

# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

Volume XVI Number 2

Summer 2001

## UPDATE

### TIPS ON FINDING HEALTH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Healthnet has added a new feature on its web site - <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>. Under the link "**Interested in doing your own research?**" are tips to help consumers do their own research on the Internet to find information related to a personal medical concern. This new feature was developed in conjunction with the National Library of Medicine funded EmpowermentPlus project which was designed to provide training for members of self-help groups in Connecticut to search for quality health information on the Internet. Lynda Grayson, Special Projects Librarian hired for the EmpowermentPlus project, designed this part of the Healthnet web site. Content was developed by Lynda, Judy Kronick and Alberta Richetelle.

Some of the unique features of this site include how to research information on a disease or medical condition, how to locate information on health care providers, and evaluating web sites. Links are provided from the EmpowermentPlus main page to the resource guides developed by Healthnet staff on topics including aging, patient advocacy, mental health, and navigating the health care system. Included also under the heading "Diseases and Disorders" are links to online textbooks, MedlinePlus, and a guide to using PubMed written for the novice searcher.

Librarians may also find this new feature useful. Try it and let us know what you think. Are there features you find especially helpful? Features you would like to see us add? Email your comments to <mailto:richetelle@nso.uhc.edu>.

## ORGANIZATIONS

### IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PATIENT AND DOCTOR

The **National Institute on Aging** recently published a booklet "Talking with your doctor: a guide for older people". First issued in 1994, this new edition also includes valuable guidelines on evaluating health information on the World Wide Web.



Patients and doctors today are working more closely together to form a partnership in order to solve medical problems and maintain the patient's good health. This partnership depends upon good communication skills for both the patient and the doctor. This booklet offers guidance for the patient who is interested in developing better communication skills with his or her health care provider. It has a wealth of information for the older patient (and younger ones as well) and offers tips in areas such as:

- \* Choosing a doctor you can talk to and why it matters.
- \* Tips for good communication such as preparing for an appointment and giving and receiving information to and from your doctor and other health professionals.
- \* Getting started with a new doctor by sharing your medical history, medications, and habits.
- \* Talking about your health in both physical and emotional terms.
- \* Discussing sensitive subjects such as depression, sexual function, and incontinence.

A single free copy is available from the National Institute on Aging Information Center. Call 1-800-222-2225; TTY: 1-800-222-4225. Bulk copies are also available – ask about pricing.



**Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network**  
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<http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>

## HEALTH INFORMATION FOR HISPANIC SENIORS

The National Institute on Aging has several new Spanish language publications in its *Age Pages* series. These new publications, written for older people are on high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep problems, medication safety, and foot care. These free science-based leaflets are also useful for family members and health professionals who care for older adults.

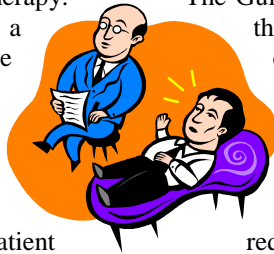
The *Age Page* on diabetes talks about how Hispanic Americans are at very high risk for type 2 diabetes. It identifies symptoms such as feeling thirsty, urinating frequently, losing weight, feeling tired, and having blurred vision. The other Spanish language leaflets follow the same format, first briefly describing the problem and how it's treated and then discussing treatment and preventive measures.

Copies of these free publications are available by contacting the National Institute on Aging Information Center at 1-800-222-2225 or TTY 1-800-222-4225.

## INFORMATION ABOUT PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THERAPISTS

The Connecticut Psychotherapists' Guild is an organization of independent psychotherapists who are concerned about the impact of managed care on psychotherapy. The Guild was formed out of concern for patients' loss of privacy, loss of the right to choose a therapist, and loss of control of the type, length and goals of therapy when managed care companies are involved in providing mental health services.

The Guild members offer therapy that is independent psychotherapy at moderate fees and many therapists charge fees on a sliding scale based on the client's ability to pay. Patients receive a 20% fee reduction if payment is made at the time of service and if the patient requires no paperwork.



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The Guild recently published a directory that includes information on what therapy is, what you can expect from it, how to choose a therapist, what kinds of training different kinds of therapists have, and how using your insurance benefits may influence your quality of care.

The directory also offers profiles of its members. Each profile lists the therapist's education and training, board certifications, background and experience, professional interests and specialties, and professional affiliations and activities. A geographical index of therapists is included along with an index of therapists by areas of special interests.

A free copy of the directory may be obtained by contacting the Guild at 1-800-731-8126 or 203/789-8208. The directory is also available online at <http://members.aol.com/cpguild/>.

If you wish to pay for mental health services on your own without going through your managed care plan, there are other organizations in Connecticut that offer therapy services and charge fees on a sliding scaled based upon the patient's ability to pay. Two of these are Catholic Family Services and Jewish Family services. These organizations have many locations throughout the state, so look in the white pages of your telephone book for the number of the office closest to you. The Connecticut Mental Health Association also provides referrals to psychotherapy services that offer a sliding fee scale based on the patient's ability to pay. Contact the Mental Health Association at 860/ 529-1970. Toll-free number: 1-800-842-1501

## NETNEWS

### GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH CANCER

The **National Cancer Institute** recently made available an online publication for parents of children who have cancer. "Young People with Cancer: a Handbook for Parents" ([http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov/young\\_people/ynqconts.html](http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov/young_people/ynqconts.html)). describes the various cancers that affect young children and adolescents, and discusses how they are diagnosed and treated. Helpful information answers many questions such as how to tell your child about the diagnosis, explaining to siblings about the diagnosis, and strategies to help the child and family members cope during treatments and hospitalizations. Advice is given on important problems to report to the physician and how to prepare your child for diagnostic tests. Some of the more common diagnostic tests are briefly described. Additional sources of information are also given.

### *MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR OLDER ADULTS*

**BenefitsCheckUp** (<http://www.BenefitsCheckUp.org/>), created by the National Council on Aging, is a free, easy-to-use service that identifies federal and state assistance programs for older Americans. Researching these programs used to be a time-consuming, frustrating experience. With the creation of this new site, seniors can quickly identify programs that may improve the quality of their lives. Family and friends can also obtain facts about benefits that their loved ones may qualify for. Many seniors may be surprised to learn that there are benefits available to them regardless of income.

The user is asked to answer a series of questions regarding sources of income, living expenses, and savings. Answers to these questions are used to determine the services for which the user is eligible. This information is a critical part of the screening process. The entire process may take 10-15 minutes.

BenefitsCheckUp assures the user that the information is completely confidential. It does not require the individual's name, address, phone number or Social Security number. The user enters simple information regarding age, income, and ZIP code. Complete information about the site's privacy policy is also provided.

### *INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES FACING LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS*

**Hospice Net** (<http://www.hospicenet.org/>), a private non-profit organization, offers helpful information, guidance, and advice for patients who are facing a life-threatening illness and for those who are caring for them. This comprehensive site describes the hospice concept, what individuals constitute the hospice team, and how to find a local hospice. It also answers common questions individuals may have about hospice care, such as whether insurance covers hospice care, when should a decision be made about whether hospice care is needed, what's involved in the hospice admission process, and what specific assistance hospice provides for the home-based patient. Questions to ask a hospice care provider are given to help the patient and family members determine what hospice program is best for their specific situation.

A section for patients discusses pain control, how to relieve pain without medication, advance directives, Medicare hospice benefits, talking to children about death, and palliative care. For caregivers, guidance is given on how to help a friend who is dying, the Family and Medical Leave Act, caring for someone with a cognitive impairment, and hiring in-home health care.

Bereavement information discusses the grief process, helping children and teenagers cope with the death of a family member, the healing process after a loss, and what we need when we are grieving. Also included is a brief list of links to other resources with helpful information, such as the American Cancer Society, Choices in Dying, and GriefNet.

### *EASING THE PAIN FROM SURGERY, HEADACHES, AND CANCER*



**Pain.com: A World of Information on Pain** (<http://www.pain.com/>) is a site for both medical professionals and consumers. It offers information on the treatment and management of pain, specifically pain associated with cancer, migraine and headache pain, perioperative pain and interventional pain management, which is any invasive procedure to manage pain.

The consumer portion of this site describes the different categories of pain mentioned above, a cancer pain electronic newsletter for professionals and patients, a general pain electronic newsletter, and an ask the Pain Doctor feature that allows users to submit questions about pain which are answered by medical experts in the treatment of pain. Answers to specific questions are posted on the site and archived for one week after which they are indexed by topic.

An assessment section includes forms that patients can complete with their doctors pre and post-surgery to help measure and manage pain. Also included are pain rating scales- one uses simple graphics and one measures chronic pain. Interviews with experts in the field of pain management offer information on state-of-the-art treatments and issues related to pain management in adults and children.

Current pain-related news is also featured and links are provided to world-wide pain organizations and self-help groups. The site gives the names and credentials of its medical advisory board and information on organizations and companies that provide funding for the site.

## FREE ONLINE MEDICAL JOURNALS

The medical journal industry continues to be volatile. Publishers are concerned about losing revenues now that many of their publications are available online and libraries are obtaining site licenses to gain access to the journals to make them available from library workstation and on institutional networks. Policies regarding subscription fees, site licenses, and free online access seem to change on a daily basis.

Currently, there are 5 well-known journals available online to the public at no charge. These journals are:

British Medical Journal – <http://www.bmj.com/>  
Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) – [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr//mmwr\\_wk.html](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr//mmwr_wk.html)  
Emerging Infectious Diseases – <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/index.htm>  
American Family Physician – <http://www.aafp.org/afp/>  
Postgraduate Medicine – <http://www.postgradmed.com/>

The online edition of the American Family Physician does not include many of the illustrations included in the print edition and not all of the articles in the print edition are made available in full-text online. Postgraduate Medicine offers full-text for some of its articles and many of the older articles are not available in full-text.

Other medical journal publishers may offer free trial subscriptions or free access to issues older than 6 months or a year. A new site, **Free Medical Journals.com** (<http://www.freemedicaljournals.com/>) attempts to keep up with this ever-changing field of publishing. The site contains lists of medical journals available in varying degrees of free access: free full-text; free one to six months after publication; free one year after publication; free two years after publication; new free journals; and cancelled free access. The site contains over 800 titles sorted alphabetically and by specialty. There are also Portuguese and Spanish listings. Users can sign up for the journal alert feature and are invited to submit information on new free medical journals.

A few caveats about this site:

It is unclear who is responsible for this site.  
Some of the information is inaccurate which leads one to believe that the publishers of this site do not update the information as frequently as they should.  
What's free today does not mean free tomorrow.

Free Medical Journals.com is part of the AMEDEO site (<http://www.amedeo.com/>), a product of the pharmaceutical industry, which offers links to current journal articles by subject category. Most of these links lead to an abstract of the article. You can also sign up for weekly email notification of new articles in categories of interest to you.

In spite of the above mentioned limitations, this site can be useful for those wanting free full-text of medical journal articles. Take a look at this site and evaluate it for possible use in your library.

## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



The following books are recommended for consumer health collections. These books are not part of the UCHC Library collection.

**Lerner's consumer guide to health care. How to get the best health care for less.** Paul Lerner and Julie Lerner. Lerner Communications, Ltd., 2001. 249 p. ( ISBN 0-9669999-2-4 ) , \$13.95 pap.

Authors Paul Lerner and his sister Julie Lerner both survived life-threatening illnesses as young adults. Their recoveries were often thwarted by the medical system that was supposed to cure them. Their experiences gave them insight into the intricacies of the U.S. health care system from the patient's viewpoint. They share their practical recommendations in this straightforward, understandable book.

Despite acknowledging the many excellent doctors and hospitals available in the country, the Lerner's compare understanding the status of today's health care with "driving a car without a dashboard. The engine sounds good, but

you can't tell how fast you're going or whether you're about to run out of gas." This comprehensive, helpful guide provides the "dashboard" to guide patients through the maze of the uncoordinated health care system. The book advises readers to act as assertive patient advocates for themselves and family members, a plan the authors label Individual Health Advocacy. It also emphasizes the importance of relying on friends and family members for support.

The book includes practical suggestions such as organizations to contact when selecting a health plan, with phone numbers and website addresses. There are sample letters to government agencies, sample questions to ask co-workers about health plans they have chosen, sources for evaluating your health plan's financial condition, a specialist referral process checklist, questions to ask a doctor one is considering, sample terminology that will be likely to resonate with a patient's insurance company when coverage has been refused, as well as a sample letter to send to the company when treatment authorization has been denied.

And, perhaps, one of their best points of advice: "...try to speak with a local librarian (great sources of health information!)"

In addition to tips on ways to access financial support and economize on health care, the book includes appendices listing health organizations, hotlines, state health departments, and a glossary. (JK)



**Obsessive compulsive disorders : a complete guide to getting well and staying well.** Fred Penzel. Oxford University Press, 2000. 428 p. (ISBN 0-19-514092-3), \$30.00.

In this readable and informative book, the author, a Ph.D. clinical psychologist and the Director of Western Suffolk Psychological Services in Huntington New York, holds the view that obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), as most people know it, is part of a whole spectrum of related neurobiological disorders. He has selected five of the disorders from this spectrum, referring to them as Obsessive-Compulsive Spectrum Disorders (OCSD), to discuss in this book: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder; Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD); Trichotillomania (TTM) – hair-pulling; Onychophagia - compulsive nail biting; and compulsive skin picking.

Dr. Penzel first describes what OCDs are and provides brief summaries of the five he covers in the book. He then discusses in detail the different therapies – behavioral therapy; self-help therapy; and medical therapy which involves the use of drugs. He talks about OCSDs and children and adolescents and offers advice to parents about how to insure their child gets proper treatment. He also counsels parents about how to come to terms about their child's disorder.

OCSDs can take many forms and Dr. Penzel discusses these in separate chapters – one on the different forms obsessions can take and one on the different forms compulsions can take. He offers several case histories to illustrate his points.

He also discusses the theories of the causes of OCSD including the contributing factors that can influence OCSD symptoms. These include pregnancy, head injury, abuse of illegal drugs, epilepsy, and stressful events and trauma. A resource list is included. Appendices offer obsessive-compulsive disorders symptoms checklists, the definition of OCD according to the official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a list of recommended books for self-help, and a glossary.

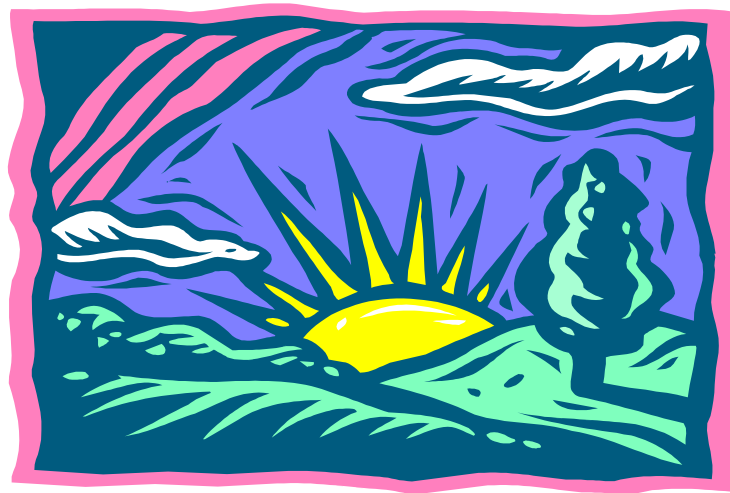
**Women's heart book. The Complete guide to keeping your heart healthy.** 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Hyperion, 2001. 364 p. (ISBN 0-7868-8428-2), pap. \$14.95.

"Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death for American women." It is far from an exclusively male disease. Although this fact is often repeated in the media, it is a hard realization for many women and men. The often unexpected heart attack risk that women face is an important reason for women to be aware of ways they can reduce their risk by following a heart-healthy lifestyle. This book discusses the unique characteristics of heart disease in women and how to deal with its dangers.

This second edition is a revised and updated version. Connecticut author Charlotte Libov writes from the viewpoint of a woman who underwent open-heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio ten years ago while in her early forties. Her comments related to the topic under discussion, written from the viewpoint of a patient, are interspersed in italics within the book's text. Co-author Dr. Fredric Pashkow was formerly the Cleveland Clinic's medical director of cardiac rehabilitation.

Written in a straightforward, easy-to-read, informal style, with anecdotes about women who faced heart disease and with "lifesaving tips," this book is a comprehensive, helpful guide written especially as an advisory guide for women. The book discusses the workings of the heart, women's heart disease risk, mitral valve prolapse, congenital heart defects in adults, hormone replacement therapy, cardiac diagnostic tests, and the effect of pregnancy on the heart. One chapter is an "Encyclopedia of Heart Problems." with clear explanations of heart blocks, arrhythmias, pacemakers, endocarditis, and cardiac tumors. There are straightforward explanations of surgeries and other types of treatment. The book concludes with specific guidance on reducing the risk of heart disease by lowering stress, maintaining a healthy weight, and exercising.

The book includes a glossary, an index, a resource guide to books, organizations, and their websites, and a bibliography of research articles. (JK)



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle with the assistance of Judith Kronick.  
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please call 860/679-4055; e-mail address [richetelle@nso.uhc.edu](mailto:richetelle@nso.uhc.edu).*

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ISSN: 1526-8624