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# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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## UPDATE

### *PUBMED TRAINING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIANS*



**SAVE THE DATES!** Healthnet is sponsoring 2 three hour hands-on workshops on searching with PubMed, the Medline database of medical journal articles produced by the National Library of Medicine. The sessions will be offered on Tuesday, April 6 and Tuesday, April 13 at the Middletown Library Service Center from 9:00 a.m. – Noon. Public librarians may register to attend one of the two sessions.

Donna Berryman, Outreach Coordinator for the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, New England Region, will be teaching the sessions. Donna has extensive experience presenting PubMed training sessions throughout New England to librarians, doctors, and other health professionals.

If you've had some experience using PubMed and want to learn more about all of its features or if you always wanted to use PubMed but didn't know where to start, this training may be just what you need. This is a great time to learn from an expert and get answers to all those questions you may have about searching Medline via PubMed.

A registration form for the training session is available at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/pubmedregis.pdf>. Copy and mail or fax the registration form to the address indicated. Register early since there are limited spaces available in the Service Center Computer Lab.

## PROFESSIONAL READING

### *RESOURCES ON EATING DISORDERS*

The September 1, 2003 issue of **Library Journal**, in its "LJ InfoTech Web Watch" column, features a select list of web resources related to eating disorders. The column, written by Nicole Cooke, has a descriptive list of thirteen sites that have high quality, authoritative information.

Eating disorders affect approximately eight million people in the United States and the vast majority of these are women, many of whom are in the teens and twenties. Children as young as eight years can also have eating disorders. The two disorders most people are familiar with are anorexia nervosa, which is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss and bulimia, which is characterized by a secretive cycle of binge eating followed by getting rid of the food and calories by vomiting, excess laxative use, or over-exercising. Compulsive overeating or binge eating is another type of eating disorder.

The list of links include diverse sites such as the **National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)**, an education and advocacy organization at <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/> and **Something Fishy**, a personal project of a recovering anorexic, at <http://www.something-fishy.org/>.

This is an excellent resource and certain to be helpful for those seeking information about eating disorders.

Cooke N. LJ Infotech Web Watch. **Library Journal** 2003 September 1: 28,30.



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## BREAST CANCER RESOURCES

Another featured section in the September 1, 2003 edition of **Library Journal** has reviews, written by Bette-Lee Fox, of eight books on breast cancer. The books cover various aspects of breast cancer, such as treatment and recovery, as well as the psychological aspects of dealing with mastectomy and the techniques used for breast reconstruction. Three of the titles have comprehensive, descriptive reviews and five titles have shorter reviews.

An excellent resource to use for updating your library's cancer or women's health collection. See also the reviews of two breast cancer consumer books in this newsletter on page six.

Fox BL. To breast cancer...and beyond. **Library Journal** 2003 September 1: 196-197.

## NETNEWS



### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW MEDICARE DRUG COVERAGE?

If you're confused about the new prescription benefits available through Medicare, the **Medicare Rights Center (MRC)** at <http://www.medicarerights.org> can help. The Center, founded in 1989, is an independent source of information and assistance, for older adults and individuals with disabilities. MRC provides telephone hotline services for individuals who need answers to Medicare questions or help securing coverage and getting the health care they need. MRC's education department works to teach people on Medicare and those who counsel them—health care providers, social service workers, family members, and others—about Medicare benefits and rights.

A fact sheet on their website "**76 Things you should know about the new Medicare drug prescription cards**" describes in plain language what this new benefit means for Medicare recipients. The fact sheet answers such questions as what the cards are, who should get the card, if the cards are worth the annual fee of \$30.00, how to enroll, how to compare the different cards available, whether discounts will be limited to certain drugs, and whether the cards can be used at all pharmacies.

The rules governing these cards are complicated and the decision process to determine which card to purchase will be difficult. This fact sheet will certainly answer many questions older adults may have and help make the decision and application process much easier.

### ADVICE ON HOW TO PREVENT MEDICAL ERRORS

The **Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ)** recently published a fact sheet on what patients can do to help avoid medical errors - <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/20tips.htm>. Medical errors happen when something that was planned as a part of medical care doesn't work out, or when the wrong plan was used in the first place. These errors may involve surgery, medications, equipment, and diagnosis and can occur in hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient services, pharmacies, clinics, and patients' homes.

A 1999 report issued by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies states that "Health care in the United States is not as safe as it should be -- or could be. At least 44,000 people, and perhaps as many as 98,000 people, die in hospitals each year as a result of medical errors that could have been prevented... Even using the lower estimate, preventable medical errors in hospitals exceed attributable deaths to such feared threats as motor vehicle wrecks, breast cancer, and AIDS." Errors may also occur when doctors and patients don't communicate. A recent report by the AHRQ found that doctors don't do enough to inform their patients about their medical care.

The AHRQ fact sheet outlines twenty tips for patients to help them become more involved in their medical care and to be better informed, thus reducing the chance that medical errors may occur. One tip recommends that patients inform their doctors of all medications they are taking, including vitamin and mineral supplements, over-the-counter medications, and herbal products. Also, it's a good idea for patients to make sure they can read a prescription their doctor writes. If patients can't read the prescription, it's possible the pharmacist may not be able to either. Another important suggestion is, when in the hospital, patients should ask all health personnel who care for them if they've washed their hands. Hospital acquired infections are on the increase and, although hospital staff receive training on infection control, it is easy to forget to follow proper sanitary practices during busy times.

This is important information for all patients who want to reduce the risk of medical errors related to their care

## FACTS ABOUT FOODBORNE ILLNESS



The **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** and the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** recently launched a **Foodborne Illness Education Information Center** at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodborne>.

Foodborne disease is caused by consuming foods and beverages that have been contaminated by disease causing microbes or pathogens, chemicals, or other harmful substances. There are over 250 different types of foodborne diseases. Most of these are infections caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites that end up in food because of poor storage, unsanitary conditions during food handling, or direct contamination. Other diseases are poisonings, caused by harmful toxins or chemicals that have contaminated the food, such as poisonous mushrooms.

These diseases have many different symptoms so there isn't one "syndrome" that can be called foodborne illness. However, once the microbe or toxin enters the body through the gastrointestinal tract, it often causes early symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and sometimes fever.

The CDC estimates 76 million people suffer foodborne illnesses each year in the United States, accounting for 325,000 hospitalizations and more than 5,000 deaths.

This new site serves as a clearinghouse for public health professionals and the public. Among the site's features are an e-discussion group for food safety professionals to share resources, information and innovative solutions to food safety problems, a database that includes food safety education materials for food service workers, children, non-English speaking adults, and child care providers. An additional feature lists food allergy resources.

A listing of food safety links leads the user to other online sources for information on topics such as as Mad Cow Disease, food irradiation, hand washing, chemical and physical contaminants, food product recalls, alerts, and advisories, online databases related to food, nutrition, and food safety, and foodborne illness outbreak information.

There is also a link to **FoodSafety.gov** - <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>- the gateway to government food safety information. This site has news and safety alerts, consumer advice, information for kids, teens, and educators, and information on federal, state, and local agencies to contact to report a suspected foodborne illness or to register a complaint about a food product. There is also information on foodborne pathogens, some of which is available in different languages.

Although the Foodborne Illness Education Information Center appears to be aimed mainly at professionals, there is plenty of information here for the interested consumer concerned about food safety and preventing foodborne illness.

## HEALTH INFORMATION FOR YOUNG GIRLS

The **Office on Women's Health, Department of Health and Human Services** recently launched a website specifically for girls - <http://www.4girls.gov/>. The site gives girls between the ages of 10 and 16 reliable, current information on many topics that answer the health concerns of adolescent girls and helps girls to choose healthy behaviors.



There are seven major categories of information on the site. "Becoming a Woman" focuses on puberty and covers everything from body hair, getting a menstrual period, acne, grooming, and tanning. "Fit for Life" stresses the importance of being physically fit and includes advice on strength training, setting up a fitness plan, sports for teens with disabilities, and sports injuries. Nutrition is the focus of "You are what you eat", emphasizing the importance of making healthy food choices, maintaining healthy weight, and reading food labels. The "Mind over matters" section discusses healthy ways to relieve stress, depressions, and teen suicide and "Choosing not to Use" give background information on the different forms of substance abuse and how they can affect a growing body, helpful ways to prevent using, and how to help others who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

"Putting it all together" stresses the importance of maintaining balance in one's life and gives advice on handling different relationships with family and friends, maintaining a positive body image, handling peer pressure, and protecting oneself from violence. The last section, "Safety savvy" talks about how to stay safe with friends, out in the world, or surfing the Internet.

## *AVIAN FLU AND THE SAFETY OF THE FOOD SUPPLY*

Avian flu is an infectious disease, caused by a virus, that affects birds, migratory water fowl, and domesticated poultry . Outbreaks have occurred mainly in Southeast Asia and China. There have also been recent reports of Avian flu showing up in two Delaware poultry farms. Scientists involved in tracking the spread of Avian flu are raising concerns about the safety of the food supply and the potential for transmission of the disease to humans. Although the Avian flu in the United States has so far been confined to one state, scientists are attempting to educate people about proper handling of poultry and eggs – important anyway considering the potential for salmonella, a group of bacteria that can cause diarrheal illness.

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** published a report on their website which gives details about the safety of the food supply - <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/micro/avian/en/>. The report details what is being done to protect the food supply, how the disease is spread among birds, the potential for spread to humans, and why this is an important public health issue.

Another source for general information about Avian flu is the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>. This site has information on the history of Avian flu, the potential for transmission to humans, and travel precautions.

## *AGED AUTOMOBILE DRIVERS*

Several recent news stories reported on elderly drivers who have caused accidents on city streets and highways because they either lost control of their car or became confused and drove the wrong way on a one-way street. Many of the accidents have resulted in multiple deaths and severe injuries. While the vast majority of older drivers are successfully making adjustments in their driving habits to compensate for age related changes in their driving ability, many families have had to face the unsettling dilemma of what to do about an older family member who may be an at risk driver but refuses to stop driving.



This is a highly emotionally issue for both the driver and for family members. For the driver, not being able to drive may mean a loss of independence, and for family members and friends it may mean facing the reality that the loved one is aging and becoming more dependent.

The **New York State Office for the Aging** has developed a booklet for families, friends, and caregivers who are worried about the safety of an aging driver. The booklet is available at <http://www.aging.state.ny.us/caring/concerned/> “When you are Concerned” discusses how to know when it is time to become concerned and how to monitor an aging driver when you don’t live nearby. It also talks about where to find help in the community and encourages family members to decide exactly what kind of help they are looking for – alternative transportation, driving skill improvement, or completely removing the person from driving.

Another topic covered is advice about how to prepare for a discussion with the older driver. There are specific recommendations regarding when to include other family or community members, advice on how and when to bring up the subject with the older person, with examples of what to say to begin the discussion and what words to use to respond to statements by the older driver. There is also a checklist of safety concerns that can be completed to use as factual information to show the older driver that he or she is at risk for self injury or injuring others.

There is also advice on how to help the older person cope with the loss of independence should he or she quit driving and how to help those who can continue to drive to drive more safely. For the younger family member, there is also a chapter on what to do now so that mobility options are there when they get older should driving have to be curtailed or eliminated.



## 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.

**Adult Bipolar Disorders. Understanding your diagnosis and getting help.** Mitzi Waltz. O'Reilly, 2002. 371 p. (ISBN 0-596-50010-6 pbk.), \$24.95.

Author and patient advocate Mitzi Waltz has added another comprehensive, detailed, and compassionate consumer health guide to the Patient-Centered Guides series of O'Reilly Publishers. She has written other books for the series about neurological and mental health disorders, including a book about bipolar disorders in children.

Ms. Waltz's guide explains how bipolar disorder, a mental health condition that causes extreme and debilitating mood swings, is defined and diagnosed by psychiatrists. She discusses other medical conditions that may mimic its symptoms, medication needed for its lifelong treatment and their side effects, types of psychotherapy, the importance of careful evaluation of complementary and alternative therapies, and negotiating the health care and insurance systems. The book concludes with specific suggestions for day-to-day living with bipolar disorders, including the challenges of housing, succeeding at college, obtaining and retaining jobs, financial and legal planning, and maintaining positive family relations. The information is enhanced by patients' anecdotal descriptions of the experience of having bipolar disorders. There are descriptions of diagnostic tests, a resource list of advocacy organizations and support groups, and a bibliography of research articles. The book's recommendations are complemented by the Bipolar Disorders Center of resources and practical information at the publisher's website - <http://www.patientcenters.com/bipolar>.

**After Breast Cancer. Answers to the Questions You're Afraid to Ask.** Musa Mayer. O'Reilly (Patient-Centered Guide), 2003. 196 p. (ISBN 0-596-50783-6), \$14.95.

**After Breast Cancer. A Common-Sense Guide to Life After Treatment.** Hester Hill Schnipper. Bantam, 2003. (ISBN 0-553-38162-8), \$14.95.

Same title, same topic, same price, same year of publication.

After breast cancer treatment concludes, uncertainty and fear of recurrence often occur. Family and friends often expect the patient's life will, thankfully, return to normal. However, anxiety and challenging emotions continue, without the support that accompanies a crisis situation. Breast cancer survivors need both emotional support and information to help them in making decisions about their current and future medical care.

Authors Mayer and Schnipper are both breast cancer survivors. Schnipper is an oncology social worker as well, whose experiences guiding support groups and providing psychotherapy enrich her book. Mayer's book incorporates general medical knowledge about recurrence and follow-up testing as well as patients' personal histories about the challenges of emotional and physical recovery, a familiar format of O'Reilly Publishers' Patient-Centered Guides.

Schnipper's book provides extensive, realistic, detailed guidance on the practical problems of recovery. There are chapters on medical follow-up testing, fertility and pregnancy, sexuality, changing relationships with partners, spouses, parents, friends, and children, complementary therapies, genetic testing, adjustments at work, and the place of spirituality in recovery. The valuable information and her dual perspective as recovering patient and experienced oncology social worker provides a compassionate, extremely valuable resource.

**American Medical Association Complete Medical Encyclopedia.** Jerrold B. Leikin and Martin S. Lipsky, editors. Random House, 2003. 1408 p. (ISBN 0-8129-9100-1) \$45.00. Subtitled: A Brand-New A-Z Guide to More Than 5,000 Medical Terms with Up-to-Date Information on Symptoms, Diseases, Drugs, Treatments and More.



This voluminous one volume encyclopedia is the long awaited update of the extremely helpful 1989 **A.M.A. Encyclopedia of Medicine**. This publication is especially useful for its succinct, authoritative, consumer friendly explanations of diseases and disorders and their treatments, medical terms, parts of the body, medical procedures and tests. Included are alternative medicine and mental health terms. The terms range from the mundane (hay fever, earwax) to the more obscure (bioelectric impedance analysis, epidermolysis bullosa). The book is enriched by many charts and line drawing illustrations

Terms are explained within the text. Cross references within the text direct readers to other related entries. The book is enhanced by symptom charts, a color atlas of the human body, and a lengthy chapter on twenty-first century medicine describing gene splicing, genetic cloning, stem cell research, and robotic surgery. Other features include first aid instruction, a generic legal form for an advance directive, and an explanation of the 2003 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA). There is a brief directory of self-help organizations and their website addresses, as well as an index.

**The Power of Resilience . Achieving balance, confidence, and personal strength in your life.** Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein. Contemporary Books, 2004. 320 p. (ISBN 0-07-139104-5), \$22.95.

Psychologists Robert Brooks, of the Harvard Medical School faculty, and Sam Goldstein, of the University of Utah faculty, have expanded their previous thoughtful writings on the nurturing of resilience in children, **Raising Resilient Children, Nurturing Resilience in Children**, to the needs of adults. Developing this strong, positive, resilient inner strength has enriched the lives of many adults and children Drs. Brooks and Goldstein have observed and advised. Using engaging case histories from their practices, they specify how adults can successfully cope with the ordinary challenges of daily living as well as the extraordinarily difficult ones that individuals face.

Their recommendations focus on changing negative mindsets, developing empathy, communicating more effectively with family and colleagues, building “islands of competence” that give one confidence, developing problem solving skills and self-discipline, and basing one’s life on positive values.

The book’s appendix includes a “Guide to Resilient Living,” summarizing the key points of each chapter, and a section of “Worksheets for Resilient Living” with probing questions for the reader in the process of transforming her life and incorporating the lessons of the book.

Articles about the concept of resilience and a resource guide are available on their website <http://www.raisingresilientkids.com/>



*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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