

Summer 2005

Healthnet News v.20:no.2 Summer 2005

Judith S. Kronick

University of Connecticut School of Medicine and Dentistry

Alberta Richetelle

University of Connecticut School of Medicine and Dentistry

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Recommended Citation

Kronick, Judith S. and Richetelle, Alberta, "Healthnet News v.20:no.2 Summer 2005" (2005). *Articles - Patient Care*. 70.
http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/pcare_articles/70

HEALTHNET NEWS

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

Volume XX Number 2

Summer 2005

UPDATE

THREE FALL WORKSHOPS TO BE OFFERED BY HEALTHNET

Healthnet is offering three free workshops this fall for librarians. A **Medical Reference Tools and Techniques** workshop will be held on **Tuesday, October 18** at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington. This is a basic introductory program for public librarians who answer consumer health questions from library users – questions that have to do with the person's personal health, or the health of a family member or friend. The workshop will cover specific techniques for answering different types of consumer health questions, a review of important medical books and Internet websites, and procedures for referring consumer health questions to Healthnet. Also, there will be a tour of our newly renovated library. For more information go to <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/regisref05.pdf>. Use the form to register for the program. Directions to the Health Center and the meeting room and information about parking arrangements will be sent once we receive your registration form.



“**What’s That Smell: Consumer Information on Toxicology, Environmental Health, and Chemicals**” will be held on Thursday, **October 27** at the Middletown Library Service Center. This free hands on training program is for reference librarians who may be confronted with consumer questions related to environmental health, hazardous substances, and toxicology. Go to <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/regisenviro05.pdf> for more information and use the form to register for the class. Mail or fax the form before the registration deadline of October 20th.

Healthnet is also offering another **Healthy Websites** program, which will be held on **Wednesday, November 2nd** at the Middletown Library Service Center. This program will demonstrate some of the best online resources to use to answer specific kinds of consumer health questions. It will also teach you how to evaluate websites to make sure the information you find is of high quality, accurate, and authoritative. More information about this program is available at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/regishw05.pdf>. Use this form to register for the class. Mail or fax the form before the registration deadline of October 27.

A REMEDY FOR YOUR WEB SITE

Have you included a list of recommended websites on your library's web page to assist library users in their Internet searching? Have you organized the websites by category---travel, government, homework help, gardening, etc.? If "health" is one of your featured categories, you are welcome to save yourself the time and effort of evaluating and selecting numerous medical websites for your home page by linking your "health" category directly to the Healthnet website at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>.

Healthnet staff is constantly searching for consumer health websites, evaluating them, and determining if they warrant placement on Healthnet's online list of recommended Consumer Health Resources on the Internet. Healthnet provides a ready-made medical website list for your library's home page.

But, link to the entire Healthnet website at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>, not to only one portion of it, so that you--and your library users--have access not only to the Consumer Health Resources on the Internet list, but also to a wealth of other online resource guides (Navigating the Health Care System, Mental Health, Dental Care, Growing Older, etc.), collection development guides, and health research tips on the Healthnet home page.



Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network

Lyman Maynard Stowe Library ♦ University of Connecticut Health Center

PO Box 4003 ♦ Farmington CT 06034-4003

Telephone: 860/679-4055 ♦ email : richetelle@nso.uhc.edu

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

HEALTHNET WEBSITE TO BE REDISIGNED

We are currently developing a new design for the Healthnet homepage to bring its look out of the 1980's and into the 21st century. The new design will be more colorful, easier to navigate, and ADA compliant. We will also be redesigning all of the features on the website. We will be adding the new design incrementally to the various sections of our website and we hope to have the entire site completed in a few months.

NETNEWS

PARENTING WEBSITES YOU CAN TRUST

A joint effort of Tufts University's Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development and librarians of the University's Tisch Library, the **Tufts University Child and Family Web Guide** at <http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/> is a comprehensive, informative, evaluative online directory of hundreds of websites of special interest to parents of children and adolescents and to child development professionals.

Websites are organized by five major categories: family/parenting, education/learning, typical development, health/mental health, and resources/recreation. All categories, except resources/recreation, include websites that focus on child development research.

Websites are also arranged by age groups, from infancy through adolescence. In addition, there are Ask an Expert and Research News features. The index search feature includes many more subtopics such as anger management, anorexia, healthy eating, gifted children, speech/language disorders, and multicultural education. There is a separate listing of "special topics" such as war and terrorism, Down syndrome, health hazards, and autism/asperger syndrome as well as an alphabetical list of all websites included.

Each website included in the **Web Guide** has been evaluated by graduate students and child development professors at Tufts University on the basis of authority, content, stability, and ease of use. The websites are assigned an overall rating (with corresponding stars) from excellent to fair and individual ratings for each of the four evaluative categories. Most websites on the Web Guide have excellent or very good ratings.

For each website, there is a review and a hyperlink to the website's home page. Many website listings also include a link to the most relevant area of the website. Readers can respond online with their comments about individual websites. If readers permit, their comments will be posted in the future on the website. There is also an online form for recommending a website for consideration.

HELPFUL HANDBOOKS FOR NEW PARENTS



The second of two attractive, informative, colorful, spiral-bound booklets for parents has recently been published by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc., a nonprofit charitable organization that is a subsidiary of the Children's Fund of Connecticut, Inc. The organization focuses its efforts on making physical and mental health care more widely available to Connecticut children, especially to those in low income families. It works in partnership with Yale University and the University of Connecticut.

Both booklets, entitled Caring for Connecticut's Children, A Handbook for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children, are available online at the organization's website (<http://www.chdi.org/>) though each is more than one hundred pages in length. Their quite specific parenting guidelines are based on child development research. The information is brief, nontechnical, and often appealingly arranged in chart form in contrasting colors.

Volume One, subtitled Promoting Health and Safety, is published online in both English and Spanish. It is no longer available in print form. It discusses sleep habits of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, nutrition, oral health, safety, and common health problems, as well as separation anxiety, toilet training, temper tantrums, and emotional trauma.

The newer booklet, Volume Two, subtitled Promoting Healthy Child Development, is available in print form as well as online. It explains the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. A Spanish translation of Volume Two is planned for publication in October.

Both booklets contain a variety of information directed especially to new, inexperienced parents. The information ranges from basic (“Be sure to test the formula temperature before giving it to the baby.” p. 23, volume 1) to less well-known facts (“Never use opened formula that has been sitting at room temperature for more than one hour. Throw away bottles of formula or breast milk that haven’t been used within 48 hours, even if they have been refrigerated.” p. 23, volume 1). Other helpful hints are a formula for a cleaning solution for toys recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, suggestions about giving understandable instructions to toddlers and effectively correcting and enriching a young child’s speech, a recipe for making crayons, and ideas for reading to preschoolers (including “talk to your local librarian”).

Each booklet includes references to publications that “helped shape the [booklets’] content,” a glossary, and a directory of Connecticut and national resources for parents and caregivers.

The print English version of Volume Two can be requested by phone at 860/679-1519. There are eight distribution locations throughout the state where individuals and organization representatives can pick up copies. An online order form can be downloaded and used to request that copies be sent by mail. There is a shipping and handling fee for booklets that are mailed that ranges from \$3. for one copy to \$25. for fifty handbooks.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEDICATIONS

A new Connecticut web site, Partnership for Prescription Assistance, available on the Internet at <http://www.pparxct.org/>, offers step-by-step guidance, in English and Spanish, to Connecticut residents who want to determine if they are eligible for potentially more than 475 national, financial assistance programs for free or reduced-cost prescription medications. Information on eligibility is also available by calling a toll-free phone number, **888-477-2669**, between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., or completing an online email form.



The website is intended to consolidate eligibility information on medication financial aid for uninsured, low-income Connecticut residents. It incorporates a ten question, step-by-step online form. The user also needs to specify the brand names of the medications she currently uses.

Forty-eight pharmaceutical companies currently include their financial assistance programs on the web site. The companies decide which of the medications they manufacture to include in financial assistance programs. Eligibility criteria are also determined by the drug companies. Criteria might include household size, income, financial assets, U.S. citizenship status, and veteran status. Connecticut residents with Medicare coverage and other drug assistance program participation may still qualify for additional programs included on the website.

After eligibility is determined online for specific programs, it is the responsibility of the patient, with the assistance and authorization of her physician, to apply directly to the specific programs. Some application forms are available online.

Medications may be sent directly to the patient’s home or to the doctor’s office. Instead of mailing medications directly, some companies send the patient a pharmacy card for free or reduced-cost drugs.

An online Resources list includes hyperlinks to additional financial assistance programs.

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.

Seven Steps to Stop a Heart Attack . Bob Arnot. Simon and Schuster, 2005. 276 p. (0-7432-2557-0) \$25.00 .

In his work as an NBC medical news correspondent and author of consumer-friendly medical advice books (**The Best Medicine, The Breast Cancer Prevention Diet**, etc.), Dr. Bob Arnot is known as a physician who can translate complex medical information into understandable language. This timely book, written specifically for the health consumer, focuses on a topic of great personal importance to him. His father, a Harvard-educated physician, died suddenly of a preventable heart attack, and his mother suffered from near fatal congestive heart failure.

The focal point of the book is prevention of heart attack, the “number one cause of death in America,” an approach Dr. Arnot has a firm and passionate belief in. He is concerned that physicians and hospitals are missing opportunities to help patients avoid heart attacks by failing to recommend important screening tests, life style changes such as exercise, healthy diet, and smoking cessation, as well as medications to lower cholesterol and high blood pressure. He is also concerned that patients are not being guided to available treatments that can be lifesaving.

Directed to patients (and potential patients) and their families, in clear language and enhanced by brief, hypothetical case histories, this consumer guide includes specific information about warning signs of a heart attack, appropriate action in the event of a family member’s heart attack, tests that determine risk and causes, medications to prevent and treat heart disease, and descriptions of surgery and medical procedures to treat heart attacks. The text incorporates the professional advice of heart disease physicians whom Dr. Arnot names and quotes.

This book does not provide a panacea for determining which tests and procedures to undergo and which medications to take. It certainly does, however, provide background information on risks and benefits of many diagnostic and treatment options.

Talking to Anxiety. Simple Ways to Support Someone in Your Life Who Suffers from Anxiety. Claudia J. Strauss. New American Library, 2004. 245 p. (0-451-21209-6) \$12.95 .

When a person suffers from an anxiety disorder, the people around them are affected as well. When worry and fearfulness prevent a family member or friend from participating in normal daily activities or experiencing joy, relatives usually want desperately to help. But how can you help when you lack experience dealing with anxiety disorder and your relative shows resistance to your involvement?

Claudia J. Strauss, communication consultant and educator, has adapted the practical, compassionate style of two similar guides she has written for family members, **Talking to Depression** and **Talking to Alzheimer’s**, to the needs of anxiety disorders.

She describes anxiety disorders in general and specific types such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and phobias.

She cautions readers to establish a balance between conveying a positive, helpful attitude toward the person in pain and becoming overly emotionally involved. She helps readers gain insight by offering glimpses from the experiences of individuals who have had anxiety disorders so readers can see “through their eyes...what anxiety feels like.” Her book gives specific suggestions about “Words that hurt: what not to say” and “Words that help: What to say” and the roles of body language and silence. She discusses the impact on children and what to say to them about a family member’s anxiety as well as their own.

The book concludes with a resource guide to books for adults and children experiencing anxiety, and organizations to contact for support and information.

The Healthy Body Handbook. A Total Guide to the Prevention and Treatment of Sports Injuries. David C. Saidoff and Stuart C. Apfel. Demos, 2005. 336 p. (ISBN 1-932603-04-2 -9 paperback), \$24.95.



Here is help for the injured weekend athlete and others who experience musculoskeletal injuries and disorders through less strenuous activities (...perhaps carpal tunnel syndrome following long days at the computer.) A physician and a physical therapist have combined efforts to explain, in detail understandable to the layperson, frequently encountered conditions such as rotator cuff disorder, fibromyalgia, achilles tendon injury, whiplash, and shoulder separation.

The book begins with an explanation of the musculoskeletal system: the structure of bones, function of nerves, types of joints, descriptions of ligaments and tendons, and muscle balance. The text describes the function of pain, types of pain and its pathways. A chapter on pain treatments includes acupuncture, massage, and visualization, as well as specific types of medication. For each of the more than thirty conditions discussed in detail, there is information about the disorder’s signs and symptoms, contributing factors, similar conditions that need to be ruled out, treatment, and prevention. Each condition is introduced with a brief “real life” case history.

The text is enhanced by clear diagrams and sketches gleaned from medical and physical therapy texts.

A Woman's Guide to Menopause and Perimenopause. Mary Jane Minkin and Carol V. Wright. Yale University Press, 2005. 413 p. (ISBN 0-300-10435-9 paperback), \$18.00.

Do fertility drugs increase the risk for ovarian cancer? Who should be tested for osteoporosis? How long should one continue taking tamoxifen? Can headaches be a symptom of menopause? In this supportive and helpful guide, Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Yale University School of Medicine and co-author Dr. Carol V. Wright provide clearly worded, straightforward answers to these questions and many other concerns of women approaching or experiencing menopause. The text is enriched by brief case histories and by Dr. Minkin's experiences treating women with related problems in her medical practice.

The book includes an explanation of how menopause occurs, its symptoms and diagnosis, managing symptoms, risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy, hysterectomy and other surgeries, cancer of the reproductive organs, osteoporosis, and cardiac health. A chapter is devoted to selecting and communicating with your doctor. Dr. Minkin explains how she determines which primary care physician to recommend to a patient based on the patient's concerns, needs, and personality. A chapter emphasizes specific recommendations for maintaining a healthy lifestyle—including diet, exercise, calcium intake, and cholesterol control.

A number of helpful illustrations, charts, and tables are included within the text. The book concludes with a glossary of medical terms and a resource guide to organizations, books, and websites.

Our Bodies, Ourselves. A New Edition for a New Era. The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 2005. 832 p. (ISBN 0-7432-5611-5 paperback). \$24.95.



The 2005 edition of this classic, feminist, pro-active guide to women's health is its first complete revision in ten years. There have been many changes in women's health care since the book's original publication in 1970. In addition, women have become increasingly assertive participants in U.S. society. These changes are reflected in the new edition. Included are detailed chapters on gender identity, sexual orientation, safe sex, sexuality, fertility, childbirth, contraception, and negotiating the health care system, as well as updated information about complementary medicine, the politics of women's health, and aging.

The book's goal is to support prevention of health problems through a healthy lifestyle rather than promoting the solution of medical problems with surgery and medication. It encourages a positive body image, whether or not one fits the media's image of feminine beauty.

In addition to information on a wide array of health and life stage topics, the book incorporates the first hand experiences of women in their own words, reflecting a more diverse population than the group who voiced their concerns and experiences in the first edition.

The companion website at <http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/> includes a table of contents, excerpts from the book, supplementary materials, and hyperlinks to websites with additional information and resources. Website information related to specific sections of the book can be accessed online by typing the title of the website area or a corresponding code within the text.

The chapter on "Navigating the Health Care System" incorporates information on evaluating health information found on the Internet, rights of patients, barriers to adequate health care such as high costs and cultural differences, strategies for productive doctor visits, and selecting a health care provider.

The book concludes with a glossary and a list of resources for further information arranged by chapter.

The Breast Cancer Book. Ruth H. Grobstein. Yale University Press, 2005. 188 p. (0-300-10413-8 pbk) \$15.95 .

Living Through Breast Cancer. Carolyn M. Kaelin with Francesca Coltrera. McGraw-Hill, 2005. 370 p. (0-07-144463-7) \$22.95 .

Whom do newly diagnosed patients rely on for extensive, in depth, authoritative background information on diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer? Hopefully, a skilled, experienced physician who specializes in breast cancer treatment and demonstrates special compassion to patients.

In these supportive, informative books both Dr. Grobstein, head of Radiation Oncology at the Scripps Clinic in California and Dr. Kaelin, director of the Comprehensive Breast Health Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School, offer extensive, detailed background information about current, recommended therapies in understandable, patient-friendly language. Dr. Kaelin, who experienced breast cancer while in her early forties, incorporates some of her patient experiences into her discussion of side effects of treatment.

A publication of the Yale University Press Health and Wellness series, **The Breast Cancer Book**, which focuses on diagnostic procedures and therapies, would be a good choice for a new patient in the beginning stages of making decisions about her treatment. The author discusses mammograms and breast exams, the pathologist's report (and includes a sample report), obtaining second opinions, breast cancer staging, radiation therapy, systemic therapy (encompassing chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, and biological therapy) and the physical and emotional after effects of treatment.

Dr. Grobstein's book is enhanced by a resource guide to organizations and informational websites and a state-by-state list of National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Centers. Decision trees, which use a flow chart format for determining appropriate treatment steps, are incorporated into the text and reprinted at the end of the book. Warning to librarians: These are on perforated pages that readers are encouraged to "tear...out for easy reference."

Living Through Breast Cancer incorporates many details and recommendations about the day-to-day experience of undergoing breast cancer therapy. In addition to extensive background information on specific therapies, this guide, written to help patients obtain "the best care while preserving [their]..self-image," devotes half of the book to discussions of breast appearance after surgery, reconstructive surgery, compensating for hair loss, as well as skin care, exercise, nutrition, and sexuality after surgery. There is a resource guide to cancer treatment facilities and organizations, and products for cancer patients.

Both books convey an attitude toward breast cancer that Dr. Grobstein expresses, "Always remember, you are not a statistic."



*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,
please call 860/679-4055; e-mail address :richetelle@nso.uchc.edu*

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ISSN: 1526-8624