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# HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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## UPDATE



### *BIOMEDICINE AND HEALTH IN THE NEWS CEASES PUBLICATION*

Biomedicine and Health in the News, the database of research related news stories from the New York Times, has officially ceased publication. The database was created and maintained by Healthnet staff and appears on Healthnet's homepage at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>. New files have not been added to the database since the end of March. All of the backfiles are still available for viewing and searching.

The database is ceasing publication because it has outlived its usefulness. When it first appeared it was one of just a few sources of news information about current medical research. Currently, there are numerous sites where a person can find information about medical research reported in the news.

Within the next few weeks, we'll be replacing Biomedicine and Health in the News with a page listing some of the best free medical news sites. In the meantime, here are three sites to help you. All are free. Besides their Health eLine, which is free, Reuters has a medical news service for professionals available for a yearly subscription fee.

Reuters Health eLine - <http://www.reutershealth.com/en/index.html>

MedlinePlus - <http://medlineplus.gov/>

CNN Health - <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/>

Connecticut residents can also search the iConn Newsstand, a database of news stories from the New York Times, Washington Post, Hartford Courant, and several other newspapers. Many news stories are very current, in most cases appearing only one day after publication of the hard copy.

## PROFESSIONAL READING

### *THREE ARTICLES WORTH READING*

The May 1 issue of **Library Journal** has three articles on health related resources. The first article is a Collection Development feature on mental illness resources. "The two faces of mental illness", written by Barbara Bibel, reference librarian at the Oakland (CA) Public Library and a frequent reviewer for LJ, focuses primarily on schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. She gives a brief overview of these two illnesses and offers guidelines for selecting books and other information resources for library collections. She also discusses ethical issues related to selecting library materials on these subjects. The resource list consists of twenty-one books, three videos, and four websites. Each entry is accompanied by a brief description and a star notes essential titles.

The second article, also written by Barbara Bibel, is a list of the best consumer health books for 2003. Consisting of twenty-one titles in twelve categories, the list includes books on cancer, children's health, diabetes, drugs, elder care, general medicine, hearing disorders, pain management, pregnancy and childbirth, psychiatry, and women's health. Each title is accompanied by a short description.



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Another article, written by Marylaine Block, former academic reference librarian and currently a writer and e-zine publisher, offers a broad overview of what's happening in consumer health publishing. Ms. Block notes a trend in publishing books that help consumers navigate the healthcare system, with one publisher launching a series to help parents be effective advocates to get medical care for their disabled or ill children. Preventive medicine is also a big topic, with an emphasis on developing a healthy lifestyle and managing one's own acute or chronic illness. Publishers are also finding there is a big interest in books to help people cope with specific diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, and diabetes. Throughout the article Ms. Block mentions noteworthy forthcoming titles in each of the areas she discusses.

Bibel B. The two faces of mental illness. **Library Journal** 2004 May 1;49-52.

Bibel B. Best consumer health books 2003. **Library Journal** 2004 May 1; 55-56, 58, 60.

Block M. Dr. Everyman. **Library Journal** 2004 May 1:61-62, 64.

## NETNEWS

### *SUMMER SUN SAFETY*

The days have finally warmed up and it's almost summer time. More time outdoors means more sun exposure. Now may be a good time to read about the dangers of sun exposure. Several Internet sites offer practical information that will help us enjoy those warm, sunny days and still practice good prevention techniques to help reduce the risk of skin cancer.



The **Skin Cancer Foundation** - <http://www.skincancer.org/> - has information on the three forms of skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell, and melanoma and also the precancerous actinic keratosis. Detailed information is given on how to do a self-exam of the skin, which should be done at least once a year, to detect any changes in moles and spots. There is also information how to be safe in the sun, what to look for when selecting sunscreen lotion, the dangers of tanning beds, a special section for older adults, and a section to educate children about how to be safe in the sun

**MedlinePlus** also has a section on skin cancer - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/skincancer.html>. This section offers news about current research related to skin cancer, general overviews of the different types of skin cancer, an interactive tutorial, information about how skin cancers are diagnosed and treated, pictures and diagrams to show what skin cancer lesions look like, prevention techniques, and current research and clinical trials. There is also information on how to find a dermatologist and a skin cancer screening program and statistics on the prevalence of skin cancer in the United States. Links are given for organizations to contact for further information about skin cancer. Other MedlinePlus topics related to skin cancer include melanoma (the deadliest form of skin cancer), sun exposure, and skin, hair, and nails.

Skin cancer is the May feature of the **American Academy of Dermatology** - [http://www.aad.org/patient\\_intro.html](http://www.aad.org/patient_intro.html). If this link isn't available, go to their homepage at <http://www.aad.org/> and type in "skin cancer". Select "Skin cancer updates" from the left-hand margin and read about the different forms of cancer, which include photographs, how to identify melanomas, how to do a skin cancer check, advice on reducing the risk for skin cancer, and recommendations for selecting a sunscreen. There is also a special section for young people on the dangers of sun exposure.

### *BE WISE ABOUT LYME DISEASE PREVENTION*

Here's another caution to heed during the warm summer months. Cases of Lyme disease increase dramatically during the summer so it's a good idea to brush up on the facts about the disease. Lyme disease is an infection caused by a bacterium that is carried by deer ticks. The ticks can infect humans and animals and cause symptoms including flu-like muscle and joint pain, an expanding red rash, which often can look like a bull's eye, fever, and headache. Later symptoms may include a stiff neck, migrating joint pains, sore throat, tingling in extremities, changes in vision, and extreme fatigue. Early treatment of Lyme disease with antibiotics within the first few weeks often results in a cure. Treatment with antibiotics later in the disease is also often successful. There is controversy about whether individuals who continue to have symptoms really have Lyme disease and whether they should be treated with long-term antibiotics. Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey have the highest incidence of Lyme disease in the United States.

The **American Lyme Disease Foundation** - <http://www.aldf.com/> - has information about the disease and provides details regarding diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and current research. There are also maps and statistics on Lyme disease prevalence in the United States, a table of recommended antibiotics and dosages, important information on how to reduce your risk for Lyme disease, and instructions on how to remove a tick (there is definitely a right and wrong way to do this). There are photographs showing the different stages of the development of the tick.

Links to other tick-borne diseases are included - babesiosis and erlichiosis . Not nearly as prevalent as Lyme disease, babesiosis is a malaria type infection caused by a parasite transmitted from the bite of an infected deer tick. Symptoms may include malaise, anorexia, and fatigue. The disease is treated with a course of quinine and an antibiotic. Symptoms may continue to occur for weeks or months after treatment. Erlichiosis is caused by a bacteria transmitted to humans from the bite of an infected tick. There are two forms of the bacteria; one that occurs primarily south of New Jersey over to western Texas and north to the high plains states and one found more commonly in the Midwest and the eastern seaboard. Symptoms include severe headache, malaise, muscle pains, chills, and fever. Some symptoms can be life threatening. Treatment consists of a seven to ten day course of antibiotics and symptoms usually subside within 24 to 48 hours.

Be prepared and be cautious and have a safe summer – read the prevention section for these disease profiles to learn how to reduce your risk of getting Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

#### *WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEPATITIS*

The **National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID)**, has information on the five forms of viral hepatitis: A, B, C, D, and E on its website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/index.htm> . The NCID is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hepatitis is a disease of the liver that can lead to cirrhosis, a severe scarring of the liver, which can lead to its failure. The liver is responsible for helping the body fight infections and filters drugs and other poisons from the body. It also makes proteins that regulate blood clotting and produces bile, which aids in the absorption of fats and fat-soluble vitamins. It is not possible to survive without a liver.

Hepatitis is highly contagious. A recent outbreak of hepatitis A in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and North Carolina was associated with consumption of raw and undercooked green onions. There are vaccines for hepatitis A and B, but not one for hepatitis C, or the less prevalent forms D and E. Some forms of hepatitis are curable, but can be deadly if not treated. Hepatitis C is the most severe form of the disease. There are an estimated 3.9 million people who are or have been infected with hepatitis C, some of whom are unaware that they have the disease. Each year more than 8,000 to 10,000 people die from the disease. Hepatitis B is responsible for 5,000 deaths per year and one out of 250 people are carriers of Hepatitis B and can pass it on to others unknowingly.

Each of the profiles for hepatitis A, B, and C has fact sheets, maps showing the prevalence of hepatitis cases in the United States, information in Spanish, links to online educational materials (for professionals) and sources for ordering print copies. There are also online educational materials for consumers, such as how to live with chronic hepatitis C, information about vaccines for the A and B forms, and how to get tested. Hepatitis A, B, and C each has a section of frequently asked questions with information on the signs and symptoms of the disease, how it is transmitted, how the disease is diagnosed, what the test results mean, living with chronic hepatitis C, and information on current research. There are also links to other online source and online training materials for health professionals.

#### *NEWLY DESIGNED CDC WEB SITE*

If you haven't visited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website - <http://www.cdc.gov/> - plan on doing so soon. They recently made important design changes that make the site look more attractive and make it easier to find information.

New features include a left-hand margin with links to the site's major topics – health and safety, publications and products, and data and statistics. There are eleven health and safety topics including birth defects, disabilities, diseases and conditions, environmental health, and traveler's health. Each link leads to additional sub-topics. The publications and products topics include links to online documents, many of which are statistical fact sheets, and documents available for purchase from the CDC. The data and statistics section offers links to reports and documents from the National Center for Health Statistics, such as growth charts and tools for calculating Body Mass Index (BMI).



The new front page of the CDC site links to information on current health issues, such as SARS, Avian flu, Ricin, and influenza. There are also links to current initiatives and campaigns of the CDC and information about upcoming conferences and meetings. While much of the information on the CDC site is aimed at professionals, there is important information here for consumers who want to learn more about current health issues. The topic of Emergency Preparedness and Response is particularly timely with information on biological and chemical terrorism, radiation emergencies, and preparing for severe storms and power outages.

The entire site is available in Spanish.

#### *A VALUABLE NUTRITION INFORMATION RESOURCE*

The **Harvard School of Public Health Nutrition Source** website - <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/> - aims to "...provide timely information on diet and nutrition for clinicians, allied health professionals, and the public." The site is divided into thirteen topics including food pyramids, fats and cholesterol, carbohydrates, protein, healthy weight, exercise, and diabetes. The first section "Interpreting News on Diet" offers guidance on how to understand research related to nutrition and diet and discusses the different types of research studies. There is also information in this section on deciphering news stories on nutrition and diet.

Each section has background information on the topic with special sections devoted to current controversies and issues. The section on carbohydrates, for instance, talks about human nutrition. There is also information on the carbohydrates according to how fast and how far they are absorbed. A diet consisting of high glycemic foods is thought to be associated with the onset of type 2 diabetes. There is a link to a glycemic index for individual foods or generate a list of foods with a low glycemic score. This section also discusses popular low carbohydrate (Atkins, South Beach) and high carbohydrate (Ornish and Pritikin) diets, describing what's good and bad about each type.



The section on fiber discusses the importance of fiber in the diet and the association between fiber intake and colon cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, diverticular disease, and constipation. Advice is given on how to increase fiber intake and how many grams of fiber adults and children should get daily.

Some of the sections list medical journal articles and include a link to the articles citation and abstract in Medline. There is also a list of recommended nutrition books and a brief list of links to other nutrition information sources.

#### *TRANS FATS NOW LISTED ON FOOD LABELS*

Confused about the new labeling guidelines for trans fats? Or maybe you're not even certain what trans fats are. The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition** has information on its website that describes the health risks associated with consumption of trans fats - <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html>. The site also has tips on how to read the new food labels and combine the amount of trans fats, saturated fats, and cholesterol to make smart food choices.

Trans fat is made from liquid fats that are turned into solid fats such as shortening and hard margarines. Hydrogen is added to vegetable oil - a process called hydrogenation - to increase the shelf life of the food and to keep flavorings stable. Research has shown that trans fats, saturated fats, and cholesterol all raise low-density lipoproteins (LDL) in the blood and increase the risk for heart disease. Trans fats are often found in processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. These foods include crackers, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, many baked goods, some candies, and some margarines.

The site offers guidance on how to read the new food labels and to compute the total amount of fat in a serving. There is also a section of practical tips consumers can use every day to reduce their consumption of fats. Simple changes, such as replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats (corn oil, nuts, fish) and monounsaturated fats (canola and olive oil), selecting skinless chicken and lean cuts of beef, eating fewer calories, and eating more fish, go a long way to help reduce the amount of harmful fats in the diet.

Also included are links to other information on dietary fats, including a background paper on the new labels, a quiz to test your food label knowledge, and guidance on how to understand food labels.



## 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.

**Hysterectomy. Exploring Your Options.** Edward E. Wallach and Esther Eisenberg. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. 278 p. (ISBN 0-8018-7623-0), \$45.00

Despite continuing controversy over the need for hysterectomy operations, it is sometimes a needed surgery for certain medical conditions. The authors of this comprehensive guide consider hysterectomy, the second most common surgical procedure undergone by U.S. women, a “last-resort treatment option.” They emphasize that hysterectomy is a surgery that is “almost always elective rather than emergency surgery,” giving women time to give careful thought to their treatment options.

To help women considering hysterectomy during the decision process, Dr. Wallach, from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and Dr. Eisenberg, from Vanderbilt University, provide a thorough, understanding, clearly written description of the anatomy of the uterus, information about how uterine disorders are diagnosed and treated, and details about the surgical procedure and its aftermath. Anatomical illustrations and illustrative case histories enhance the explanations. The authors include specific questions to ask the surgeon before making a final decision about having a hysterectomy. A helpful chart outlines the reasons for undergoing a hysterectomy and appropriate types of surgery corresponding to the uterine disorder. They have chosen topics, e.g. details about preparing for a hysterectomy, that seem to anticipate a patient’s specific concerns. The concluding chapters discuss sexual and reproductive issues and hormone replacement therapy and its alternatives after hysterectomy.

This is an appropriate and helpful public library purchase.

**The Ups and Downs of Raising a Bipolar Child. A Survival Guide for Parents.** Judith Lederman and Candida Fink. Simon & Schuster, 2003. 308 p. (ISBN 0-7432-2940-1), \$14.00.

The agonizing time when Judith Lederman, his teachers, and pediatricians were baffled by her son’s alternately sensitive, aggressive, and extremely sad moods was painful and bewildering. The uncertainty and lack of a diagnosis continued even after her five-year-old’s attempted suicide during a family vacation at Mystic Seaport. His diagnosis with early-onset bipolar disorder (manic depression), the cause of his extreme and debilitating mood swings, and his subsequent treatment, brought some relief but also continued daily challenges.

Much of the detailed information about medications, coping with a child’s mood swings, selecting therapists, summer camps, and schools, in this realistic, helpful guide is written from the viewpoint of a parent who has gleaned the information through experience. However, each chapter concludes with “Notes from the Couch,” presenting the viewpoint of co-author, child psychiatrist Candida Fink.

Also included is advice on such sensitive topics as whom to tell about your child’s diagnosis, guidance for participation in clinical trials, crisis planning, understanding medication side effects, techniques for discipline, the effects on personal relationships and marriage, and coping with insensitive neighbors and parents. There are specific recommendations for seeking legal advice, and serving as your child’s education advocate.

Additional information describing bipolar disorder, recommendations for mood-stabilizing foods, and links to additional websites are provided at the authors’ website - <http://www.parentingbipolars.com/index.htm>.

**The complete guide to mental health for women.** Lauren Slater, Jessica Henderson Daniel, Amy Elizabeth Banks. Beacon Press, 2003. 403 p. (ISBN 0-8070-2924-6 hardcover)(ISBN 0-8070-2925-4 paperback), \$24.95 paperback.

Relationships, sexuality, menopause, and choosing childlessness are among the topics discussed by more than fifty expert contributors to this comprehensive, readable overview of women’s mental health. In addition, there are brief chapters on mental disorders and concerns such as schizophrenia, aging, body image, eating disorders, and addictions. These sections reflect the outlook of the individual authors and of a diverse range of women’s economic and health circumstances.

An extensive section of the book discusses such treatments as antidepressant medications, cognitive behavioral therapy, antianxiety medications and others. Each of the chapters on medications is written by a physician. One chapter focuses on complementary treatments for anxiety and depression, with details on their risks and benefits. Included in the section on "Getting Help" is information on current psychotherapeutic therapies, including controversial ones such as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).

The book concludes with suggestions for additional reading, arranged by chapter and descriptions of the authors' backgrounds.

## UCHC RECENT ACQUISITIONS

**Patient Drug Facts. For Patients Who Want to Know More.** Facts and Comparisons. Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc., 2004. 1774 p. (ISBN 1-57439-166-6), \$20.95. (UCHC Reference Collection – not available for loan)

Intended as a resource guide for health professionals educating patients about medications they are prescribing, this comprehensive collection of detailed medication descriptions is a useful and clearly written source for public library medical reference collections. More technical and in depth than the **USPDI: United States Pharmacopeia dispensing information volume 2** for the patient, yet much more consumer-oriented than **USPDI: United States Pharmacopeia dispensing information volume 1 for the Health Professional**, or **Mosby's Drug Consult**, it fills an information gap. The drug information is adapted from **Professional's Guide to Patient Drug Facts**, a loose-leaf medication reference service for pharmacists and physicians, updated monthly.

Each two to three page medication article lists generic names, discusses medication side effects, purposes of the drug, food and drug interactions, and specific guidelines for its use. Also included is a combined index for generic and brand name drugs, a chart of normal laboratory values for medical tests, recommendations for a home medicine cabinet, a list of FDA pregnancy risk categories, a directory of oral medications that should not be crushed, and an extensive listing of drug names that sound very much alike, posing a potential hazard if they are confused.

An appropriate and helpful public library purchase.



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