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## Healthnet News v.16:no.4 Winter 2001

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# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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## UPDATE

### *SAVE THE DATE – CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION CONFERENCE*

... **April 30, 2002** - for the **Consumer Health Information Conference: Networking and Technology** to be held at the Publick House in Sturbridge, MA. This one day conference is designed to foster cooperation between public health departments, public libraries, health sciences libraries, major voluntary health organizations, and health educators. It will help these health professionals use authoritative Internet resources and referral systems and to plan new projects to effectively answer consumer health questions.

Plan to attend! Hear how a health sciences librarian developed a cooperative project between libraries, health agencies, and associations to meet the health information needs of an urban community. Listen to a medical doctor's perspective on a current public health issue and the public's need for accurate information. Hear about the experiences of a patient and her spouse when they searched for information they needed to make informed medical decisions. Learn about the tools you'll need, such as Internet resources and grant writing skills, to develop a cooperative consumer health information project that meets the unique needs of your community.

Public health officials, health educators, public librarians, health sciences librarians, and local chapters of major health organizations are invited to attend. This conference is open to all of these groups in the six New England States.

Sponsored by the Lyman Maynard Stowe Library, University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington CT, the Conference is funded by the National Library of Medicine, National Network of Libraries of Medicine - New England Region.

Additional details and registration information will be sent out soon. If you have questions, please contact: Alberta L. Richetelle, Program Director, Healthnet:Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network, Lyman Maynard Stowe Library, University of Connecticut Health Center; 860/679-4055; email: [mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu](mailto:mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu).

### *“HEALTHY WEB SITES” PROGRAM FOR YOUR LIBRARY*

We are still offering our “Healthy Web Sites” program for to help consumers find quality health information on the Internet. If you are interested in arranging a program at your library, please call Alberta Richetelle at 860/679-4055 or email: [mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu](mailto:mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu).



We can arrange a program to meet your library's individual needs. We have presented both day and evening programs that have been one to two hours in length. Our daytime programs, however, seem to attract more people. So far, we've presented programs at public libraries in Fairfield, Meriden, Southington, Farmington, New Hartford, Glastonbury, Columbia, Ashford, and Redding. Upcoming presentations include Cheshire and Darien.

Several libraries have invited area librarians and local health department staff to attend the program. If you're interested, we can also schedule a separate program just for librarians. Call or email us for more details.



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### *NEW NATIONAL-WIDE NUMBER FOR POISON CONTROL CENTER*

The bright red sticker and the flyer enclosed with this newsletter are reminders of the new national telephone number for the Poison Control Center. By phoning 1-800-222-1222 from anywhere in the United States, you will be automatically connected to the certified Poison Control Center in the state from which you are calling.

If you are calling from Connecticut, you will be connected to the Connecticut Poison Control Center at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington, one of sixty-five poison control centers in the country. Centers throughout the country respond to more than 2.2 million calls each year, many related to young children. This one toll-free number will link you to trained health professionals available to answer preventive and emergency poison-related questions twenty-four hours a day, every day of the week. Their confidential responses to your questions provide potentially life-saving advice.

A media education campaign to publicize the new phone number and to warn children of the dangers of poisons will be launched soon. Additional stickers and other materials about the new nation-wide toll-free number are available by calling the Poison Control Center phone number. Feel free to make copies of the enclosed flyer to distribute in your library.

## **PROFESSIONAL READING**

### *NEW BOOKS ON GRIEF AND LOSS*

The December 17, 2001 issue of **Publisher's Weekly** features an article on new and backlist books on bereavement and healing. Compiled by Robert Dahlin, the listing is organized by the following specific topics: grieving and surviving loss; children's grief and needs; recovery and self-help; and spiritual solace. The listings under each topic are arranged by publisher with complete information given on the author, title, editions available, publication date, and cost. A brief one or two sentence description or comment is also included.

Dahlin R. New and backlist books on bereavement and healing. **Publisher's Weekly**. 2001 December 17: 52-57.

## **NETNEWS**

### *PREVENTING COMPUTER RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS*



**HealthyComputing** - <http://www.healthycomputing.com/> - is an easy to use site offering information on the importance of proper computer ergonomics to prevent computer related injuries. It offers advice on how to set up your workstation to minimize strain on your arms, back, neck, shoulders, and eyes and features a buyer's guide to ergonomically tested products and how to evaluate these products before purchasing.

There is a section on computer related causes of discomfort and pain which describes possible sources of pain in different areas of the body and remedies to reduce or eliminate the pain. A "Medical Conditions and Treatment" section provides information on conditions, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, trapezius myalgia, and low back pain, and how they are treated. Advice is given on self-help techniques that can minimize the pain caused by these conditions.

A section on products and accessories describes new equipment that can make computing more comfortable. Did you know there's such a thing as a foot operated mouse? A section on "Stretches and Exercises" offers illustrated step-by-step instructions on exercises that can be done to relieve pain and help prevent computer related injuries.

## *FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION'S HEALTH FRAUD INFORMATION*

The **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**, in cooperation with the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**, has published a brochure called "Miracle' Health Claims: Add a Dose of Skepticism". The brochure, which is posted on the FTC web site at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/health/frdheal.htm> describes some common false statements and claims advertisers use to entice people to buy their product. These fraudulent claims include:

\*Statements that the product is a quick and effective cure-all or diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments. For example: "Extremely beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis, infections, prostate problems, ulcers, cancer, heart trouble, hardening of the arteries and more."

\*Statements that suggest the product can treat or cure diseases. For example: "shrinks tumors" or "cures impotency."

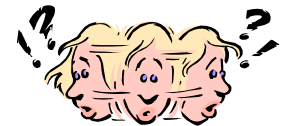
\*Promotions that use words like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret ingredient" or "ancient remedy." For example: "A revolutionary innovation formulated by using proven principles of natural health-based medical science."

\*Undocumented case histories or personal testimonials by consumers or doctors claiming amazing results. For example: "My husband has Alzheimer's disease. He began eating a teaspoonful of this product each day. And now in just 22 days he mowed the grass, cleaned out the garage, weeded the flower beds and we take our morning walk again."

\*Promises of no-risk "money-back guarantees." For example: "If after 30 days you have not lost at least 4 pounds each week, your uncashed check will be returned to you."

Other features of the brochure include a description of common targets for false claims especially people who have cancer, arthritis, and HIV/AIDS and advice on how to assess claims for dietary supplements. Instructions are given on how to report a possible false health claim and an adverse reaction to a drug or medical treatment.

A link is given for an FDA online publication that describes regulations governing what claims can be made in the labeling of food and supplements. This publication can be found at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/hclaims.html>.



## *CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT THOSE RESEARCH RESULTS MEAN?*

Harvard Medical School has developed a guide to help consumers sort through the facts about current medical research reported on television, in newspapers and magazines, and on web sites. "What's it all mean? The Harvard Medical School Guide to Evaluating Medical News" - <http://www.health.harvard.edu/article.cfm?id=26> gives general advice about how to determine what's important and what's hype. It advises consumers to be skeptical of dramatic and sensational claims and to keep in mind that medical breakthroughs rarely occur overnight.

The guide also explains that studies that detect an effect from a drug or treatment tend to get published more often than studies showing no effect from a specific intervention. It also points out that experts rarely consider a single study, no matter how impressive, significant until other research repeats and confirms the results.

Consumers to consider the source of the information and try to obtain a copy of the published research article from a medical library or from the journal's web site. There may be a fee associated with getting copies from either place. Be sure that the article was published in a peer reviewed journal, one in which the research article received a careful and critical review by the author's peers in medical research.

The guide also has a summary of the different types of research and what to look for when reviewing a medical journal article. Also discussed is how to determine if the data are applicable to your own situation. For example, a research study involving 40 year old men may be of questionable relevance to a 25 year old women.

This guide is a must-read for consumers who want to be certain they are getting the most important facts related to current medical research that may be relevant for their individual medical care.

## *IS SOY THE NEW 'MIRACLE' FOOD?*

Much has been published in the last few years about the heart healthy benefits of adding soy to your diet. In 1999, the **Food and Drug Administration** issued guidelines for manufacturers about what health claims they can put on their soy based food products. These new guidelines raised a great deal of controversy and confusion.

To help consumers sift through the many claims about soy, the FDA has published an online guide "Soy: Health Claims for Soy Protein, Questions About Other Components" at [http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2000/300\\_soy.html](http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2000/300_soy.html). The publication gives background information about the FDA guideline regarding soy and explains the reasons for some of the controversy and confusion.

The publication also describes some of the more common sources of soy protein, the scientifically proven health benefits of eating soy, how much soy you need to add to your diet to achieve the benefits, and ways in which you can add more soy to your diet.

## *FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR WHO HAVE NORMAL HEARING*

A new web page with health information especially for parents – <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/parents/index.htm> has been added to the web site of the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), one of the National Institutes of Health. The NIDCD focuses on research and health promotion related to hearing, balance, smell, taste, voice, speech, and language. The parent web page links to NIDCD information for parents of children who are deaf and for those whose children have normal hearing.

Among the features of special interest to parents are a checklist of age appropriate developmental speech milestones, advice about avoiding noise-induced hearing loss, an explanation of ear infections in children and its treatment, and information about infant screening for hearing loss. The articles about noise and ear infections are available on the web site in Spanish and English. There is also a link to other Spanish language publications published by the NIDCD.

In addition to the parent-directed information, there are links to other health information on the NIDCD web site on hearing and balance, smell and taste, and speech. An online order form for publications, a directory of hearing and speech organizations, a glossary, and a link to a list of NIDCD clinical trials seeking participants are included. Parents are encouraged to contact a NIDCD information specialist by mail or by telephone on weekdays for information not found on the website.

The web site is clearly designed, attractive, and colorful. Its articles are written in easy-to-understand language and the site is searchable.

## **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 UHC library collection.



**Matters of life and death: finding the words to say goodbye.** Carol Wogrin. Broadway Books, 2001. 189 p. ( ISBN 0-7679-0394-1), \$10.95.

Finding the appropriate words and gestures to comfort a dying friend or family member is among the most difficult challenges anyone can face. Many books discuss the grief process and how to cope with the effects of the loss of a family member, but few address the challenging times as death approaches. **Matters of life and death** is a valuable resource for those times.

Author Carol Wogrin is both a nurse and a clinical psychologist. She is the executive director of the Massachusetts Compassionate Care Coalition, National Center for Death Education, and of the Bereavement Studies Program at Mt. Ida College. Her nursing experience with dying patients and their families, and the case histories she provides enrich the book. She describes her nursing work with dying patients as "[sharing] some of the most meaningful experiences in people's lives."

She says that when people know death is approaching, their relationships takes on a different tone. She considers this knowledge valuable to the patient. She feels that it is counterproductive to keep the approaching death a secret from the patient. The patient needs time to face this reality and express her requests for how she wishes to be remembered. The author includes sample scripts to assist in wording questions one can ask a relative or friend that will help them express their wishes and concerns.

The guidance Ms. Wogrin provides is practical and compassionate. There are suggestions for planning ahead for the approaching death, including determining the type of care and lifesaving measures the patient wants to be undertaken at the end of her life. Suggestions are offered for saying farewell to an individual with whom one has had an unhappy relationship, as well as explaining death to children and guiding them in saying goodbye. Her goal is to make the “end of life...as rich and fulfilling as the rest...”

The book concludes with a selective resource list of books on “Care of the Dying,” books for children, websites, and organizations of help to those facing a family death. A valuable, sensitive resource recommended for public libraries.

**American Medical Association Guide to Talking to Your Doctor.** Angela Perry, medical editor. John Wiley, 2001. 244 p. ( ISBN 0-471- 41410-7), \$14.95.

Even if your physician is among the best there is, you also play a vital role in assuring that you receive good health care. In this straightforward patient guide to communicating with your doctor, the American Medical Association, national professional association of physicians, emphasizes that effective medical care involves more than the physician. It is an interactive process between physician and patient . The book points out that the physician relies on the patient as the authoritative source of information on her symptoms, in order to make a correct diagnosis.

Written in straightforward, nontechnical language, the book provides an overview of how to impart personal health information to your doctor. It discusses patient rights and responsibilities, as well as how to select a physician. It offers advice on ways to approach sensitive subjects with health professionals.

The book discusses how to talk to physicians on behalf of family members unable to speak for themselves. It suggests questions to ask about tests and treatments recommended. It includes recommendations to follow when you are dissatisfied with your treatment. The book gives advice about when to obtain a second opinion.

The guide includes a glossary as well as a detailed resource section with information on advocacy organizations, health associations, websites, and government agencies. A basic consumer health patient guide, recommended for public libraries.



*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,  
please call 860/679-4055; e-mail address: [mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu](mailto:mailto:richetelle@nso.uchc.edu)*

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