

# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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## UPDATE

### *HEALTHNET FINALIST IN NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM*

Healthnet was recently selected as one of ten finalists in the Health Information Awards For Libraries Program of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). The finalists were chosen by a panel of judges from a list of forty-one state winners. The Awards are designed to encourage library programs that address one or more of the following: dietary choices; exercise; smoking cessation; alcohol and/or drug abuse prevention or cessations, immunizations and health screenings; and improved health literacy, that is, the ability to understand and make use of health information.



Healthnet, along with the other nine finalists, was invited to participate in a Health Forum on May 3, which was held at the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, MD. Librarians from the ten libraries participated in panel discussions describing their programs and the challenges of developing quality health information services aimed at consumers. Public, academic, hospital, and special libraries were represented. Dr. J. Edward Hill, President of the American Medical Association, gave the keynote address.

The grand prizewinner, chosen from the ten finalists, was announced at an evening reception. Although Healthnet did not receive the coveted \$20,000 first prize award, the program received \$1,000 and a commemorative plaque. This was indeed a great honor for the UConn Health Center Library to be selected as one of the top ten consumer health information programs in the U.S.

## PROFESSIONAL READING

### *TOP CONSUMER HEALTH BOOKS FOR 2005 ... AND MORE*

**Library Journal** has named the best consumer health books for 2005. Barbara Bibel, reference librarian at the Oakland (CA) Public Library, selected the nineteen titles. Topics include heart health, caring for aging parents, infertility, travel for individuals with mobility limitations, ovarian cancer, polio, menopause, exercise, and herbal medicine. Familiar authors include Dr. Bob Arnot, Dr. Andrew Weil, Mary Jane Minkin (an Ob/Gyn at Yale), and Dr. Harvey Simon (a cardiologist at Harvard). Each title has a brief summary.

Some, or even many, of the titles may already be in your collection, but the list is still worth a look to insure that you have all of the high quality titles.

An accompanying article describes the recent shift in publishing of consumer health books from those that deal with fads (diets, exercise regimens, etc.) to ones that deal with more realistic expectations of the reader. There are more titles appearing that help the reader cope with and manage a chronic disease (diabetes, high blood pressure) and there is a greater emphasis on personal responsibility.

The “quick fix” for common problems is no longer appealing as consumers are reacting more favorably to information that takes a more “holistic” or whole person approach, especially the emotional components of an ailment. There is also a trend for authors of health books to take themselves less seriously and to use humor in their work “... to draw readers in by saying “You’re not alone – look at me”.



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Another notable trend is the growing number of tie-ins between books and Internet resources. Some health books evolve from an author's website or blog and readers like to know that the information in a book can be supplemented and updated by an author's website. The authors remain committed to authoritative books on specific topics but will continue to use the Internet for quick, reliable information.

Bibel B. Best consumer health books of 2005. **Library Journal** 2006 May 1; 131(8):58-60.

Williams E, Kuzyk R. Fads begone! realistic approaches burn up the market. **Library Journal** 2006 May 1; 131(8):54-56.

## NETNEWS

### *YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO PUMP IRON*

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** has added a new feature on their website to encourage older adults to develop a strength training program. Developed by experts at Tufts University and the CDC, "Growing Stronger – Strength training for older adults" - [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing\\_stronger/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/index.htm) - provides guidance in setting up a strength training program and offers tips on staying motivated, selecting equipment, judging your exercise effort, and measuring progress. Specific step-by-step instructions are given for the exercises, which are accompanied by animated drawings. .



The program is based on sound scientific research on the benefits of strengthening exercises. In addition to maintaining or even regaining muscle strength, these exercises can help maintain the integrity of your bones, and improve balance, coordination, and mobility. The program includes a physical activity readiness questionnaire to help you determine whether you should check with your doctor first before starting a strength-training program.

### *VIDEO PROGRAMS – A NEW FEATURE OF THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCE CENTER*

Gale has made available a new resource on its Health & Wellness Resource Center called Healthology . The Health and Wellness Resource Center is one of the free databases available through iConn. – <http://iconn.org/>. Healthology is a collection of 700 videos covering more than sixty therapeutic areas, such as allergy, arthritis, cancer, heart health, pregnancy and childbirth, and vascular disease. The videos are produced in a news magazine format and each runs approximately four minutes in length.

Participants in the videos include physicians, scientists, nurses, nutritionists, fitness trainers, patients, caregivers, and patient advocates. Biographical information is given for the medical professionals in the videos. Viewers have the option of watching the video or reading a printable transcript.

Healthology topics are accompanied by news stories, a "Did you know" feature which expands on the specific information under discussion, and the ability to download a written transcript of the video. The producers of the videos claim that all of the content is developed through a rigorous process consisting of both internal and external medical or expert review.

Add Healthology to your list of available online medical videos along with the surgery videos on MedlinePlus – <http://medlineplus.gov/>.

### *CRITIQUING MEDICAL NEWS SITES*

The University of Minnesota School of Journalism & Mass Communication and the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making recently launched a website to help journalists develop more critical appraisal skills when writing a news story. The site also offers guidance to consumers to help them evaluate the medical and research news reported in the various media. The new website is at <http://www.healthnewsreview.org/>.

Medical news stories from about fifty of the major newspapers, broadcast media, wire services, and news magazines are monitored by a staff of twenty medical research and journalism experts. The stories, all of which are about the prevention and treatment of diseases and make claims about the treatments, procedures, and tests, are evaluated on the basis of accuracy, balance, and completeness. Each story is then given a score using a star system with one star indicating the lowest ranking and five stars the highest.

Criteria used to evaluate stories include novelty of treatment, availability of treatment, treatment options, and disease mongering, which refers to whether the story “medicalizes” a normal human function, frames risk factors as a disease, or exaggerates the prevalence of the disease. Stories are also judged on the quality of the supporting evidence and whether the benefits and risks are quantified in understandable terms.

The website also helps users understand themes commonly found in medical news stories, such as absolute vs. relative risk, phases of drug trials, and the significance of animal studies. There is a link to twelve five-star rated stories which help readers gain a clearer understanding about what is good reporting.

### *ONLINE REGISTRY OF STROKE TRIALS*



A free, searchable, international registry of current clinical research trials of therapies for acute ischemic stroke, hemorrhagic stroke, stroke prevention, and stroke recovery is available online at <http://www.strokecenter.org/trials/>. Based at the Internet Stroke Center at Washington University School of Medicine, the **Stroke Trials Registry** is supported by the American Stroke Association and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. It includes descriptions of five hundred completed and current research trials. The information is derived from published medical journal articles, professional medical conference presentations, scientists conducting the trials, and trial sponsors.

In each trial’s description, there is brief information about the trial’s purpose, its design, and study results, if concluded. Also included are links to medical journal citations for published articles about completed studies, many including summaries of the articles.

There is also a database of medications tested in clinical stroke trials, arranged alphabetically by generic and brand names. On each drug’s description page, there are links to brief narratives about ongoing and completed trials that tested that drug.

Additional database features are chronologically arranged links to medical news articles about stroke, stroke patient assessment tests, links to other government, commercial, and independent websites about stroke trials, and a separate “update list” of trials recently added, published, updated, or presented at medical conferences. There is a link to an information page about each trial on the “update list.”

Because one to four years may elapse after research concludes before clinical trial results are published, this registry is an important source of current research results.

### *RESOURCE GUIDE ON BULIMIA*

Bulimia Nervosa is “...an eating disorder in which a person engages in binge eating (eating a lot of food in a short time) followed by some type of behavior to prevent weight gain from the food that was eaten.” This behavior may include self-induced vomiting, misuse of enemas and laxatives, fasting, or excessive exercising. Some people who have bulimia may starve themselves for a period of time before binge eating again. This disorder has important physical, emotional, and mental aspects that require consideration during treatment.

**The Bulimia Resource Guide for Family and Friends** - <http://www.bulimiaguide.org/> - is a comprehensive guide on bulimia nervosa for those who want to understand the disorder and how to support a family member or friend with bulimia. The content of the guide was researched and developed by ECRI (formerly the Emergency Care Research Institute) whose mission is to improve the quality, safety, and cost-effectiveness of healthcare through its publications, professional training and education programs, health technology evidence reports, laboratory evaluations of medical devices, and consulting services to the healthcare community. ECRI is designated as an Evidence-based Practice Center - <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epc/> by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

The Resource Guide offers comprehensive information on bulimia nervosa, including its causes, risk factors, signs and symptoms, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment. It also answers such questions as “Should friends and family be involved in treatment?”, “Which treatment works best”, and “What is treatment like?”.

There is also a directory of treatment centers in the United States, information on maximizing health insurance benefits to pay for care, checklists and tips (do’s and don’ts of Providing Support for someone who has bulimia, signs family and friends may notice), a list of related resources and organizations, a glossary, and references for further reading.

This is a helpful, practical guide for those who have bulimia nervosa and their family and friends.

#### *HERBS AT A GLANCE*

Bilberry, cranberry, milk thistle, and echinacea are among the eighteen herbs and botanicals described in individual fact sheets in **Herbs at a Glance** at <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm>, a new website of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health. For each herb there is brief information about its medical uses, alternative names, its possible side effects, scientific evidence for its effectiveness, and additional sources of information. A color photograph of the herb is included. The information is not copyrighted and “duplication is encouraged.”



One of twenty-seven institutes of the National Institutes of Health, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine sponsors research, education, and outreach efforts for complementary and alternative medicine, and encourages its integration into the practice of conventional medicine when its efficacy has been scientifically proved.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine website at <http://nccam.nih.gov/> incorporates additional consumer health information on selecting and evaluating complementary medicine as well as descriptions of current clinical research trials of complementary medicine.



### **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.

**The AARP Guide to Pills.** MaryAnne Hochadel, editor-in-chief. Sterling Publishing Co., 2006. 981 p. (ISBN 1-4027-1740-7).

Based on the Clinical Pharmacology online database produced by the Gold Standard drug information company, the **AARP Guide to Pills** is published by the AARP, national advocacy organization for older adults. The book provides one or two page descriptions of more than 1,200 prescription and nonprescription medications. Arranged alphabetically by generic name, the Guide briefly answers questions about each drug’s uses, dosage, interactions with other medications, how it should be taken, procedure if a dose is missed, possible side effects, precautions when using, safe storage, and information about current medical conditions to discuss with the patient’s health care provider before taking the medication. There is a small identifying color photo of each medication. The alphabetical index of medications, by brand name as well as generic name, can be used to guide the reader to the main entry for the drug. The medications are also listed in a separate index arranged alphabetically by disease or disorder. A section on “How to Use This Book” clearly explains and illustrates the sections of each medication entry.

An informative introductory chapter discusses the effect of medications on older adults, how to use medications safely, and provides suggestions for purchasing medications more economically.

**American Cancer Society's Complete Guide to Colorectal Cancer.** Bernard Levin, et. al. editor. American Cancer Society, 2006. 418 p. (ISBN 0-944235-55-7 ) \$19.95.

As the third most prevalent cancer and second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S., colorectal cancer is a great concern of many healthy adults. The American Cancer Society Guide, written for individuals and families facing colon cancer as well as for health consumers interested in its prevention, is a well-organized, comprehensive introduction to colorectal cancer's risk factors, prevention, and treatment.

It provides research-based information in consumer-friendly language. The treatment section discusses alternative and complementary therapies as well as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery.

Written by medical specialists in cancer treatment, the book is enhanced by medical illustrations and photos, as well as patient comments about their experiences. It emphasizes the importance of being a proactive, involved patient and discusses patient rights and the workings of the medical system. The text includes questions to ask the medical care team about surgery, follow-up care, and other treatment phases. It features a sample pathology report and specific questions to ask of a physician about the report. There is also information about related practical concerns such as finances, insurance coverage, and workplace issues. One section is directed specifically to family members of cancer patients. The Guide provides important information for consumer health collections.

**Celiac Disease. A Hidden Epidemic.** Peter H. R. Green and Rory Jones. Collins, 2006. 334 p. (ISBN 0-06-076693-X ) \$22.95.

One out of every hundred people experiences a potentially damaging, life-long, hereditary autoimmune disease that is often undiagnosed. Celiac disease affects the ability of the small intestine to absorb nutrients. It may result in intestinal disorders, nutrient malabsorption, anemia, neurological symptoms, osteoporosis, and an increased risk of cancer.

Dr. Peter H.R. Green, director of the Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University and professor of clinical medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia, and science writer and celiac disease patient Rory Jones clearly describe the diagnostic procedures, how celiac disease damages the intestine, related diseases, its effects on different age groups, the strict gluten-free diet used in its management, and research on its cure. Patient anecdotes greatly enhance the text.

A third of the book discusses follow-up testing and dietary changes after a patient is diagnosed. In addition to a directory of national support groups, the book's appendix includes a guide to ingredients, a glossary of terms, and an explanation of grains.

**The Consumers' Guide to Hearing Aids.** Hearing Loss Association of America, 2005. \$4.25. Available from the Hearing Loss Association of America. See address and website below.

Have library users asked you to help them locate evaluative information about specific hearing aid brands and models they are considering for purchase? Not an easy request to fill. Descriptive and comparative information about types of hearing aids has been available, but objective, detailed comparisons of the features of specific brands and models have been very difficult to locate.

This twenty-four page booklet, published by the Hearing Loss Association of America ([www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)), provides comparisons of the features of a variety of models for thirty national brands. Its charts indicate whether features such as directional microphone, multi-channel technology, dynamic range circuitry, and ability to recharge are "standard" or "available" in specific hearing aid models. Comparisons are provided for five types of hearing aids: conventional analog and entry level, basic, advanced, and premium digital styles. The technical terms used to describe hearing aid features are defined in a glossary at the conclusion of the booklet.

In addition to the comparative charts, the booklet includes brief articles about realistic expectations for hearing aids, an explanation of newer directional microphone hearing aids, characteristics of "open ear" hearing aids, and a question and answer section that describes how a hearing aid works and how a new hearing aid user can adapt to its use.

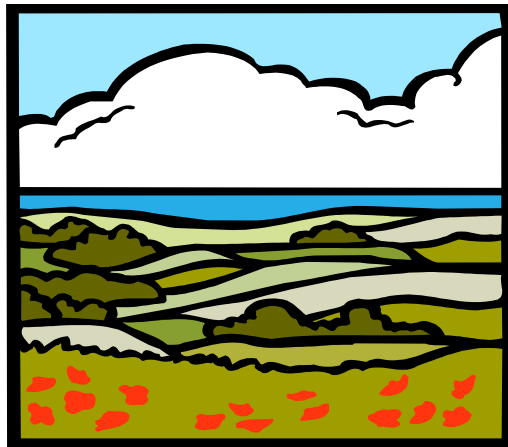
Details on ordering the booklet and its cost are available from the Hearing Loss Association of America, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, Maryland 20814 ; phone (301) 657-2248; email [info@hearingloss.org](mailto:info@hearingloss.org) .

**So What Can I Eat?! How to Make Sense of the New Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Make Them Your Own.** Elisa Zied with Ruth Winter. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006. 212 p. (ISBN 0-471-77201-1) paperback, \$14.95.

Dietician Elisa Zied encourages readers from the start that following the new jointly issued U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines does not mean you must avoid favorite foods or exist on an extremely restricted diet. The Dietary Guidelines recommend eating foods from all food groups, consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low or fat-free dairy products and fewer added sugars, saturated and trans fats, and including exercise in your daily schedule. According to Ms. Zied, after following the Guidelines' recommendations, there is leeway for additional quantities of healthy food and even a bit of chocolate.

With these recommendations as basic guidelines and a 2,000 calorie daily limit, Ms. Zied offers menu plans and recipes that illustrate what you can eat while following the Guidelines. The meal plans and recipes comprise nearly half the book. Master food lists detail the amounts of a variety of healthful foods that equal the Guidelines' recommended portions.

Using a practical, encouraging, informal style, Ms. Zied incorporates a number of practical suggestions for calorie intake reduction, food substitutions, healthy grocery shopping tips, and restaurant ordering recommendations including ethnic food choices.



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle and Judith Kronick.  
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