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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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HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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UPDATE

CONNECTICUT GOLOCAL PROJECT

The University of Connecticut Health Center Library is applying to the National Library of Medicine to receive approval to develop a Connecticut GoLocal database that will be part of MedlinePlus.

The GoLocal links on MedlinePlus's health topics pages take you to information about health services in local geographic areas, including hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, support groups, health screening providers and many others. You can link directly from each MedlinePlus health topic to services related to that particular topic.

To see what this actually looks like, go to MedlinePlus at <http://medlineplus.gov>, type in the topic "Breast cancer". This will lead you to a listing on health topics related to "Breast cancer". Select the very first link which will bring you to the main breast cancer topic page. Notice on the right hand side of the page there is a link to GoLocal resources. Select "Massachusetts" (they've been live for over a year). This will bring you to a map of the state divided up by counties. Select "Hampden" county which will bring up a list of links to local services such as Cancer Clinics, Oncologists, Support Groups, etc. Connecticut's GoLocal will look like this only with Connecticut resources listed.

Once approved, it will take about one year to identify and enter all of the Connecticut resources related to the main topics in the MedlinePlus database. As soon as Connecticut GoLocal is up and running on MedlinePlus, we'll be traveling around the state to publicize the database.

We may be calling on you to help us identify community resources in your area and to help us publicize Connecticut GoLocal. We'll keep you posted on our progress to let you know how close we are to completion.

THE POISON CONTROL CENTER...AVAILABLE FOR EMERGENCIES 24/7

No matter what the time of day or night, if you are worried about a possible poisoning, you can contact the Connecticut Poison Control Center at **1-800-222-1222** for confidential advice from a nurse, pharmacist, physician, or other health professional. A statewide, 24-hour emergency service for Connecticut residents concerned about a family member or friend's possible exposure to poison, the Connecticut Poison Control Center will provide immediate recommendations for home care or transfer to a hospital for treatment.

In addition, the Connecticut Poison Control Center's website at <http://poisoncontrol.uhc.edu/offers> advice for emergency situations, medication safety tips, recommendations about "poison-proofing" a home, information about exposure to pesticides, toxic gases, poisonous plants, alcohol, and drugs of abuse.

Certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers, the Connecticut Poison Control Center has provided round-the-clock emergency assistance to Connecticut residents for more than fifty years. It is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington.

1-800-222-1222 is an important emergency phone number whether you or your library users are at home in Connecticut, vacationing on the coast of Maine, or visiting New York City. It is a national phone number that will connect callers to the Poison Control Center in the state from which they are calling.



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>

PROFESSIONAL READING

TOP CONSUMER HEALTH BOOKS FOR 2006

Library Journal has named the best consumer health books for 2006. Barbara Bibel, reference librarian at the Oakland (CA) Public Library, selected the twenty-three titles from among the numerous consumer health books published in 2006. The topics include weight loss surgery, treatment for depression, health care costs, celiac disease, end of life issues, nutrition and the food industry, stroke prevention, pregnancy, menopause, the drug industry, abortion, alternative medicine, and recovery after cancer treatment.

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, authors of **Our Bodies, Ourselves**, have published a book about menopause with a similar proactive approach and format in **Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause**. Marion Nestle, nutrition professor at New York University, combines an absorbing overview of the distribution and marketing techniques of the U.S. food industry with recommendations for healthy food choices. Her book, **What to Eat**, is described in the Summer 2006 issue of Healthnet News at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/summer06.pdf>.

Bibel B. Best Consumer Health Books of 2006. **Library Journal** 2007 May 1;132(8):48-52.

NEW CONSUMER HEALTH MAGAZINE

MedlinePlus, the comprehensive, consumer-friendly health information website produced by the National Library of Medicine, online at <http://medlineplus.gov/>, now publishes a quarterly consumer health magazine, NIH MedlinePlus Magazine, available on its website at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine.html> and as a free, print subscription.

The Spring 2007 issue includes information about six common cancers with background information and research updates, effects and treatment of drug and alcohol addiction, details about a woman physician who founded a medical treatment program for the homeless in Washington, D.C., current research studies of fibroid tumors in women, and a television personality's promotion of the Spanish language version of MedlinePlus.

The colorful articles are brief, about two pages long, and easy-to-read. Most are based on information from The National Institutes of Health, the federal government's medical research organization. The National Library of Medicine is a component of this agency.

To request a free print subscription, print and mail the form that can be found at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine.html>. You can also join the Friends of the National Library of Medicine using the same form.

NETNEWS

QUICKER DRUG APPROVALS?

Before a drug is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the drug manufacturer must carry out a succession of successful research studies that are evaluated by the FDA after completion. Each phase of these clinical research trials moves the drug closer to potential approval and availability to ailing patients. Every research study must meet specific criteria and may only enroll subjects who meet the study's requirements. This lengthy research process determines if a drug is safe and effective. According to an article on the American Cancer Society website, "Clinical Trials: What You Need to Know" at http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/ETO_6.asp, eight years may pass from the initial phase of research using human subjects until a drug's approval for sale.



In an effort to reduce the duration of the approval process, the National Cancer Institute has initiated an Experimental Therapeutics program (NExT). In this new program, brief Phase 0 trials, in which patients encounter less toxicity, are conducted before Phase I trials. Phase 0 trials evaluate the process of drug absorption and transport through the body as well as how the drug impacts the body over an extended time period. Phase 0 trials can be conducted with smaller groups of patients, more quickly, using lower drug doses, and thereby eliminate further testing of drugs that show little promise. Lower doses in Phase 0 trials reduce the risk of harm to human subjects, but also reduce the chance of therapeutic benefit. Using this new method, the process may be shortened by six to twelve months. The first Phase 0 trial results were reported in early June 2007 at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

SAFER DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS?

Dietary supplements such as calcium and folic acid have proven health benefits. And they are approved and evaluated for safety by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration before manufacturers are allowed to sell them...right?? Actually dietary supplements are not required to pass any evaluation by the FDA before they are marketed to the public. Under the provisions of the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA), they are controlled by the FDA in the same way foods are. Although lengthy evaluations are required for new medications, they are not required for dietary supplements. After they have been sold to the public, the FDA does investigate dietary supplements that have been found to be unsafe.



Under a new “final rule” governing “current good manufacturing practices,” issued by the FDA in June 2007 and described in an online Fact Sheet at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/dscgmps6.html>, the FDA identifies specific manufacturing standards for dietary supplements. Manufacturers will be required to evaluate the contents and safety of their products. Manufacturers, not the FDA, are responsible for determining that supplements contain the ingredients their labels claim and that the product is not contaminated. Manufacturers do not have to comply immediately. The requirement will be phased in through 2010. In extreme cases of contamination, the FDA will seize products.

The new “final rule” marks a change in FDA procedure, but dietary supplements will still not be subjected to evaluation by the FDA before they are sold to the public.

WHEN A PARENT HAS CANCER

The stress a child feels when a parent or sibling is undergoing treatment for cancer may not be evident to the adults in her life. Children, especially teenagers, may not express the anxiety, fear, and depression that they experience during this difficult time for their family. Several cancer websites offer information on helping children when a family member has cancer and some discuss specific issues concerning when a parent has cancer.

“How to talk to your children,” an article on the website of the **Y-Me National Breast Cancer Organization** at http://www.y-me.org/coping/relationships/how_to_talk_to_children.php discusses the specific concerns and understanding of children in various age groups. For children below two years of age, “their biggest concern comes from the disruption of their daily routine.” Slightly older children may fear that they are the cause of their parent’s cancer, associating its onset with their misbehavior at school, for example. This brief article for parents is available online in six languages, in addition to English.

“When Someone in Your Family Has Cancer,” an online booklet on the website of the **National Cancer Institute** at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/when-someone-in-your-family/page1>, is addressed to children. It describes how cancer affects the entire family, dispels myths such as the belief that cancer is inevitably fatal and that it is contagious, and briefly discusses cancer treatment. A reassuring section, “what it’s like for you,” talks about feelings of fear, guilt, anger, neglect, and loneliness that may be experienced by children whose family members have cancer.

The **American Cancer Society** has several articles that offer information on when a family member has cancer. Links to these articles can be found at http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/CRI_2_6x_Children_and_Cancer.asp. (scroll down the page). Topics of the articles include dealing with diagnosis and treatment, what to do when a parent’s illness is terminal, understanding psychological support services, and bereavement information for children and parents.

The “Family Connections” area of the **Dana-Farber Cancer Institute** of Boston website - <http://www.dana-farber.org/familyconnections> - discusses age-appropriate ways to explain a parent’s treatment to a child, identifies possible signs of stress in a child whose parent is ill, includes a glossary of medical terms, and offers guidance in sharing information with a child’s teachers.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION UPDATES.FOR CONSUMERS

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**, the federal agency that regulates the distribution of new medications, medical devices, and food additives, and monitors the safety of food, cosmetics, and animal feed and medications, has added a consumer-friendly page to its website at <http://www.fda.gov/consumer>. The new webpage, “Consumer Health Information for You and Your Family,” presents monthly updates on subjects such as contaminated toothpaste from China, a new diabetes glucose monitoring device, pet food recalls, and a contact lens solution recall.

The webpage includes featured topics such as the Nutrition Facts Label and its interpretation, a basic comparison of generic and brand drugs, and background information on the elimination of the preservative thimerosal in vaccines. Among the medical products and procedures explained are LASIK eye surgery, breast implants, and contact lenses. There are links to brief, consumer publications about Eating for a Healthy Heart, How to Give Medicine to a Child, Clinical Trials of Medical Treatments, and Keeping Your Food Safe. Many of the publications are in Spanish as well as English. An alphabetical index links to individual FDA consumer publications. There are also links to other federal government health information websites.

On the webpage, there is an opportunity to register for a free, monthly FDA consumer health e-newsletter. The e-newsletter replaces the agency's print journal, FDA Consumer.

This webpage is not, however, the place to search for detailed, complex FDA background information on drug approvals, press releases about food and drug recalls, licensing actions, or reports on biologic product shortages. For this information, consumers and librarians will need to continue to search the FDA's general website at <http://www.fda.gov/default.htm>.

RATING HOSPITALS ON HEART ATTACK CARE

Library users can ask tough questions.



If they ask about the quality of hospitals in Connecticut and want comparisons among hospitals in the state, it can be very difficult to find this information. Precise statistics comparing hospitals is not easily available to the public. But when they request information about hospitals in Connecticut or other U.S. states, there is now an additional source of information to recommend.

Based on a study of nearly 5,000 U.S. hospitals, a new report has been published online by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the Department of Health and Human Services. The information about hospital death (mortality) rates for patients experiencing heart attacks and heart failure appears on the **Hospital Compare** website at <http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov/> along with other qualitative measures of individual hospitals' treatment of patients with heart attacks, heart failure, pneumonia, and surgical infection prevention.

For the hospitals selected, by location or hospital name, you can learn if the hospital mortality rate is "Better than the U.S. National Rate," "No different than the U.S. National Rate," or "Worse than the U.S. National Rate." Numerical death rates for individual hospitals are not shown. The rating is based on death rate information from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006. Deaths that occurred within thirty days after discharge from the hospital are included as well as deaths that occurred during the hospital stay. Adjustments were made to reflect how ill a patient was before hospital admission and to take into account differences in death rates that may occur because of chance.

Of the thirty-one hospitals in Connecticut, two were designated "Better than the U.S. National Rate," twenty-nine were designated "No different than the U.S. National Rate," and none were described as "Worse than the U.S. National Rate" in comparing mortality rates from heart attacks. For the thirty-two Connecticut hospitals that treat heart failure, none were designated "Better than the U.S. National Rate." All were classified "No different than the U.S. National Rate." Addition of mortality rates statistics on pneumonia patients is planned for next year.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

AfterShock: What to Do When the Doctor Gives You—or Someone You Love—a Devastating Diagnosis. Jessie Gruman. Walker and Company, 2007. 276 p. (ISBN 0-8027-1502-8). \$16.95.

The shock of unexpectedly receiving a serious diagnosis from your doctor can make a patient feel immobilized—unable to make reasoned decisions about her own care or gather background information that can help in the decision-making process. Having experienced the trauma of being diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses four times, social psychologist

Dr. Jessie Gruman has based this understanding, informative guide on her experiences and the experiences of the more than two hundred patients she interviewed. Dr. Gruman is founder and president of the Center for the Advancement of Health, <http://www.cfah.org/>, an independent policy institute that focuses on helping patients and health professionals utilize valid scientific information in making health decisions.

This realistic, sensitive book provides guidance in gathering and evaluating background information, seeking help from friends and family members, locating appropriate doctors, managing health care expenses, and finding emotional support. It deals with the practical aspects of serious illness, e.g. effective ways to make an appointment with a busy specialist, involving young children, adolescents, and elderly parents, negotiating medical leave with an employer.

The accompanying website, <http://www.aftershockbook.com/>, updates the appendices that provide detailed information about information resources, books related to family and illness, searching for doctors and hospitals, medical privacy, financial assistance, participating in clinical trials, and seeking a second opinion.

Bipolar Kids. Helping your child find calm in the mood storm. Rosalie Greenberg. Da Capo Press, 2007. 294 p. (ISBN 0-7382-1080-3), \$26.00.

The challenges of parenting a child with bipolar disorder (manic depression) occur every day and often without warning. Daily life can be demanding, especially when a child needs to interact with others or experience a crowded setting... at a grocery store, birthday party, or family get-together. Relatives, friends, and strangers may assume a child's outbursts, rapid mood swings, and lack of cooperation are the result of poor parenting and proceed to advise the parent about a better, more effective approach. Embarrassing? Discouraging? Exhausting? Yes, yes, and ... yes.

Dr. Rosalie Greenberg, a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist and assistant professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, with more than twenty-five years experience working with bipolar children, provides a realistic, compassionate guide for parents who face these unique challenges daily.

Since children exhibit bipolar disorder differently than adults, it is often undiagnosed in youngsters. Irritability, anger, and aggressiveness may replace the upbeat manic mood that adults display. Writing in understanding, conversational language, Dr. Greenberg discusses medications, medical conditions that often accompany bipolar disorder, types of therapy, details about initial psychiatric interviews, hospitalization, and some real life solutions.

The book is enhanced by reference notes to statements in the text, and a resource list of organizations, websites, and children's books. Additional biographical information about Dr. Greenberg is available on her website at <http://www.rosaliegreenbergmd.com/aboutdrgreenberg.html>.

Other books about childhood bipolar disorder are described in Healthnet's online guide "Mental Health Resources" at <http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/mentresource.html>.

The Comfort of Home for Stroke. A Guide for Caregivers. Maria M. Meyer, Paula Derr, and Jon Caswell. CareTrust Publications, 2007. 338 p. (ISBN 0-9664767-8-6), \$24.95.

When an individual is suddenly thrust into the role of caregiver for a parent or spouse, life's focus changes. The needs of the family member predominate. Long-term goals and leisure plans are often subsumed by the day-to-day needs of the newly dependent relative. Practical details of caregiving—bathing, feeding, medication schedules—become very important and often overwhelming.

The Comfort of Home for Stroke, one of a series of books providing day-to-day guidance for caregivers, explains these details to inexperienced, sometimes exhausted caregivers in an easy-to-read, basic style, enhanced by line drawings. Written by an experienced caregiver, a nurse, and the editor of *Stroke Connecticut Magazine* the book is a guide to the causes of stroke and its effects on stroke survivors, preparing a home for safe caregiving, communicating effectively with health professionals, hiring in-home help, paying for care, and providing day-to-day care. There is detailed, step-by-step instruction on medical equipment and mobility aids, home modifications, avoiding caregiver burnout, assistance with bathing, bed making, preventing pressure sores, helping a family member transfer from a wheelchair to a car, and preparing a plan of care.

In addition to a general guide for caregivers in Spanish and English, CareTrust Publications has published similar guides for caregivers of family members with multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome. Tony Attwood. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007. 397 p. (ISBN 1-84310-495-4), \$29.95.

Dr. Tony Attwood's new guide to Asperger's Syndrome ends on an upbeat note. Dr. Attwood relates a hypothetical anecdote about the future success of an engineer diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome as a child. Still exhibiting personal characteristics of a focused scientist who continues to have difficulties with informal social situations and conversations, team work, and sudden job routine changes, nonetheless "Jack" manages to achieve success at work, the respect of his employer, and a lasting relationship with a compassionate woman.

This ending may be especially heartening to parents of children diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, part of the autism spectrum, who have concerns about their children's difficulties socializing with other children, inability to "read" social cues, problems with sensory over stimulation, difficulties adapting to a school setting, and extreme focus on a specific topic or field of study.

The book is a guide to greater understanding of Asperger's syndrome for parents, teachers, employers, and individuals with Asperger's syndrome. An Australian clinical psychologist who specializes in Asperger's syndrome, Dr. Attwood uses case histories from his wide-ranging experience treating more than two thousand individuals with Asperger's syndrome to provide detailed information about the characteristics of Asperger's syndrome, examples of therapies, and special strategies parents can use to encourage socially appropriate behavior.

Attwood displays a positive attitude toward the patients he describes. He writes: "I usually say to the child, 'Congratulations, you have Asperger's syndrome,' and explain that this means he or she is not mad, bad or defective, but has a different way of thinking." Dr. Attwood states that he hopes this guide will help an individual with Asperger's syndrome understand the source of her behavioral and social differences from others and not "feel dejected or rejected." Dr. Attwood's website at <http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/> includes descriptions and links to many additional resources for families, professionals, and individuals with Asperger's syndrome, including support groups in the United States.



*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.uhc.edu*

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