

2020

## Wellness Through Answers News v.35:no.2 March-April 2020

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### Recommended Citation

Urciuoli, Wendy, "Wellness Through Answers News v.35:no.2 March-April 2020" (2020). *Articles - Patient Care*. 123.

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## Wellness Through Answers News

January/February 2020

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

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### **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.

### **Have a Personal Health Question?**

*Wellness Through Answers* staff can help you find answers. Our medical librarians research personal health questions for Connecticut residents. Our service is free and confidential. Call or email us with your question: (860) 679-4055 / [hnet@uchc.edu](mailto:hnet@uchc.edu)

### **Happiness Lab Podcast**

What makes people happy? Psychologist Laurie Santos explores the science behind this question in a podcast called the **Happiness Lab**. The podcast is based on a hugely popular course she taught at Yale University and later offered on Coursera. Dr. Santos just launched a new podcast episode in response to the novel Coronavirus called "Beat Your Isolation Loneliness."

### **Reasons to Be Cheerful**

Are you looking for a reason to smile? Would you like to be more hopeful about the state of the world? Check out the newsletter, **Reasons to be Cheerful**. The newsletter, started by the musician and artist David Byrne, draws attention to the successes ordinary people are having in solving serious problems like homelessness, hunger, and access to clean drinking water. The stories will give you hope that people can actually work together to make the world a better place.

### **Why are Nonprofit Hospitals so Profitable?**

When you hear the term "nonprofit hospital" do you think of charity care? Private nonprofit hospitals are exempt from state and local taxes in exchange for providing a certain amount of "community benefit." At one time, tax laws required non-profit hospitals to provide free care. Today a wide range of services qualify as a community benefit.

**Over half** of the hospitals in the US are private, nonprofit hospitals, including such prestigious institutions as Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins. These large, highly profitable institutions do not pay state or local taxes, nor do they pay for services like garbage collection.

Taxpayers are asking whether all nonprofit hospitals should be exempt from paying taxes. Although there small nonprofit hospitals that are struggling financially, other

nonprofits are paying their chief executives annual salaries and benefits worth **millions of dollars.**

### Save Money on Drugs or Give Up Your Privacy?

"GoodRx" is a popular website for saving money on drugs. The site lets consumers comparison shop for the lowest drug price and offers money-saving drug coupons. An **investigation by Consumer Reports** found GoodRx also shares its customer's personal health data with 20 social media and marketing companies. The health data include drug names, chronic health conditions, and sexual orientation. GoodRx also provides the location of the device used to browse their website.

**HIPAA** (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) protects the personal medical information doctor's offices and hospitals collect. **It does not protect** personal health information collected by websites or apps like GoodRx, or by fitness devices that track personal health data.

### Confusion Over Brand Name and Generic Drugs

Generic drugs save you money, but are they safe and will they work? By law, generic drugs must contain the same active ingredient and provide the same medical benefit as the brand name. Generic drugs may differ in inactive ingredients (e.g. fillers, stabilizers, flavors), appearance, and price. There may also be multiple generic versions of the brand name.

Are generic drugs as safe as the brand name? According to website PharmacyChecker.com, makers of generic drugs sometimes have manufacturing problems that affect the **quality of those drugs**. Sometimes, patients are allergic, or sensitive to the inactive ingredients used in the generic drug. Also, the amount of the active ingredient may vary a tiny bit between the generic and brand name. This tiny difference may **make the generic harmful** or less effective than the brand name. In this situation, the generic cannot be substituted and is not considered bioequivalent to the brand name. The FDA's annual guide "Approved Drug Products With Therapeutic Equivalence Evaluations" ("the **orange book**") lists generic drugs that are equally effective as the brand name.

### New Osteoarthritis Guidelines

Osteoarthritis is the **most common cause of disability** in adults. An estimated **30.8 million adults** have osteoarthritis. There is no cure for this condition. The American College of Rheumatology and the Arthritis Foundation just published new guidelines for the management of osteoarthritis of the hand, hip, and knee in the journal ***Arthritis & Rheumatology***. The new guidelines **encourage mind-body therapies** but do not recommend the supplements **glucosamine or chondroitin**.

### **Grandma has ADHD?**

Attention deficit disorder (ADD or ADHD) is a condition associated with children, not their grandparents. Yet many older adults are discovering that they have ADHD too. People with ADHD experience symptoms of inattention, disorganization, and hyperactivity. Hyperactivity may decrease with age, but the other symptoms do not.

A diagnosis of ADHD can be enormously helpful. Treating the condition, however, can be problematic. Drugs commonly used for children may be unsafe for adults with heart conditions or high blood pressure. ADHD drugs may also cause insomnia, agitation, and psychosis. Treatment for ADHD usually involves drugs and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT.) A **recent study of CBT** showed it to be effective for older adults. More research into ADHD in older adults is needed.

### **What's in Your Drugs? Startup Company Answers that Question**

Are you worried about the quality or safety of your prescription drugs? A new company, **Valisure**, aims to reassure customers by testing drugs before they are sold to consumers. Valisure is the only pharmacy that is attached to an analytical lab. Drug distributors allow Valisure to sample batches for contaminants, correct dosage, problems with inactive ingredients, and concerns about how the drug would act in humans. When the company is sure a batch is of high quality, it purchases large quantities of it. Standard pharmacies don't buy in bulk, but buy drugs on a daily or weekly basis to save money.

Valisure markets itself mainly to consumers and doctors. In the future, the company hopes to act as a drug wholesaler for healthcare systems.

### **Health Care Sharing Ministries Are Not Insurance Plans**

Health care ministries, or sharing ministries, are religious-based co-ops where members agree to pay each other's medical bills. The **Trump administration** has promoted them as alternatives to Accountable Care Act coverage. State insurance officials describe them as sham insurance companies that lure customers with misleading advertisements. When consumers who purchased the plans required medical care, they discovered they had no insurance and their bills were not covered. **Nationally, there are** one million people enrolled in over 100 sharing ministries in 29 states.

### More Health News You Can Use

Five **easy tools** to learn mindfulness meditation

Tips for building **healthy habits**

Create your own hospital **discharge checklist**

Free lists of **grants** for young scientists

Database of emotional **facial expressions**

How **babies learn a** language

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UConn Health Nondiscrimination Policy