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Wellness through Answers News

November/December 2018

*Linking Connecticut Patients, Families, and Residents to
Reliable Health Information*

New Name

The name "HealthNet" is no longer used by our library's consumer health information service. Our service is now called "Wellness through Answers." To be consistent, we have renamed our newsletter, too. Although our name has changed, our focus remains the same: linking you to reliable health information.

Build Your Family Health History

Holiday gatherings may be the perfect time to create a family health history. A health history is a record of medical information about individuals and their biological family. Many health conditions can be inherited. Completing a health history can be used to identify family members who are at an increased risk for developing genetic conditions. You can find materials to create your own family health history on the National Library of Medicine's [GeneEd](#) website.

"18percent" Offers Free Online Mental Health Communities

According to the website's creators, at any one time, 18% of Americans are suffering from mental illness. Visitors to "[18percent](#)" can receive instant peer-to-peer support 24/7 in a safe, moderated environment. There are many channels covering a variety of mental health conditions including addiction, depression, mood disorder, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Hospital Mergers Often Mean Higher Prices for Patients

Hospital mergers may result in cost savings, but consumers don't benefit from them. A study conducted for the [New York Times](#) showed that hospital mergers eliminate competition and generally raised the price of hospital admissions in the United States. The study, which was conducted by the University of California, Berkeley's "Petris Center," examined 25 metropolitan areas with the highest rate of hospital consolidations between 2010 and 2013. The report found one third of the areas studied saw an average increase of 25% in the cost of hospital admissions. State and federal government officials are looking into how hospital mergers are affecting soaring health care costs.

Rating Connecticut's Child Care Facilities

Currently, 41 states have a county- or statewide "Quality Rating Improvement System" (QRIS) parents can use when researching the safety and educational quality of day care facilities. QRISs usually offer a database of facilities in that state and rate them from A to F, or award them one to five stars. Connecticut does not have a QRIS.

To fill this void, [The CT Mirror](#) newspaper has created a [day care database](#) for Connecticut families. The database includes safety violations and resolutions,

inspection history, and the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation.

An App for Naps

Need more zzzzs? If so, you might want to download the "NAP26" app to your mobile device. It's a power nap program inspired by NASA's research with test pilots. According to the company's website, NASA discovered that 26 minutes is the optimum length of time for a power nap. After 26 minutes, nappers wake up refreshed and more alert. NAP26 uses pulsating beats to create sound vibrations which match natural sleeping patterns and signal the brain to enter a more relaxed state. NAP26 is available for Apple and Android devices.

Worldwide Spike in Measles Cases

A few years ago, measles was all but **eradicated**. A **worldwide surge** in measles cases in 2017 now threatens public health gains in controlling this serious disease. Health organizations say part of its resurgence can be blamed on parents not vaccinating their children and economic turmoil in some parts of the world.

YouTube Videos on Prostate Cancer are Often Unreliable

A large study in *European Urology* found that many popular prostate cancer videos on YouTube are misleading, biased, or contain poor quality information. Among the study's findings: more videos mentioned benefits than harms; only half of videos defined medical terms or provided summaries or references; and only half of videos recommended that patients and physicians engage in shared decision-making. The overall quality of information in the videos was rated three on a five-point scale. The authors caution patients that a high number of "thumbs up" does not mean the information is trustworthy.

Assistive Technology News

- **Microsoft Office Lens** enables users to create braille versions of print books using their cell phone. The app is free.

- **Nuos** uses artificial intelligence to convert electrical signals from the brain and eyes to keyboard or voice commands. The device, which is worn like a headband, enables paralyzed individuals to communicate via tablets or smart speakers.
- **Olli, a self-driving bus**, speaks sign language and offers simplified information and reminders for people who have trouble remembering.
- An experimental **bionic eye system** has restored a "sense of sight" to people with blindness due to retinitis pigmentosa. Patients are using the system to navigate everyday life.

1990s Brought a Surge in U.S. Spending on Prescription Drugs

Prior to 1997, the U.S. spent about the same amount on drugs as other wealthy countries. Between 1997 and 2007, drug spending in the U.S. more than tripled. An article in the *New York Times* explores the reasons for the surge in drug spending. Among these reasons: costly blockbuster drugs; an explosion of research into the genetic basis of diseases; increased advertising to physicians and patients; and expanded coverage of drugs through public programs like Medicaid.

More Health Information You Can Use:

- How to **take charge** of your medical care
- Data brokers **sell your data** to insurance companies and physicians
- What you give up when you sign hospital **consent forms**
- Interactive map shows **autism rates** around the world
- Leapfrog Group to rate **outpatient surgery centers** in 2019
- Why the **flu** makes us feel so bad
- **Standing desks** are overrated
- **Medication safety** for older adults - questions to ask the pharmacist

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