the use of health professionals and consumers, is a large, diverse list of links to eye disease and vision websites, ranging from guidelines for anesthesia administration during cataract surgery, links to associations and hospitals, fact sheets on eye diseases to photos of antique spectacles. Some are commercial websites.

ARE YOU SLEEP-DEPRIVED?

According to the nonprofit **National Sleep Foundation**, more than 40 million Americans experience sleep disorders and more than forty per cent of adults suffer from daytime sleepiness that interferes with their lives. The National Sleep Foundation's colorful website at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org> includes information on topics such as snoring, sleep apnea, and sleepwalking, as well as sleep-related effects of medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and fibromyalgia. There is also a children's website with games and puzzles as well as explanations of "how sleep works" and how to solve sleep problems. A map of the U.S. directs users to sleep clinics in individual states.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine at <http://www.aasmnet.org> accredits sleep disorder clinics and laboratories for sleep-related breathing disorders. The Academy also publishes clinical practice guidelines for sleep medicine clinicians. Its website for health consumers, <http://www.sleepeducation.com> , includes background information on sleep disorders such as narcolepsy and sleep apnea, specific sleep disorder treatments, and "Hot Topics" such as "Teens and School Start Time", "Seasonal Affective Disorder", and "Insomnia Cures". Each article is reviewed by a physician named at the end of the article.

Mayoclinic.com, a source of reliable consumer health information on many disorders and conditions, offers a variety of sleep-related articles on its website's Sleep Center at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sleep/SL99999> . Among the articles are "Sleep Tips for the Perpetually Awake," "Sleeping Pills," and "Insomnia Treatment," "Fatigue and Shift Work" as well as a slide show on proper sleeping positions. The Sleep Disorders area discusses causes, diagnosis, treatment, and self-care of snoring, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, jet lag, and narcolepsy. There are also responses from Mayo Clinic physicians to sleep-related medical questions.

IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

How do you determine when it's appropriate to rush your child to the emergency room? Should you call an ambulance for your elderly father or drive him to the nearest hospital emergency room?



To help health consumers make these decisions at times of stress, the **American College of Emergency Physicians**, a national medical specialty society of physicians, has published a list of "warning signs" on its website at <http://www.acep.org/webportal/PatientsConsumers/> .

Difficulty breathing, sudden or severe pain, and uncontrolled bleeding are among the signs that emergency room care is necessary. The age of the patient also affects the decision. A fever in a very young infant indicates that the child needs to be brought to the emergency room. However, a fever in an older child or adult may not point to a need for immediate medical care. A life-threatening situation warrants a 911 call rather than a car ride. And, if you are uncertain if you or a family member needs emergency care, go to the emergency room and let a doctor decide...

CANCER INFORMATION IN MANY LANGUAGES

The **Y-Me National Breast Cancer Organization** at <http://www.y-me.org/index.php>, a source of consumer information on breast cancer diagnostic techniques, treatment options and side effects, coping with daily life, and supporting a family member with cancer, now publishes its website in Chinese, Russian, Tagalog, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese as well as English and Spanish. One of its brochures, “A Woman’s Guide to Breast Cancer,” appears online in its entirety in each of these languages.

Its 24-hour Breast Cancer Hotline is staffed by “trained peer counselors who are breast cancer survivors” who speak English (1-800-221-2141) and Spanish (1-800-986-9505). Interpreters are also available in one hundred fifty languages via the Hotline. A peer counselor will arrange a connection with a Language Line Services interpreter in the language requested. This arrangement allows a three-way call with participation by the counselor and caller, as the interpreter translates. Interpreter calls may be accessed by phoning 1-800-221-2141.

WHERE’S THE EVIDENCE?

How do health consumers make sense of the numerous announcements of medical discoveries in daily news reports? How can contradictory research announcements be evaluated? How can patients determine whether a specific medical treatment is effective?



The British website, <http://www.patient.co.uk> explains: “Clinical trials and other types of research aim to provide evidence (“proof”) whether a particular treatment works, how well it works compared to other treatments, and what are the risks of the treatment.”

The websites listed below may serve as a useful consumer guide to research-based medical information.

Cochrane Collaboration--- <http://www.cochrane.org/>

Since 1993, the **Cochrane Collaboration**, an international, volunteer, nonprofit organization of researchers, physicians, other health professionals, and some health consumers, has published evaluations of medical research trials and systematic reviews of research studies related to particular medical topics. The reviewers employ specific quality standards. Abstracts and plain language summaries are available online for a number of topics. Paid subscriptions are required for full text access to the Systematic Reviews.

National Library for Health--- <http://www.library.nhs.uk/rss/>

The British National Health Service provides a free, consumer-oriented online database that includes an informative feature called “Hitting the Headlines.” It is written to allow “the clinician and the patient to be able to quickly identify the reliability of news stories and the research evidence on which they are based.” This brief feature analyzes and explains, in consumer-friendly language, a current medical topic discussed in news articles. One query in the question-and-answer format for each medical topic is “How reliable are the conclusions?” Any Cochrane Collaboration reviews written on that topic are cited.

Behind the Medical Headlines --- <http://www.behindthemedicalheadlines.com/>

Another informative British consumer health news website, it is published online by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The articles are written by individual member physicians. The authors discuss and cite scientific evidence for and against specific research findings. Each article displays a search form for the Online Medical Dictionary so readers need not be stumped by medical terms. Readers may browse the index or use the search engine to locate specific topics.

National Guideline Clearinghouse --- <http://www.guideline.gov/>

The National Guideline Clearinghouse is an online database of “evidence-based clinical practice guidelines,” published jointly for health professionals by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the American Medical Association, and the American Association of Health Plans. Some of the guideline summaries include references to patient resources on the topic. The database may be browsed and searched by medical condition, treatment, or organization/agency that published guidelines.

Deciphering Medspeak -- <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/>

Published online by the Medical Library Association (MLA), professional association of medical libraries and librarians, this brief brochure defines, in consumer-friendly language, a number of technical medical terms. It also explains some of the abbreviations used as “medical shorthand” by physicians on medical records and medication prescription forms.

MLA has also released three disease specific “Medspeak” brochures. The brochures focus on breast cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Each features a list of prescription shorthand abbreviations, a glossary of medspeak terms, and MLA recommended websites related to each disease.

INSIDE THE BRAIN

How does brain activity appear on a positron emission tomography (PET) scan of the human brain? What parts of the brain affect balance and problem-solving? What is the view of brain activity as you are hearing words? What is the main brain cell type that Alzheimer’s disease destroys? A new website answers these questions visually as well as verbally.

The **Alzheimer’s Association** website, at http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_4719.asp, includes a colorful, interactive tour entitled “Inside the Brain” that illustrates the brain’s components and their functions. The sixteen slide tour begins with a brief, colorful, easy-to-understand explanation of “brain basics” and concludes with slides that illustrate the brain as it appears in individuals with mild, moderate, and severe Alzheimer’s disease. Clear line drawings and dramatic photos demonstrate the neurological changes that occur during Alzheimer’s disease. Pointing the mouse over phrases of colored text highlights the feature in the adjacent illustration.

This website provides a clear, basic explanation of the effects of Alzheimer’s disease on the brain for patients, families, and students.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



The following books are recommended for public libraries and health sciences libraries with consumer health collections. They are not part of the UCHC library collection.

ConsumerLab.com’s Guide to Buying Vitamins and Supplements. What’s really in the bottle? Tod Cooperman, William Obermeyer, and Densie Webb, editors. ConsumerLab.com, 2003. 226 p. (ISBN 0-9729697-0-5 \$17.95 paperback)

If your library does not subscribe to ConsumerLab.com’s database that independently evaluates vitamins and minerals, dietary supplements, sports and energy products, this Guide can provide an overview of product evaluations on popular vitamins and supplements. Only very brief test report summaries are available online to nonsubscribers. The database at <http://www.consumerlab.com/> is described in the summer 2006 issue of Healthnet News (<http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/summer06.pdf>)

ConsumerLab.com tests dietary products to determine if their actual content matches the claims on the product’s label. Products that passed the company’s tests are listed by brand name in the Guide. There is data on recommended daily intake for individual vitamins and minerals as well as information on the health benefits of each. Chapters containing product reviews of herbals and supplements such as creatine, echinacea, ginkgo biloba, SAME, glucosamine and chondroitin also include recommendations for their purchase and use, and cautions and dangers for the specific product.

The appendix explains the company’s testing methods and standards.

Encyclopedia of Healing Foods. Michael Murray, Joseph Pizzorno, and Lara Pizzorno. Atria Books, 2005. 895 p. (ISBN 0-7434-7402-3 hardcover) \$29.95, (ISBN 07434-8052-X paperback) \$24.95.

Can foods serve as effective medical treatments? Can the elimination of certain foods relieve ear infections? Can specific foods play a positive role in treating fibrocystic breast disease?

Authors and naturopathic physicians Michael Murray and Joseph Pizzorno, also authors of **Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine** (1998), advocate the “healing power” of vegetables, fruit, grains, legumes, nuts, herbs, fish, dairy products, and meat, discussing the “medicinal properties” as well as the “nutritional benefits” of foods. Their approach recommends eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, reduced consumption of meat and animal products, and lower exposure to pesticides. They have created an Optimal Food Pyramid based on aspects of the traditional Mediterranean diet and the traditional Asian diet. They include lengthy explanations of food components such as protein, carbohydrates, dietary fiber, fats, vitamins, minerals. Each specific food’s section has information on the food’s “history” “health benefits” and “nutritional highlights” as well as storage and preparation recommendations. For each food, there are imaginative “quick serving ideas” which are actually brief recipes.



The text summarizes research attesting to a food’s specific benefits. Although there are no references to studies substantiating health claims within the text of the book, there are many citations to research studies supporting the text at end of book, organized by chapter.

The Encyclopedia’s second section, “Food Prescriptions for Specific Diseases” makes recommendations for foods that the authors consider beneficial in the treatment of seventy medical conditions.

Kids in the Syndrome Mix of ADHD, LD, Asperger’s, Tourette’s, Bipolar, and More! Martin L. Kutscher. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005. 224 p. (ISBN 1-84310-810-8 hardcover), \$19.95, (ISBN 1-84310-811-9 paperback).

Since children with Asperger’s syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Syndrome, Tourette’s syndrome, and bipolar disorder are often diagnosed with more than one of these or other syndromes, many parents and children have multiple challenges to live with on a daily basis.

New York Medical College pediatric neurologist Martin L. Kutscher, with the assistance of specialists Tony Attwood and Robert R. Wolff, explains causes, diagnosis, and treatments for a variety of neuro-behavioral conditions and learning disabilities. He has provided parents with practical behavioral strategies for coping with these often co-occurring medical conditions that impact teachers, siblings, classmates, parents, and the children themselves. His recommendations are realistic and compassionate, emphasizing empathy for the child and a positive, calm outlook. His advice is illustrated with specific recommendations, real-life anecdotes, and sample (positive and negative) parent-child dialogues.

He reminds parents that their child’s diagnosis “start[s] with a real, live child...with feelings, needs, and hopes.” Parents and teachers, as “first-responders,” play a critical role in helping often confused children cope with the world they must face each day. His book assures parents of the appropriateness of making “common sense accommodations” for their challenged children and offers specific suggestions such as preferential classroom seating, creating Social Stories to help children to initiate friendships, and providing help with classroom note taking

More Than a Mom. Living a Full and Balanced Life When Your Child Has Special Needs. Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett. Woodbine House, Inc., 2006. 487 p. (ISBN 1-890627-51-5 paperback) \$18.95.

Families of children with serious disabilities or medical disorders often discover that their special needs child has become the focal point of the family. Medical care, daily attention, and communicating with teachers and health providers take a great deal of a parent’s time. Meeting the child’s exceptional parenting needs can be “physically” as well as “emotionally exhausting.” Because of the child’s unique requirements, being a parent to a special needs child can often be all-consuming—in time and energy.

How can a mother maintain her own health and “rejuvenate” herself so that she can continue to be an effective parent for all of her children? How can she find time to enjoy her own personal interests? As mothers of special needs children, authors Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett are quite aware of the challenges of finding personal time and the energy to

enjoy it. Their realistic suggestions for gathering help from family and friends, obtaining flexible work hours, organizing daily life, and carving out private time were gleaned from numerous responses to a mothers' questionnaire as well as their experience and research. They make long range recommendations, for the child's future financial and living arrangements, as well as numerous practical recommendations for daily living.

The book's publisher, Woodbine House, at [http:// www.woodbinehouse.com/](http://www.woodbinehouse.com/), specializes in books for children with disabilities, their parents, and educators.

Sports Success Rx! Your Child's Prescription for the Best Experience. How to Maximize Potential AND Minimize Pressure. Paul R. Stricker. American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006. 218 p. (ISBN 1-58119-227-5 paperback), \$15.95.

Children no longer play at their own pace by spending long afternoons riding bikes around the neighborhood, jumping rope, or playing marathon hopscotch games. These days, playing on an organized, adult-led team whose emphasis is on winning, is a much more likely sports experience for young children.

Writing in an informal, easy-to-read style, Dr. Paul Stricker, pediatric and adolescent sports medicine specialist, guides parents to help their child achieve "reality sports success," based on developing skills appropriate to their age, physical development, and present skill competence. He expresses concern that children are currently experiencing too much pressure to advance quicker than appropriate for their ability and lack the opportunity to develop skills sequentially. "Unrealistic expectations" by parents and coaches can cause overuse injuries, a growing problem, and "mental stress," since skill development relies on psychological as well as physical development. He warns that children differ from adults in aerobic capacity and heat tolerance and face danger from unrealistic expectations.

Dr. Stricker recommends that parents emphasize and praise effort rather than winning. He stresses that playing sports should provide children with a positive, enjoyable experience based on personal achievement... whether a game results in a victory or not.

Since this book is based on Dr. Stricker's professional medical experience and personal background as an athlete, it includes no references to research studies.



*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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