

# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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## UPDATE

### *AN UPCOMING WORKSHOP FOR YOU: THE HEALTHY LIBRARIAN*

Managing the challenges of your hectic work schedule, keeping up-to-date with changes in technology, and staffing long hours at a public or academic library...all of these stresses can exact a toll on your personal sense of wellbeing. Are you ready for a professional workshop that focuses on your needs on the job?

*“The Healthy Librarian: Cultivating Wellness in the Workplace”* is a workshop designed to help you find practical techniques to assist in lowering your workday stress level. Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network will host this workshop, especially for librarians, Wednesday June 24 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Middletown Library Service Center. Librarian Michelle Eberle, Consumer Health Coordinator of the New England Region, National Network of Libraries of Medicine, will present the workshop.

Mark your calendar! Registration details will be announced soon.

This free workshop will help you learn skills and simple strategies to manage the challenges of your job. An interactive workshop, you will explore practical solutions, including stress management skills, ergonomics, and incorporating more activity into your workday. Resources for improving your own health literacy, helpful health check tools, and techniques for developing resiliency in the constantly changing library profession will be explored. Workshop presenter Michelle Eberle assures attendees that all librarians will leave with enhanced knowledge and realistic skills for incorporating healthy habits into their daily work.

## NETNEWS



### *MEDICAL RESEARCH RESULTS FOR THE PUBLIC*

Are you looking for a quick overview of the types of research currently being done on macular degeneration and its treatment? Would you like to know what research efforts are planned by scientists at the **National Institutes of Health** for brain and other central nervous system cancers? Are you interested in a brief history of Type 1 diabetes complications before current treatments were discovered?

The National Institutes of Health publishes fact sheets for the public about more than one hundred medical topics and diseases and their current treatments at <http://www.nih.gov/about/researchresultsforthepublic/> These brief, understandable summaries discuss the history of a condition's treatment, its contemporary treatment, and future research directions. Among the conditions described are asthma, Parkinson's disease, oral cancer, and post-traumatic



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<http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>

stress disorder. There are also explanations of topics such as “genes and personalized medicine,” “health effects of climate change,” and “mind-body medicine practices.”

You may sign up on the website for email updates of *Research Results for the Public*.

If you are looking for specific details about research in progress and information about participating as a subject in ongoing research, consider consulting three additional websites described on the Internet Resources page of the Healthnet website at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/inters.html#clini>

*Clinicaltrials.gov* at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov/> a “service of the National Institutes of Health,” is an international registry of more than seventy thousand clinical research trials being conducted in the United States and other countries. This searchable website provides details on a research trial’s purpose, locations, criteria for participation, and contact information for individuals who are considering participation. Using the website’s search page, it is possible to find Connecticut study locations for a clinical trial testing “Radiation Therapy in Treating Women Who Have Undergone Surgery For Ductal Carcinoma In Situ or Stage I or Stage II Breast Cancer.”

*CancerTrials* at <http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials> is a searchable, online database of the National Institute of Health’s National Cancer Institute. More than six thousand cancer research studies, currently accepting patient participants, are described.

*CenterWatch*, a commercial website at <http://www.centerwatch.com/clinical-trials/listings/> describes clinical trials “actively recruiting” participants in twenty medical specialties including neurology, obstetrics, and oncology. A Clinical Trials Results Database summarizes the findings of many completed research studies. The results are organized by medical condition and by “drug or therapy name” and then alphabetically by state.

#### *UNDERSTANDING MEDICAL TERMS WITHOUT A MEDICAL DEGREE*

The medical terms your doctor uses in explaining your health conditions may make perfect sense to her, although they may be baffling to you. Words a layperson uses frequently may have a different meaning to a health care provider. Medical terms are often quite lengthy. Words that are distinctly different to your doctor may sound quite similar to a layperson. Did she say “hyperglycemia” or “hypoglycemia”? Sometimes, it seems “you and your doctor are speaking different languages.”

Understandably, you are very sympathetic when a library user asks your help in researching a medical condition or defining terms in a medical report that mean very little to an individual who lacks medical training.

The **Medlineplus** website, published for health consumers at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/> has added an online tutorial entitled, “Understanding Medical Words,” written especially for patients and family members meeting the challenge of comprehending medical terms.

The tutorial is available at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/medicalwords.html> . It utilizes Flash Player, available for download at no charge.

The tutorial helps viewers learn the meaning of parts of medical terms and how to combine them. In addition to word roots, prefixes, and suffixes, there are explanations of abbreviations and acronyms. Illustrations and diagrams are included. The tutorial incorporates quizzes to evaluate your learning. After completing this tutorial, you may feel more comfortable when your doctor uses an unfamiliar, lengthy term to describe a procedure she is recommending. You may even understand that “pericarditis “ means “inflammation of the area around the heart,“ without consulting a dictionary.

But, as the tutorial advises at its completion, even though you’ve learned many medical terms, there are some that are hard to figure out, and sometimes, “it’s easier to look it up!” Fortunately, the Medlineplus website includes a Merriam-Webster medical dictionary and the A.D.A.M. medical encyclopedia for terms that still stump you.

## *PAIN MANAGEMENT....HELPING YOUR DOCTOR HELP YOU*

Pain, whether acute or chronic, can not only signal your attention to a health problem that needs medical care, it can also make day-to-day functioning challenging and extremely difficult.

According to Dr. Joseph Civetta, professor and vice chairman of the department of surgery at the University of Connecticut Health Center, an important path to pain relief is the ability to communicate to your physician the type, degree, and pattern of pain you are experiencing. Because pain is a subjective experience, your physician depends on your expression of its severity and pattern to help determine what treatments will be most effective for you.

Dr. Civetta recently presented a community program at the University of Connecticut Health Center entitled “An Informed Client is the Best Patient: Improving Pain Management.” He encouraged patients to document their pain and communicate their pain experiences to their physician whenever their pain treatment needs adjustment.

If you were not able to travel to the University of Connecticut Health Center to hear Dr. Civetta’s lecture, you may view it on the University of Connecticut Health Center website archives at <http://www.celebrate.uchc.edu/webcasts/index.html>

The Pain Management Education Guide on the University of Connecticut Health Center website at [http://patientsafety.uchc.edu/patients/pain/pdfs/guide\\_patientedu.pdf](http://patientsafety.uchc.edu/patients/pain/pdfs/guide_patientedu.pdf) provides a two page booklet with opportunities to record specific, guided descriptions of your pain on a daily basis. This information can help your doctor track your response to specific medications and make decisions about adjusting your medication regimen if needed.

The University of Connecticut Health Center website provides a link to a list of pain resources at [http://patientsafety.uchc.edu/patients/pain/pain\\_resources.html](http://patientsafety.uchc.edu/patients/pain/pain_resources.html)

Additional articles and resources about pain management are available on the Medlineplus website at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/pain.html>

## *FINDING A FARMERS’ MARKET IN YOUR TOWN*

The approach of spring often inspires an urge for the taste of a variety of farm fresh fruits and vegetables. Local, nutritious fruits and vegetables are available in spring and summer at farmers’ markets in many Connecticut towns. The **United States Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture Marketing Service** offers a website with a searchable list of more than 4,600 local farmers’ markets around the country.



To find a farmers’ market in a Connecticut town, use the search form at <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/> You may specify state, city, county, or zip code to find farmers’ markets in a specific location. You may also search by the name of a farmers’ market.

You may narrow your search request further by indicating forms of payment accepted at the markets in the location requested. You may also request a list of farmers’ markets in specific locations that accept WIC vouchers (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), electronic benefits transfer such as debit and credit cards, or Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program vouchers.

The WIC program provides financial aid for food purchases for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as children up to five years of age. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides low-income older adults, who are at least 60 years of age, with coupons to help purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. Nutrition education is part of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program as well.

The Department of Public Health includes a guide to local WIC offices with names of towns served by that office at <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=387772>

WIC recipients receive Farmers' Market coupons in June at local WIC offices. Seniors should apply to the social services office in their town for Farmers' Market vouchers.

### *FREE GENETIC COUNSELOR SERVICE*



If you are searching for information on a genetic disease... such as current methods of testing, sources of genetic testing, and new treatment recommendations, the **National Organization for Rare Disorders** at <http://www.rarediseases.org/> would like to help. NORD's genetic counselor and nurse both accept questions from the public about specific genetic diseases, their diagnosis, and treatment. They may be contacted by phone at **1-800-999-NORD** or by email.

A twenty-five year old organization, the National Organization for Rare Disorders is a federation of disease-focused organizations that advocate for patients with "orphan diseases" that affect fewer than 200,000 patients. These nearly 6,000 disorders involve 25 million patients and their families.

NORD's genetic counselor addresses questions about gathering family history, locations for genetic testing, patient support, and genetic counseling as well as current testing methods, treatment, and research in progress. The genetic counselor's email address is [GeneticCounselor@rarediseases.org](mailto:GeneticCounselor@rarediseases.org)

NORD's nurse discusses medically-related concerns about specific rare disorders. The nurse will explain medical terminology, medications, and medical procedures. The nurse can suggest an appropriate type of specialist, offer questions to ask a doctor, and present names of medical centers that specialize in treating specific disorders. The nurse is also a resource for finding financial support for treatment. The nurse's email address is [RN@rarediseases.org](mailto:RN@rarediseases.org)

The genetic counselor and nurse will provide information but will not review medical records nor make diagnoses.

The organization's Rare Disease Database at <http://www.rarediseases.org/search/rdbsearch.html> describes more than 1,150 diseases. Disease summaries are brief and include a list of disease-related organizations and their web addresses. Full-text descriptions may be ordered for a fee online. There is no fee for the first request.

A searchable Organizational Database at <http://www.rarediseases.org/search/orgsearch.html> includes descriptions of more than 2,000 organizations, their web addresses, and additional contact information. The Database is searchable by disease name or organization name.

The Medlineplus website, published by the National Library of Medicine for health consumers, offers additional information about rare diseases at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/rarediseases.html> and information focused on genetic disorders at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/geneticdisorders.html>

Healthnet's customized research service will search for information in response to specific disease-related questions for residents of Connecticut who have personal health concerns. Healthnet's phone number is **860/679-4055**.



## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following titles are recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services. They are not part of the UConn Health Center Library collection.

**Healthy Child, Whole Child: Integrating the Best of Conventional and Alternative Medicine to Keep Your Kids Healthy.** Stuart H. Ditchek, Russell H. Greenfield, and Lynn Murray Willeford. Collins Living, 2009. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 330 p. (ISBN 0-06-273745-7 \$17.99 paperback ).

Drs. Stuart Ditchek and Russell Greenfield are physicians (and parents) with a scientifically-based attitude toward both alternative and conventional medicine. This updated version of their 2001 guide for parents offers neither an uncritical acceptance of alternative medicine nor a rejection of conventional or alternative medicine. It helps parents determine “which therapies are safe and effective for children and which are useless—or worse, dangerous.”

Both Drs. Ditchek and Greenfield are trained as “conventional” physicians but both also practice the “integrative medicine” techniques and philosophy of their mentor, alternative medicine physician and author Dr. Andrew Weil.

The information about immunizations, nutrition, common medical conditions, and therapies is practical and straightforward. The authors provide clear recommendations for or against specific alternative therapies. (“Neither of us recommends chiropractic care for infants. We rarely recommend chiropractic therapy for children under age twelve.” (page 163) “We believe the best treatment for self-limiting illnesses [such as upper respiratory infections] is to get out of the way and let the natural forces of healing do their work.” (page 212) ) They warn against using unnecessary antibiotics and antibacterial products but unequivocally recommend that children be immunized against diseases.

In addition to explaining the functions of a child’s immune system and its development, they discuss sound nutrition practices (and include a plant-focused “Healthy Child Food Pyramid”), exercise recommendations, and the specifics of alternative methods such as biofeedback, homeopathy, self-hypnosis, herbal medicines, and guided imagery.

The book concludes with a well-organized resource guide to books and websites.

**Mommy Calls. Dr. Tanya Answers Parents’ Top 101 Questions about Babies and Toddlers.** Tanya Remer Altmann. American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009. 178 p. (ISBN 0-8018-8797-6 hardcover \$40.00, ISBN 978-1-581110-295-6 paperback \$12.95 ).

“The baby is here...now what do I do?” This brief, focused guide addresses the bewilderment often felt by new parents upon the arrival of their first child.

“How do I know if my baby is allergic to milk-based formula?” “I have a cold. Should I continue nursing?” “Which car seat is best for my child?” “When can I start solids?”

When Dr. Tanya Remer Altmann discovered that the same types of questions were asked repeatedly by parents calling the hospital at which she was training as a pediatrician during the night shift, she realized that a book with a pediatrician’s responses to these frequent questions would be helpful to many parents.

**Mommy Calls** offers concise, practical responses to “common questions parents ask their pediatricians.” It was written especially for parents of babies and young children through age 3. It is directed to parents who have no time for lectures or lengthy explanations and just want to know “what do I do?” It is a helpful book for inexperienced parents to consult when they are uncertain whether or not to call the pediatrician and are wondering: how serious is this symptom?

The book is organized by categories such as fever, skin, stomachaches and vomiting, breastfeeding, formulas, and sleep. The author provides page-long, straightforward responses. There are symbols to indicate when the information applies

specifically to newborns (babies birth to 3 months), infants (babies 4 months through 1 year), and toddlers (children ages 1 to 3 years), as well as a graphic picturing a phone to indicate that it's time to stop reading this book and call the pediatrician!

A practicing board-certified pediatrician, Dr. Altmann is also a clinical instructor at Mattel Children's Hospital at the University of California in Los Angeles.

**The 10 Best Questions for Living with Alzheimer's: The Script You Need to Get the Best Care for Your Loved One.** Dede Bonner. Simon and Schuster, 2008. 318 p. (ISBN 1-4165-6051-3 paperback \$15.00).

**The 10 Best Questions for Surviving Breast Cancer: The Script You Need to Take Control of Your Health.** Dede Bonner. Simon and Schuster, 2008. 322 p. (ISBN 1-4165-6050-5 paperback \$15.00)

Patients and family members are no longer content to remain in the dark about the details of their medical conditions and the treatments that have been recommended for them. They have become much more assertive in questioning their physicians to determine what specific recommended treatments involve, what they will experience as patients, the probable outcomes of their treatment, and the prognosis for their disorder.

Nonetheless, according to author Dede Bonner, an executive leadership specialist and business professor, "The most important questions are often the ones you didn't know to ask. Even the best doctors in the world can't give you the right answers unless you ask them the right questions first."

Relying on input from medical specialists, journalists, and patients whom she interviewed (and whose names and background are included in the Meet the Experts section at the conclusion of each book), Dr. Bonner has formulated incisive questions on a variety of aspects of care for breast cancer and Alzheimer's Disease. The questions are posed in ways that are likely to elicit detailed information from the doctor to help the patient making decisions about treatment, selection of a surgeon, etc. These questions relate to Alzheimer's drugs, participation in clinical trials, hiring a home health care agency, seeking a second opinion, finding a surgeon or oncologist, selecting a hospital, deciding on breast reconstruction surgery, and others. Each group of 10 questions concludes with an additional "magic question" such as "Do I have any special health or personal considerations that might be affected by radiation therapy?"

In addition to recommending specific questions to guide patients, e.g. "What is this hospital's accreditation status?" "What procedures are in place for patient safety and infection control?" "How do you help your staff avoid burnout?" "Has any conventional medical organization endorsed this [alternative] product or treatment?," Dr. Bonner provides two or three paragraphs of background information and rationale for each question. This additional information, as well as the recommended questions, will help patients and families prepare for productive interviews with health care providers.

"10 Best Questions" books about recovering from a heart attack and living with fibromyalgia are planned for 2009 publication.



*Healthnet News is written by Judith Kronick and Alberta L. Richetelle  
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,  
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