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HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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UPDATE

CONNECTICUT POISON CONTROL CENTER

Handling poison emergencies is only part of the mission of the Connecticut Poison Control Center (CPCC). Preventing poisoning is key and to that end the CPCC has recently hired a Community Education Specialist, an invaluable consumer health resource. The educator's main responsibility is to educate the public about poisons and poison prevention. Librarians across the state can tap into the CPCC's educational offerings. Informational questions are always welcome.

The educator can custom fit a presentation to a specific library audience, incorporating general information such as how to use the poison center, poison prevention, and the new national number. In addition, specialized topics such as popular poison myths, prevention through the stages of child development, environmental issues, and substances of abuse can be included.

Participation in health fairs is another service that the CPCC offers. Interactive displays and printed materials encourage the public to utilize the CPCC. Building relationships with community organizations and businesses is another goal for the educator.

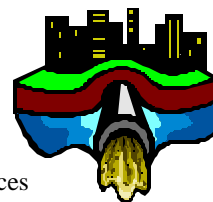
Materials such as brochures for poison prevention, emergency action, plant information and seasonal topics, as well as telephone stickers, are available. For more information, contact Amy Hanoian directly at (860) 679-4422 or hanoian@uchc.edu.

A free service of the University of Connecticut Health Center, the Connecticut Poison Control Center is staffed twenty-four hours a day by experts in the field of toxicology. Dialing 1-800-222-1222, the new number for poison centers nationwide, will connect callers with pharmacists, doctors, and nurses. Poison information specialists will answer your questions related to poison exposures and prevention.

NETNEWS

EDUCATE YOURSELF! HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES IN THE ENVIRONMENT

The **National Library of Medicine** has launched a new web site, **Tox Town**, at <http://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov/>. Tox Town is designed to give information on everyday locations where someone might find toxic chemicals. It offers non-technical descriptions of chemicals and links to select, authoritative chemical information on the Internet, as well as links to Internet resources on environmental health topics. An important feature describes how the environment can impact human health.



In this first release, Tox Town gives information on eight chemicals and eleven locations in an imaginary small town. The chemicals include arsenic, asbestos, carbon monoxide, lead, mercury, ozone, radon and toluene. The locations in the small town include a factory, a river, offices and stores, vehicles, drinking water, a park, a school, homes, outdoor air, and a farm. Plans are to expand Tox Town to include more chemicals and new scenes, such as an urban community and a farming community.



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Tox Town uses color, graphics, sounds and animation to add interest to learning about connections between chemicals, the environment, and the public's health. The Flash version has all the colorful graphics but the text version is more user friendly because the print is easier to read.

Tox Town is a pilot project to explore how best to provide environmental health information to a general audience. The site looks at an ordinary town and points out environmental hazards that may be in the town. Users can click on a town location, for instance a school, and see a cutaway view of that building. Toxic chemicals that might be found in the school are listed, along with links to selected Internet resources with information about the chemical and ways to decrease exposure.

This site is an excellent way to learn about chemicals in our environment and how we can minimize our exposure to these harmful substances and reduce risks to our health.

PHYSICIAN INFORMATION FROM STATE LICENSING BOARDS

The **Federation of State Medical Boards** - <http://www.fsmb.org/> - has a listing of links to licensing boards for 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands. On the site, select "State Medical Board Information" then "Board Directory" for links to the web sites of licensing boards in the United States. Some of the state sites provide information on disciplinary actions taken against physicians and some have complete physician profiles. Several of the states have separate listings for osteopathic physicians. Not all of the state medical boards provide online information about physicians.



There is also a general description of the responsibilities of state licensing boards, their structure, how physicians are licensed and regulated, and how they may be disciplined.

HORMONES AND HORMONE RELATED DISEASES

The **Hormone Foundation** (<http://www.hormone.org/>), the public education affiliate of the Endocrine Society, is dedicated to serving as a resource for the public by promoting the prevention, treatment, and cure of hormone-related diseases. The Foundation is a leading source of hormone-related information for the public, physicians, allied health professionals and the media. It has developed educational materials on menopause, pituitary imbalances, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), testosterone and men's health, and breast cancer. It is currently developing programs on hormone abuse, obesity, metabolic syndrome, thyroid disease, osteoporosis and prostate disease.

There are separate sections with in-depth information on diabetes, growth, hormone abuse, obesity, osteoporosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), the pituitary gland, the prostate, and thyroid gland. Each of these sections features a link to a Medline search that produces a list of citations to medical journal articles on the topic. This feature has limitations since it does a broad search which results in a listing of every journal article citation on the topic, in many instances numbering in the thousands.

Another feature of the site offers information on current clinical research trials for diseases related to endocrinology. The information about the trials is from CenterWatch, a clinical trials listing service, the National Cancer Institute, and the National Institutes of Health. There is also background information on clinical trials and a glossary of terms used in clinical research.

The Hormone Foundation's online physician referral directory is comprised of over 2,500 members of The Endocrine Society. Visitors to the site can find the names of physicians in their geographical area by selecting a state and then selecting a city. It is also possible to get a complete listing of all specialists in a particular state. Each physician listing includes contact information, area of expertise (e.g., diabetes, thyroid, menopause, etc.) and Board certifications.

Online publications include titles such as *Pros and Cons for Treatment of Menopause Symptoms*, *Timeline: Evolution of Estrogen*, *Get the Facts: Hormones and Breast Cancer*, and *Patient's Guide to Low Testosterone*. There are also several publications on menopause but they are being revised to reflect new data and are not currently available.

EASY TO READ HEALTH AND MEDICAL WEB SITES

The **National Network of Libraries of Medicine** of the **National Library of Medicine** has put together a listing of links to easy to read health and medical information - <http://nnlm.gov/hip/easy.html/>. About 25 of the sites have Spanish language information.

There are 22 main subject areas including accidents and injuries, diabetes, elders' health, kidneys, heart problems, mental health, smoking and tobacco, infections, and teen health. A separate category has a list of sites with Spanish language information. There's also a list of short videos (actually online tutorials) from the MedlinePlus database, a site sponsored by the National Library of Medicine. These interactive tutorials are easy to read and provide basic information on 70 diseases and medical conditions, 18 tests and diagnostics, and 41 surgical procedures. There are also 6 tutorials on health and wellness topics, such as exercise, smoking, and cholesterol.

CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION FOR ASIANS

Librarians and staff from The Houston Academy of Medicine and the Texas Medical Center have put together a selection of links to publications written in Vietnamese. There are also a few publications written in Chinese. The links are at <http://hwh.library.tmc.edu/CHIA/>. There are about 25 different topics including breast cancer assessment, diabetes, heart disease, physical examinations, high blood pressure, stroke, and medication safety.

The majority of the publications are from the Harris County (Texas) Hospital District. Several of the publications are from the American Cancer Society and a few are from the National Diabetes Education Program.

HEALTH INFORMATION FOR TEENAGE WOMEN

The **Young Women's Resource Center** - <http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/> - from Boston Children's Hospital offers information in English and Spanish for teenage women. From the Center's main page, select "Health Information" in the upper left-hand corner to find fact sheets on cancer, eating disorders, emotional health, endometriosis, menstruation, gynecological health, sexuality and birth control options, nutrition, health and healthcare, scoliosis, and smoking.

Specific fact sheets discuss what to expect during a first pelvic exam, a guide for teens on body piercing, a guide for teens on lesbian health, reproductive answers for survivors of cancer, support for teens with eating disorders, how to be a healthy vegetarian, a guide to puberty and menstrual cycles, and sports nutrition. Most of the fact sheets have Spanish language versions.

Although written specifically for teenage women, parents will find the fact sheets helpful when discussing health concerns with their young daughters.



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.

Eat, drink, and be healthy. The Harvard Medical School guide to healthy eating. Walter C. Willett. Simon & Schuster, 2001. 299 p. (ISBN 0-684-86337-5 pb.) \$13.00.

At least the food we consume is a health variable we can control! Certainly, that's a comforting concept for many Americans. But Dr. Walter C. Willett's recent book has turned the nutrition advice many Americans rely upon, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Pyramid, upside down. In his recent book, Dr. Willett, a physician who is chairman of the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, and a lead researcher for the renowned, ongoing Nurses Health Study, contradicts some of the Food Pyramid's established principles.

Writing in an understandable style directed to consumers, Dr. Willett recommends eating an increased quantity of fruits and vegetables, eating whole-grain instead of refined-grain carbohydrates, moderate alcohol consumption, a daily multivitamin "for insurance," use of unsaturated fats, substitution of beans, poultry, fish, and nuts for red meat as a

healthier protein source, and avoiding too much calcium consumption. He warns against excessive consumption of carbohydrates, but does not advise their elimination. He characterizes his new Healthy Eating Pyramid as “a flexible eating strategy” that incorporates foods from a variety of cultures, especially the recommended essentials of the Mediterranean diet.

A great deal of his advice is based on extensive cohort research studies of diet’s effect on disease. Fortunately, to help readers follow his advice, he includes a list of recommended “snack selections,” with a nutritional analysis of each, shopping suggestions, and an extensive section of recommended menus and recipes. Nearly every recipe includes recipe-related general nutrition advice, advice for readers who are pregnant, diabetic, or on a sodium-restricted diet. There is a recipe index as well as a general index and recommendations for additional reading, arranged by chapter.

The text incorporates many helpful charts, such as trans fat content in processed foods, the nutrient content of a cup of whole milk, hidden salt in food, sources of folic acid and the glycemic index for major carbohydrate sources. Dr. Willet has included a helpful dictionary of types of whole grains. This section has a description of each grain’s forms, cooking time and difficulty, and shopping guidance.

The green pharmacy herbal handbook. James A. Duke. Rodale Press, 2000. 282 p. (ISBN 1-57954-184-4) , pap. \$19.95.



Since he published **The green pharmacy**, his alphabetical guide to the herbal treatment of more than 120 medical disorders, botanist James A. Duke has continued to gather information for his online database of medicinal herbs, available at no charge on his website at <http://www.ars-grin.gov/duke/>. This database may be searched in a sometimes lengthy and technical process. The author warns that the database information was “gathered rather randomly from the literature on economic plants” and was “compiled by human beings.”

His companion volume, **The green pharmacy herbal handbook**, is a much more straightforward option for determining the properties and therapeutic uses of many herbs. But Dr. Duke cautions readers that he is “a PhD, not an M.D” and the reader’s physician should be consulted if she “is thinking about taking herbs along with prescription drugs.” The handbook focuses on more than 180 potentially healing herbs, each described in a one to two page outline. Written in an engaging, practical style, it is organized by herb. Unfortunately, this book lacks the sketches of many herbs found in **The green pharmacy**.

It does, however, provide a one to two paragraph description of each herb, its common name and scientific name, its therapeutic and folk uses i.e. “unscientific, unsubstantiated health claims”, medicinal properties, dosage options, precautions, a safety rating, and, in some cases, its prescription drug counterparts. Number 3, the highest safety rating, is described by the author as “safer than coffee.” Each herb is also given an efficacy rating, ranging from “highest, therapeutic impact” to folk use.

The book’s Guide to Conditions is an index to health disorders with names of appropriate healing herbs and page numbers of their entries. There is an alphabetical index to herbs and other topics as well.

Living longer, depression free. A family guide to recognizing, treating, and preventing depression in later life. Mark D. Miller and Charles F. Reynolds. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. 184 p. (ISBN 0-8018-6943-9 pb.), \$17.95.

This is an informative introduction to depression in the elderly, intended as both a self-help guide for older people suffering from depression, and a useful overview for patients’ family members interested in learning about the diagnosis and management of depression. Drs. Miller and Reynolds are geriatric psychiatrists from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine whom their colleagues describe as “pioneers in the diagnosis and treatment of depression in older people.”

While emphasizing that depression is not a normal characteristic of the aging process, the authors describe the “unique patterns” of depression in the elderly and how they can be successfully treated. A one page questionnaire, a short form of the Geriatric Depression Scale, is included. The authors discuss how depression in the elderly is diagnosed and treated by psychotherapy and a variety of medications. There are long-term strategies for remaining depression free. Each chapter is introduced by an illustrative case history.

A chapter describes popular complementary and alternative medications for depression and their side effects. The authors warn that effectiveness of alternative medications can only be determined by thorough scientific study, and that the regulations that F. D. A. approved medications are required to adhere to do not apply to supplements .

In the appendix, there are lists of information hotlines and relevant Internet websites. In addition, there are separate chapter-by-chapter bibliographies for the reader and the health professional.

Mayo Clinic on Alzheimer's disease. Ronald Petersen, editor. Mayo Clinic Health Information, 2002. 210 p. (ISBN 1-893005-22-4), \$16.95.

When a family member exhibits signs of dementia and extreme forgetfulness, it can be a frightening experience. Practical solutions for a myriad of problems are needed quickly.

The **Mayo Clinic on Alzheimer's disease**, one of a series of Mayo Clinic books for the health consumer, (**Mayo Clinic on healthy aging**, **Mayo Clinic heart book**, **Mayo Clinic on managing diabetes**, etc.), is organized to provide basic information and guidance for family members. It would be a helpful overview for someone who is beginning to learn about Alzheimer's disease. It includes explanations of the brain's functioning, the normal aging process, characteristics of Alzheimer's disease exhibited in the brain, its causes, its diagnosis, how symptoms are treated, and current research focuses. There are full color diagrams and MRI's showing the progression of the disease.

An especially helpful feature is the book's lengthy section, Quick Guide for Caregivers. In a page or two, it provides realistic suggestions for coping with situations such as planning for the holidays, explaining the disease to children, restlessness or wandering, common medical problems, and coping with mood changes. The book's final part discusses the process of caregiving for a person with Alzheimer's disease, with regard to both long-term planning and day-to-day care.

One page focuses on the patient's perspective. It prints quotations from patients with early Alzheimer's Disease who were asked, "What changes have occurred in your life as a result of the memory loss?"

The book includes an index and a guide to agencies and organizations that serve as additional resources. Updated information on Alzheimer's disease and other health conditions is available on the Mayo Clinic website at www.MayoClinic.com.

The natural pharmacy. Complete home reference to natural medicine. Schuyler W. Linninger, editor. Prima Publishing, 1999. 621 p. (ISBN 0-7615-1967-X), \$24.95 pap.

The American Pharmaceutical Association Practical Guide to Natural Medicines. Andrea Peirce. William Morrow and Company, 1999. 728 p. (ISBN 0-688-16151-0), \$37.00.



"Frustration, nostalgia, a desire for control" of one's health are among factors that have stimulated a strong interest in using herbs for medicinal purposes and an increase in the number of books published about the subject. Looking for solid information before using herbal medicines is a wise move . Since the passage of the federal Dietary Supplements Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA), dietary ingredients used in dietary supplements are no longer regulated for safety by the Food and Drug Administration.

Published within the last few years, these two guides to herbal medicine are basic, well-organized, consumer-friendly explanations of the safety and effectiveness of a large number of herbal medicines.

The Natural Pharmacy is based on a health information database, " Healthnotes Online," that is sold to thousands of retail stores as a source of complementary medicine information. It is available in supermarkets, pharmacies, and natural food stores in the United States, Canada, and the Great Britain through in store touch screen kiosks.

The Natural Pharmacy is divided into four sections: Health Concerns, Nutritional Supplements, Herbs, and Homeopathic Remedies, with a cross-reference index to the disorders that specific homeopathic remedies are recommended for. The book includes an index and references to articles and books that evaluate uses of the herbs. Its editorial advisers are physicians and naturopathic doctors.

Practical Guide to Natural Medicines is a publication of the American Pharmaceutical Association. Each herb's entry includes a description, uses, forms, dosage, effectiveness ("Will it work for you? What the studies say"), and side effects (Will it harm you? What the studies say.), with footnotes to substantiating articles and books at the end of each section about an individual herb.

Its writing style provides a smoother flowing overview of the findings than **The Natural Pharmacy's** more straightforward text. The author has provided a clear assimilation of the studies cited. This book includes a helpful general explanation of herbal medicines and types of scientific studies. It discusses how to assess the safety of herbs as well as the regulation of herbal medicines in the U.S. and a contrasting regulating system in Germany.

A parent's guide to Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism. How to meet the challenges and help your child thrive. Sally Ozonoff, Geraldine Dawson, and James McPartland. Guilford Press, 2002.
278 p. (ISBN 1-57230-531-2), \$17.95 pap.

Children and adults who exhibit outstanding stores of knowledge about a specific topic and yet lack basic social skills often have great difficulty functioning in the real world. This behavioral incongruity is among the characteristics of many individuals with "high-functioning autism spectrum disorders."

For parents and family members of a person with these pervasive developmental disorders, there is a great need for coping techniques. This helpful book provides a comprehensive and practical guide. In addition to explaining the diagnostic process, including the criteria listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, and possible causes of autism spectrum disorders, this book offers many clear, realistic suggestions for modifying a child's behavior and helping her to cope with school and social life. The authors discuss communicating with siblings, handwriting alternatives, creating a circle of friends, negotiating for special education services in the school system, and many other daily challenges, in a very readable style enriched with anecdotes and case histories.

The authors are professors of psychiatry and psychology who are directly involved with centers for the study and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. They have included clear explanations about a great many current treatments for autism spectrum disorders. The challenges of autism spectrum disorders continue into late adolescence and adulthood and the guide discusses these age groups as well as childhood.

The appendix includes books for additional reading, organizations, websites, and clinics and medical centers that specialize in this condition. A very valuable book, distinguished by its humane and understanding approach.

Other recommended books about pervasive developmental disorders are described in the Mental Health Resources Guide on the Healthnet web site at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/>.



*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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