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**WHS Washington Hospital Offers
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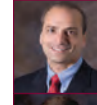
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A S H O S P I T A L . N E T

Don't Miss Your Flu Shot!

Influenza, better known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and sometimes the lungs. Influenza viruses spread primarily through tiny droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk.

Most people who get the flu recover without any issues. However, the flu can be associated with very serious illness and lead to hospitalization or death. The risk is especially high for seniors, young children, pregnant people, and people with chronic medical conditions. It commonly causes people to miss school and work.

Flu season typically runs from October through May, with the peak coming in February. Approximately, 3-11 percent of the U.S. population catches influenza every year — which equates to about 100,000 Allegheny County residents, annually.

While the severity of the 2022-2023 flu season cannot be predicted, it may be severe. The past two flu seasons were unusually mild because of behaviors related to the COVID-19 pandemic (masking, social distancing, working from home, and at-home school). Now, many of those behaviors have changed.

The best way to reduce your risk from influenza illnesses, hospitalizations and death is to get vaccinated every year. The influenza vaccination, or flu shot, has been used for almost 80 years. Everyone 6 months and older should get a shot every flu season, with rare exception. For people 65 years and older, particular flu shots help provide even better protection. Getting the shot protects you, your family, and your community. Since the vaccine is most effective in the first six months following the shot, the best time to



get it is before the end of October. Cases can occur as late as May, so even people who don't get it in October should still get it later in the season.

Finally, to protect yourself and others from getting the flu, cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands regularly, consider wearing a mask in crowded places, and stay home if you are sick. Maintain your overall health by eating a healthy diet, getting proper rest, being physically active, and reducing stress.

➤ For answers to frequently asked questions about the flu and the vaccine, visit AlleghenyCounty.us/Influenza or contact us at (412) 578-8062.

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WHS Washington Hospital Offers Breakthrough Treatment for Mitral Regurgitation



By Andrew Wilson

The cardiology team at WHS Washington Hospital is now offering a breakthrough minimally invasive cardiovascular treatment for patients with a severe leak in the mitral valve of their heart.

The procedure, called MitraClip™ therapy, is indicated for patients with mitral regurgitation, the most common heart valve condition which occurs when the mitral valve doesn't open and close properly, inhibiting normal blood flow,

and causing the blood to flow back into the heart, causing it to work much harder and leading to a number of possible symptoms.

"Mitral regurgitation is typically a chronic condition developing over several years," said David Haybron, MD, a cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon at WHS. "Frequently it will present with symptoms related to heart failure such as lower extremity swelling, shortness of breath, or palpitations.

Left untreated, patients with mitral regurgitation are at greater risk for life-threatening stroke or heart failure. As mitral regurgitation becomes severe, people find it harder to take part in their normal activities, experience severe fatigue, and grow progressively weaker.

"The traditional approach to treating severe mitral insufficiency would be valve repair or replacement, frequently performed minimally invasively," said Dr. Haybron. "Patients who suffer from heart failure due to extremely weakened heart function can develop mitral insufficiency due to enlargement of the heart. The resulting valve leakage typically worsens the heart failure."

For some patients, guideline-directed medical therapy (GDMT),

a regimen of medications, can improve their condition and avoid the need for additional procedures, but for other patients GDMT may not be as effective.

"Patients who have very weak hearts or who are at very high operative risk and who meet specific anatomic guidelines may be candidates for the Mitraclip," said Dr. Haybron.

The MitraClip device is delivered to the heart through a small incision in the leg and clips portions of the leaflets of the mitral valve together to reduce the backflow of blood, restoring the heart's ability to pump oxygenated blood more efficiently. Patients who have the MitraClip inserted tend to have a shorter hospital stay – about two days on average – and generally experience an almost immediate improvement in heart function and lessening of symptoms.

"Currently, the MitraClip procedure is a durable repair technique indicated in patients who cannot safely undergo surgery due to high operative risk," said Dr. Haybron, who cautioned that not every patient with mitral regurgitation is a candidate for MitraClip insertion.

"Some patients cannot have the procedure due to anatomic reasons," he said. "For this reason, it will never completely replace surgical valve repair surgery although there are scores of devices being developed which show great promise for similar transcatheter use."

For those patients where MitraClip is indicated, however, there is a great relief in knowing that their leaky heart valve can be successfully treated close to home in a minimally invasive manner.

MitraClip, which is developed by Abbott and has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for nearly 20 years, has treated over 100,000 patients worldwide. WHS Washington Hospital successfully performed this minimally invasive procedure in early July and the patient is doing very well.

"The Mitraclip represents a successful technology which complements the multidisciplinary WHS heart team's current skill set for managing complex cardiac conditions in a local setting," said Dr. Haybron.

> For more information about **MitraClip** and the cardiology team at **WHS Washington Hospital**, visit whs.org/heart or call **(724) 225-6500**.



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St. Clair Health: Fighting Breast Cancer

By Kevin Brown

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It's an opportunity to call attention to breast cancer and its impact, as well as to celebrate advances in breast care. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women, but it is also very treatable and preventable.

The St. Clair Hospital Breast Care Center at Village Square Outpatient Center in Bethel Park offers a comprehensive, team-based approach to help patients meet the challenges of breast cancer head-on. Joining the Breast Care Center team recently in the fight against breast cancer is Sarwat Ahmad, M.D., a breast surgeon who came from Mayo Clinic to practice with St. Clair Medical Group Breast & General Surgery.

Dr. Ahmad notes that October is a good time for women to become familiar with breast cancer screening guidelines. "Many women in the U.S. will start getting a screening mammogram every year at age 40. Some guidelines recommend starting screenings at age 45. The benefit of mammograms from a 40 to 45 age range varies from patient to patient, and they should discuss that with their primary care physician. Typically, the average age to start screening is 40 and continues annually through 75 or beyond, depending on one's health" she says.

"Most breast cancers are diagnosed as findings on the mammogram that may or may not have any clinical manifestation," Dr. Ahmad says. "However, women should maintain a good self-breast awareness and always be on the lookout for changes in the breast that are persisting and bring that to the attention of their physician."

Heredity plays an important role in breast cancer, so Dr. Ahmad recommends that women speak with close family members, such as a mother or sister, to dis-

cuss their history of breast cancer. "Around 10 percent of breast cancers are associated with a hereditary cause, like a genetic mutation. If a patient has a BRCA 1 or 2 gene mutation, or other known cancer-causing mutations that run in the family, the recommendations for breast screening are going to be different than the average-risk woman," she says. Genetic testing is offered at the Breast Care Center.

Other risk factors play a role in breast cancer. Dr. Ahmad advises that there is a clear link between obesity and breast cancer. "A Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 30 is associated with a lower risk of breast cancer, along with maintaining an active lifestyle and avoiding alcohol. Hormone replacement therapy in the post-menopausal period is also something to discuss with your doctor to see if that's going to increase your risk for breast cancer," she says.

If breast cancer is diagnosed, treatment varies from patient to patient based on the stage. Dr. Ahmad explains that the majority of breast cancers are diagnosed at an early stage. "In the early-stage, breast cancer can be treated with breast-conserving therapy with a partial mastectomy or lumpectomy instead of a full mastectomy, which is the removal of all the breast tissue."

When surgery is an option, there are additional considerations that help St. Clair experts curate care for each patient. According to Dr. Ahmad, "When we know that the cancer is treatable with surgery, we'll talk about the type of surgery. Then we talk about whether they would benefit from radiation treatment to the breast, hormone-blocking medication to reduce the effect of estrogen on the breast, and other anti-cancer therapeutics. The treatments that are going to be recommended really depend on each patient's breast cancer type. Often, it's a combination of surgery, radiation, and medical therapies such as endocrine and/or chemotherapy."

The Breast Care Center at St. Clair Health has all the resources and specialists needed to treat breast cancer in one location. "Everything is there, which is great for coordination of care and convenient for patients. The relationships among all the breast specialists from radiology, surgery, radiation oncology and medical oncology allows patients to receive the most coordinated and comprehensive care," Dr. Ahmad notes.

Collaborations with Mayo Clinic Cancer Care Network and the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center also offer great advantages for breast cancer patients at the Breast Care Center. "There are vast resources available through these expert clinical collaborators," Dr. Ahmad notes. "From a medical oncology perspective to the surgery perspective, we can discuss complicated cases and see if there's any clinical trials that our patients may qualify for. We have access to educational materials as well, to help both the patients and the physicians providing the services."

At St. Clair Health, you're not alone in the fight against breast cancer.



The relationships among all the breast specialists from radiology, surgery, radiation oncology and medical oncology allows patients to receive the most coordinated and comprehensive care. - Dr. Sarwat Ahmad



To learn more about the **Breast Care Center** at St. Clair Health, visit stclair.org/breastcare or call **(412) 942-4000**.

Women's Health

Local Physician Offers Innovative Procedure for Pelvic Organ Prolapse

How far would you travel for a minimally invasive medical procedure that is performed by an expert in the field? Betty Milburn traveled 32 miles from her home in Derry, PA to Penn Highlands Connellsville in Fayette County, PA to have Michael Pelekanos, M.D., perform the EnPlace procedure to correct her pelvic organ prolapse.

"I was in a great deal of discomfort," said the 72-year old mother of four. "I felt bloated and had to make frequent trips to the bathroom."

Mrs. Milburn's family practice physician suggested that she see Dr. Pelekanos who performs the mesh-free minimally invasive EnPlace procedure at Penn Highlands Connellsville. Dr. Pelekanos is a urogynecologist with Penn Highlands Healthcare, which is one of only a few health systems in the United States offering the unique, Food and Drug Administration-cleared procedure. In addition, he is one of only six instructors in the U.S. that teaches the EnPlace procedure.

Pelvic organ prolapse occurs when the muscles and tissues supporting the pelvic organs (uterus, bladder or rectum) become weak and drop or press into or out of the vagina.

"Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP) is a debilitating disease. Many women are uncomfortable talking with their doctor about their symptoms until the discomfort becomes too great," said Dr. Pelekanos. "POP is very treatable," he continued. "The EnPlace approach is an advanced procedure for fixation of pelvic floor ligaments."

Mrs. Milburn had the procedure to re-suspend her uterus thus preventing the need for a hysterectomy. Alice Burrell, an 80-year-old mother of four and grandmother of five from Plum Borough, Pennsylvania, had the procedure to correct a bladder prolapse.

"I'm not fond of going to the doctor so I lived with the discomfort of my bladder prolapse for nearly two years until my doctor suggested that I see Dr. Pelekanos," explained Mrs. Burrell. "I had my procedure nearly a year ago and I didn't experience any pain — in fact almost immediately I felt 100% better."

EnPlace can relieve pelvic organ prolapse without mesh or a biologic implant. The procedure is performed with almost zero cutting of the vaginal wall and without general anesthesia. EnPlace takes less than 45 minutes in an outpatient setting.

"We are excited to offer this approach to the women of Southwestern Pennsylvania. It is helpful to have expansion of biotechnology in our collection of resources so that we can help women rapidly resume their normal lifestyle activities," said Dr. Pelekanos. "Our EnPlace enables patients to go home the same day and are back to work or normal activities within 48-72 hours — which is amazing!"

Dr. Pelekanos is on staff at Penn Highlands Connellsville. His practice is limited to gynecology, urogynecology, infertility surgery, endometriosis surgery and routine annual women visits.

➤ For more information, call **Dr. Pelekanos** at (724) 603-2671. His Greensburg office is located in the Walsworth Commons Building, 1275 S. Main Street, Suite 203. He also sees patients at the **Penn Highlands Connellsville Women's Health Center** at 700 Park Street, Suite 6, in Connellsville.



Dr. Michael Pelekanos, a urogynecologist with Penn Highlands Healthcare, explains to a patient how he uses a cystoscope to view the inside of her bladder.

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Welcome Michael Pelekanos, MD Urogynecology

Penn Highlands Healthcare is pleased to welcome double board-certified urogynecologist Michael Pelekanos, MD, to Penn Highlands Urogynecology in Connellsville and Greensburg.

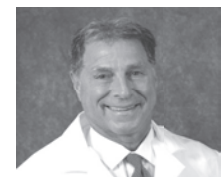
Dr. Pelekanos has more than 30 years of experience and specializes in urogynecology, a subspecialty of gynecology focused on women with pelvic floor disorders.

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By Kevin Brown

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). That adds up to 795,000 people each year. CDC data also shows that someone dies from a stroke every 3.5 minutes, making strokes a leading cause of death in the U.S.

St. Clair Health offers Stroke Care that has received the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® – Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award three years in a row. The award recognizes the hospital's commitment to ensuring that stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally-recognized guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

Leading the Stroke Care program at St. Clair is Maxim D. Hammer, M.D., MBA, Chief of Neurology, who practices with St. Clair Medical Group Neurology. Under his leadership, St. Clair has introduced a number of innovations in stroke care.

Dr. Hammer defines stroke as “a sudden neurological deficit caused by a vascular problem.” He explains that definition has three components. “One is that it happens suddenly. The second is that it's a neurological deficit, which means some loss of function such as weakness, loss of sensation, slurred speech, loss of vision, or the inability to communicate or understand people. The third is a vascular problem – in other words, a problem with the circulation. The majority of the time, a stroke is caused by a blocked artery, which cuts off blood supply. Less commonly, a stroke is caused by a ruptured or broken artery that causes bleeding in the brain.”

Time is of the essence in treating a stroke. When a stroke patient comes to the St. Clair Hospital Emergency Department, Dr. Hammer notes that it is important to determine when the stroke began and do a quick physical examination to measure the general severity of the stroke.

“We do a CAT scan to place these patients into a category,” he says. “Is it a bleeding-kind of a stroke that will show up as blood on the CAT scan? Or is it the blocked-artery type of stroke, in which case the CAT scan will show no blood? If it's someone who has ischemic stroke where there's a blocked artery – and we can catch it early – the next step is to administer an intravenous treatment called thrombolysis, where we provide a drug called Tenecteplase to the patient. The sooner we administer it, the better the chance of recovery.”

“We previously used a drug called TPA, and we switched to Tenecteplase a year ago. The old stroke community is slowly switching to Tenecteplase because it's believed to be slightly more effective. The second thing we're doing is analyzing the delivery process of this treatment to determine what steps can be shortened. We're aiming to deliver this medication even more rapidly than we do now, because the earlier it's given, the more effective it is,” he says

St. Clair Health: Award-Winning Stroke Care



“We want to make sure we fully understand the cause of that stroke, so that we can do everything we can to protect the patient from having another stroke in the future.”

-Dr. Maxim D. Hammer

“The next step is to determine if there's a major artery that's blocked. A second scan called a CT angiogram is done, which scans the brain and the neck to look for large artery blockage. If a major artery is blocked, then the patient might be a candidate for a procedure where the blood clot is removed. Those patients are transferred by helicopter to another hospital in Pittsburgh where that procedure can be performed. The majority of patients do not have a large artery that's blocked, so they are able to remain at St. Clair Hospital,” explains Dr. Hammer.

“The Emergency Department has been very helpful as a partner both for helping us treat acute strokes, and keeping the patients in St. Clair Hospital that are able to stay here. We developed a prediction model that will tell us which patients can safely remain at St. Clair Hospital, which is the majority of the patients that come to the Emergency Department. That way, they can continue to get care in their neighborhood hospital,” Dr. Hammer says.

Another innovative approach to stroke care at St. Clair is a video-based telestroke collaboration with

Mayo Clinic. Dr. Hammer explains that stroke care is very time-sensitive. “Every minute, something like 10 million brain cells can die during stroke. If it takes the doctor on-call about 45 minutes to get to the hospital, well, that's 450 million brain cells that are potentially gone, just due to travel time,” he says. “The telestroke service allows for immediate virtual assessment of the patient by a stroke specialist, to deliver the best care as quickly as possible.”

Dr. Hammer has also implemented a novel approach to caring for his patients once they return home. “I provide the patient and their family with a direct line to contact me,” he says. “Whatever their concerns are, they can be addressed very quickly and directly with me. In addition, I follow-up with stroke patients within days after discharge from the hospital to make sure everything is okay and to discuss any apprehensions or concerns.”

Dr. Hammer notes that an important aspect of stroke care is preventing stroke. “Even after a stroke has occurred, we don't just want to treat the stroke that has happened. We want to make sure we fully understand the cause of that stroke, so that we can do everything we can to protect the patient from having another stroke in the future. That's actually the main goal of the Stroke Care program,” he says.



For more information about the **Stroke Care** program at **St. Clair Health**, visit www.stclair.org or call **(412) 942-4000**.

The Caution of OTC Hearing Aids

By Lois Thomson

You might be surprised to hear a professional say he's not opposed to someone who wants to make an over-the-counter purchase of products he sells. But Michael J. Rametta, MS, owner of Rametta Audiology & Hearing Center, explained why he feels that way – but also added a word of caution.

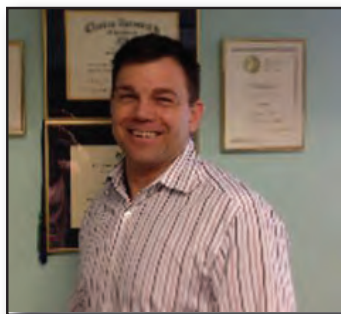
The products in question are hearing aids, and Rametta confirmed, "I'm not against over-the-counter hearing instruments, because there are about 5 million people who have mild hearing loss, and we can't realistically help them in a fair, economic manner when the loss is mild."

However – as background, President Trump signed a bill passing a law that would create a category of OTC instruments that would still be constructed as hearing aids. It took until now for the guidelines to be worked out, but Rametta said in the near future, OTC hearing aids will probably be available at CVS, Walmart, and similar places at a significant savings.

The problem, according to Rametta, is that while saving lots of money is a good thing, if you are getting hearing aids and are not checked by a professional, you may not actually need the aids: "You could just have wax in your ears, or you could have a hole in your eardrum, or you could have an ear infection. You could have a whole plethora of things that should be looked at by either an audiologist or a doctor before you would even think about putting anything in your ear, and that's my big precaution for people.

"You can't look in your own ear. You can take a pair of eyeglasses and look in the mirror and see everything, but you don't know what's going on in your ear. So you may not need hearing aids, and that would then be a waste of money."

He added that by not having a hearing test, a person doesn't know if what they're getting is going to be appropriate for them. "I caution



Michael J. Rametta


In addition to buying OTC hearing aids when a professional checkup may show you don't need them, Michael Rametta, Rametta Audiology & Hearing Center, said, "It's important for people to understand that if you do buy something over the counter, professional help doesn't come with it; you can't go back to CVS and ask the pharmacist to help you. You may still have to take the device to a professional and have it cleaned or looked at, but most of those devices will not be able to have any adjustment done by a professional."

people, if you're thinking of doing this, you can go to a professional, pay your co-pay, and get a hearing test. You can still walk out and go try your over-the-counter ones, but at least you'll know that medically you're safe, and you're going to walk out with a little more education and know if that is the right thing for you."

Rametta reiterated that he's not against an OTC hearing device. "I just think the FDA made it consumer friendly, but they didn't make it consumer informed."




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Lutheran SeniorLife Now Managing the Heritage Valley Senior Living Community



We are pleased to announce that, as of August 1, 2022, Lutheran SeniorLife is providing management services to the residents of the Heritage Valley Senior Living Community (formerly The Willows). Our community consists of Independent Living, Personal Care and Memory Care residences, and is conveniently located across the street from Heritage Valley Kennedy hospital.

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We also offer a neighborhood designed for the specific needs of seniors with Alzheimer's or dementia. Our Memory Care residence is designed to create meaningful and personal routines based on each resident's life story, and offers a home-like environment conducive to both emotional health and physical well-being.

Lutheran SeniorLife is a faith-based provider of senior services and communities in western Pennsylvania. For more than 100 years, Lutheran SeniorLife has provided quality care in residential living and personal care facilities, home health, rehabilitation, Alzheimer's memory support and more. The mission and organizational values of Lutheran SeniorLife align with those of Heritage Valley Health System, and we look forward to working together to elevate the health and wellness of our residents and provide a safe and enjoyable place to live.

We believe that moving into the Heritage Valley Senior Living Community will enhance your lifestyle and improve your outlook on life.

➤ For information on the **Heritage Valley Senior Living Community**, or to schedule a personal tour, please call **(412) 331-6139** or visit our website at <https://www.heritagevalley.org/services/senior-living/>.

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State-of-the-Art Aesthetic Care and Exceptional Outcomes in a Safe, Medical Setting

By Nancy Kennedy

Are you dissatisfied with the condition of your skin? Do you have age spots, acne scars, rosacea, wrinkles or spider veins? Would you like to look better and feel better about yourself, yet you are a little nervous about having cosmetic procedures performed on your face?

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“We believe that cosmetic and aesthetic treatment should go hand in hand with medical care. We perform the diagnostic testing as well as the treatment right here in the same office.”

Nicole Bruno, RN, ACNP

“We meet your aesthetic goals with a medical approach,” says Nicole Bruno, RN, ACNP, a nurse practitioner with years of aesthetic treatment experience. “We believe that cosmetic and aesthetic treatment should go hand in hand with medical care. We perform the diagnostic testing as well as the treatment right here in the same office. We offer venous ultrasound, radiofrequency ablation, sclerotherapy and lasers. Our lasers are very effective for sunspots, rosacea, spider veins and varicose veins. We can rejuvenate your skin with fillers and Botox and it will look natural – you won’t need a facelift.”

Bruno says that these are medical procedures and for safety and the best possible outcome, should be performed by experienced and fully credentialed medical professionals. “You can have procedures

Continued on following page.



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Continued from previous page.


done in a way that is safe and medically driven. Our treatment is extremely individualized – every face is unique and every person has individual goals. We also treat other areas of the body: the arms, back, underarms and legs. We offer men’s services too.”

Cosmetic lasers can treat the tiny red blood vessels and even varicosities that sometimes appear around the nose and lips. They can be used for hair removal and are also very effective for rosacea, a condition for which there are very few treatments. The lasers minimize scarring and improve skin texture.

“We have tremendous expertise and the highest standards of care. We give you the best skin care imaginable. This is ultimately about much more than treating a medical condition – this is a very personal matter. Your self-esteem and confidence is connected to your appearance and everyone wants to look their best. Our services are customized, comprehensive, safe and effective and we provide every service under one roof, including follow-up. We genuinely care about our patients; we take time with them and give them personal care.”

The center opened one year ago. It is part of Greater Pittsburgh Vascular Associates, a medical practice that specializes in the care of blood vessel conditions. GPVA provides preventive care, patient education, state of the art diagnostic imaging and minimally invasive interventional treatment of blood vessel conditions including varicose veins, spider veins, venous insufficiency, peripheral arterial disease and others.

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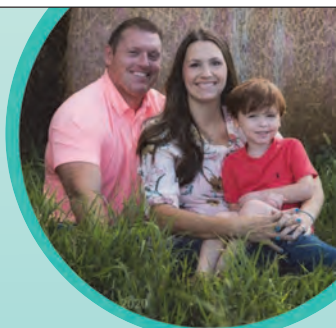
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Addiction & Rehabilitation

By Nancy Kennedy

In the United States, the number one cause of death for young adults aged 18 to 45 is drug overdose, surpassing suicide, vehicle accidents, and gun violence, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The drug in the center of this tragic epidemic is Fentanyl, a highly addictive, synthetic opioid prescription medication that was initially developed as an analgesic (painkiller) for surgeons to use during and after surgery to treat or prevent extreme pain.

Fentanyl is a very effective analgesic and it can create feelings of euphoria. In fact, Fentanyl is so potent that it is said to be 100 times more potent than morphine. These qualities mean that the drug's potential for addiction, abuse and overdose are very high.

Fentanyl has become the drug at the center of the illicit drug market and the tragic, soaring number of opioid overdose deaths across the U.S. and in Westmoreland County.

In the period from May 2020 to May 2021, over 100,000 Americans died from drug overdoses, and in 64% of those deaths, the cause of death was Fentanyl or a Fentanyl analog, typically manufactured in Mexico.

Making matters worse, Covid-19 has worsened the incidence of substance abuse disorder, including opioid misuse, as



Fentanyl Remains a Leading Cause of Death: Help is Available

people experience the isolation, anxiety and despair brought by the pandemic.

Breane Minardi, MSW, Director of Clinical and Case Management Services for Westmoreland County Drug and Alcohol Commission (WEDAC), states that Fentanyl overdose deaths increased 26% from 2020 to the present in Westmoreland County. In 2021, there was a total of 168 overdose deaths in the County, and Fentanyl was responsible for 137 of them. Males have a higher rate of overdose, with the greatest number of deaths occurring in the 31-40 age group; for women, the highest rate of overdose is in the 51-60 age group.

Much of the misuse of Fentanyl is unintentional. People may purchase drugs on the street, or in questionable non-medical settings, unaware that the drugs they buy contain Fentanyl in an amount that can be deadly. Fentanyl may be mixed into, or "laced" into,

counterfeit narcotic pills that resemble common pain medications or into marijuana. Even the tiniest amount of Fentanyl can be deadly, so this "lacing" has been a major factor in the rising number of overdose deaths. "Any use of street drugs includes a risk of death," Minardi says.


Director Minardi wants the community to know that despite widespread substance abuse and the alarming number of opioid overdose deaths, there is help available through her agency and a comprehensive network of services.

WEDAC is a resource for individuals, families, professionals and organizations; it funds and contracts treatment programs and case management services at the local level, using state and federal funds. The agency offers in-house community prevention programs and an innovative Narcan Mail-In Request program. "We are here to help anyone who is struggling with

addiction," Minardi says. "If you are uninsured, or underinsured, we can provide access to addiction treatment. We break all the barriers. We provide Narcan to anyone who needs it."

Every home should have Narcan, Minardi believes. "An opioid overdose can happen in any home. An older adult on pain medication may accidentally take a double dose of her pain medication. An unattended child may get into the medication. A teenager visiting for a holiday could go into the bathroom and overdose. Narcan is free, easy to use and lifesaving. If you have Narcan and know how to use it, you can prevent an overdose death."

> The Mail-In Narcan program provides kits to anyone who wants one. It can be reached by visiting www.wedacinc.org or calling (724) 243-2220 extension 4450. The web site includes an instructional video.



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Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc.

To decrease overdose deaths and support individuals with substance use disorder, Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. is offering Mail-In Narcan to Westmoreland County residents, professionals, and organizations throughout the county.



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Telehealth: A New Option for Treatment at Gateway Rehab

By Nancy Kennedy

Telehealth, also known as electronic or virtual healthcare, is a relatively recent trend that has changed the delivery of care in many healthcare settings, primarily by increasing access to services. In the specialty of alcohol and drug addiction treatment, telehealth is an option with numerous advantages, and it is being utilized creatively and effectively at Gateway Rehab, the region's highly regarded facility for substance use disorder treatment, prevention and education.

At Gateway, telehealth is one of many options available for outpatient treatment. "Through telehealth, the highest quality outpatient care from our experienced team of masters-prepared therapists is easily accessible," says Nancy Casciato, M.S., Lead Therapist at Gateway Rehab's Greensburg office. "Telehealth means that you can have a face-to-face visit, individually or in a group, in the comfort and privacy of your home, without having to travel or deal with the common stressors of in-person appointments."

Telehealth uses the common tools of technology to give people the ability to communicate electronically with health care providers for a "virtual" visit, Casciato explains. "Participation in telehealth requires a smart phone or a computer with a camera and microphone, plus Internet access. Using two-way, audio- video conferencing platforms like ZOOM, telehealth outpatient care is convenient, safe, and efficient. Although telehealth was launched about ten years ago, the COVID pandemic created a tremendous demand for it."

"We began using telehealth at Gateway when the pandemic began. COVID made it difficult to connect with people, and telehealth was a new option in addiction treatment that provided a promising solution. COVID has changed the face of treatment: pre-COVID, we knew the usual barriers to treatment such as lack of child care and transportation. COVID revealed the existence of barriers that we were less aware of. This includes the "sandwiched" caregivers, busy caring for older adults as well as children; the distances that left rural clients underserved; difficulties with access for people with disabilities, despite us being wheelchair accessible; and the problem of social anxiety, which was made worse by the isolation. For these people, the barriers and distances were insurmountable.

"Many people who needed treatment were not getting it because they thought their only option was to come in person. Thanks to telehealth, they are now able to access the care they need. More people are seeking help with opioid addiction and alcoholism. I had a client who had late-stage alcoholism, but did not get treatment

because she was disabled and could not travel. Without telehealth, she would never have received treatment. She recently celebrated two years of recovery."



Nancy Casciato

There are, Casciato says, few disadvantages to telehealth but ones to prepare for include a therapist's limited ability to view body language, a lack of access to required technology, or distractions in the home or setting of the session. At Gateway Rehab however the team is prepared to assist, support and respond.

For clinicians like Casciato and her staff, telehealth requires a different skill set from in-person treatment. "We can see more clients thanks to telehealth, but it's more challenging to build group cohesion electronically. Connection is an important part of drug and alcohol treatment." Casciato finds that despite the challenges, treating substance use disorders through telehealth is personally satisfying. "Clients are grateful to have this new option, and it's bringing in many more people. Telehealth is now an option for groups or individual counseling. We urge people to reach out and contact us to learn more about our services and schedule an evaluation. This can be done in person or electronically. The evaluation determines the level of care and type of treatment that is best. This is very individualized to meet each client's unique needs. "Gateway Rehab offers day and evening group options as well as individual services, including one-on-one telehealth sessions on Saturdays. We work with each client to fit treatment into their schedule, and get them into recovery as fast as possible. Gateway Rehab also provides telehealth family programming for the patient's loved ones and support systems."

Gateway Rehab has been rooted in Pittsburgh since 1972 and provides a full continuum of care across Western Pennsylvania. Gateway practices whole-person care, treating body, mind and spirit. Recovery is possible.

> To schedule an evaluation, visit www.gatewayrehab.org or call (800) 472-1177. Gateway Rehab's website includes a telehealth appointment request form that can be submitted 24/7. Visit www.gatewayrehab.org/appointment_request. Live chat representatives are also available online to connect a visitor with the clinical assessment team.



On July 1, 2022, Gateway Rehab acquired Greenbrier Treatment Center.



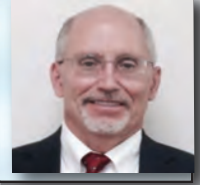
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Use It Or Lose It - Are Your Dental Benefits Expiring December 31?



By Nancy Kennedy

As we approach the end of 2022, we wanted to remind you to take full advantage of any dental insurance benefits you may have remaining for the year: If you don't use them, you lose them! Many patients don't realize that most dental insurance benefits expire and reset every year, usually on December 31, (but please check with your plan for exceptions). You might accidentally let hundreds or thousands of dollars' worth of benefits go back into the insurance company's bank account.


While treatment is never dictated by insurance, you can utilize your dental benefits wisely, especially when it comes to larger treatment plans such as dental implants. Many times implants can be placed in one fiscal year and, due to 3-6 month healing times, crowns can be placed in the next year to better maximize your benefits. And right now is the time to schedule to get this started!

Dr. Joseph Gurecka has been placing dental implants at Valley Brook Dental, LLC for the last 16 years. His passion is to use dental implants to help patients connect with something that they lost: missing teeth, the ability to chew, and a confident smile! Our goal with every one of our patients is to help you enjoy optimal oral health because we want you to look and feel good and have healthy teeth and gums for life.

To accomplish this in the facial esthetic zone requires a degree of

expertise that only comes from experience. This is especially important with dental implants. Dental implants are a great way to replace missing teeth and offer a fixed solution for removable partial or complete dentures giving you a result that is esthetically pleasing. To accomplish this Dr. Gurecka utilizes some of the most advanced techniques (such as PRP/PRF) for dental implant placement and bone regeneration to achieve lasting results while simplifying the procedure and increasing the reliability of the treatment. Sometimes a patient with a broken tooth or a fractured root can have the tooth removed and the implant placed at the same time! Learn more about the dental implant process at <https://www.valleybrookdental.com/procedures/dental-implants/>.

To keep up with this rapidly changing field Dr. Gurecka completed a nine month Implant program at Augusta University in Georgia, home to the Georgia Dental School. There he completed almost 400 hours of continuing education through the American Association of Implant Dentists (AAID). In 2019 he passed the written AAID Fellowship Exam and then flew to Chicago to submit actual cases for peer review and an oral examination which he passed and in September was inducted as an Associate Fellow in the AAID.

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Opportunities in Healthcare Grow

Occupations in healthcare are estimated to increase 16 percent – more than 2.5 million new jobs – by 2030, much faster than the average for all other occupations. While doctors and nurses may be the first positions that come to mind when thinking of jobs in healthcare, workers in the profession encompass myriad other positions, including those who work both directly and indirectly with patients, such as aides, lab technicians, home health aides, occupational or physical therapists, paramedics, nutritionists, or even workers who handle and remove medical waste. Taking that into consideration, there are nearly 60 million such healthcare workers around the world. The Association of American Medical Colleges projects a national shortage of up to 124,000 physicians in the next decade, including among primary care physicians and certain specialists, such as pathologists, neurologists, radiologists and psychiatrists.

Other positions that will be highly sought after this year include:

- Nurse practitioners
- Occupational therapy assistants
- Physical therapist assistants
- Medical and health service managers
- Medical assistants

While some careers in healthcare might result in a wealthy lifestyle, money often isn't the motivation for pursuing such a position. A more obvious reason would be the reward that comes from assisting people who are ill or injured, and helping improve the quality of their lives. Whatever the position and whatever the reason, choosing a career in healthcare has a promising future.



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Home Modifications Program Handles 'Everything' for Consumers

By Lois Thomson

The program is called Home Modifications, but Steve Johnson believes that name is a little limiting. As he explained, "That's only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what it actually provides to the community."

Johnson is director of marketing for Voices for Independence (VFI) in Erie and Transitional Paths to Independent Living (TRPIL) in Washington, PA, and the Home Modifications program was first established by VFI in 2002. Johnson said that, as its name implies, such home modifications could be a ramp, an accessible bathroom or kitchen – things that would help people get into or out of or navigate inside the home, including widening doorways for a power chair.

But in addition, "Now we're also able to do assistive technology in the home, which would be smart home features, like voice activated lights or locks, or automatic door openers. As technology rapidly grows, so do our options, in terms of how we can best assist a con-



Two-year-old Haylee, diagnosed with cerebral palsy, uses her new ramp from Voices for Independence for the first time, with her grandmother Loretta



The Home Modifications program at Voices for Independence has been around for 20 years, and serves all 27 counties in the VFI service area. In summary, Steve Johnson, director of marketing for VFI, said, "We pride ourselves in making sure that we communicate with the consumers we serve. Before the contractor is called, we meet with the consumer and talk to them about what's going to keep them independent in the home, keeping their safety and comfort in mind while they age in place."

sumer. As a result, we're currently helping people live more independently than ever before. This program operates on a person-centered and individualized basis, to ensure that the scope of work being completed truly addresses the recipient's needs."

Further, Johnson said the services provided are more than just making modifications. "Our team basically handles everything. The consumer is a key component in all of this. We try to take worry and stress out of the process. If there's a need for home mods they may not know who to trust to do the work, how to handle the contractor pricing process. We help navigate that process and make them an active participant in the build, and in many cases we try to help them find funding."

He acknowledged that the program "is a lot more robust now. The home mods are like another piece of the puzzle to make sure individuals are able to live independently at home." Johnson said a key component is that they know the contractors who are experienced in this work. "Often we meet with people who say, 'Yeah, we had a bunch of friends come together and build this ramp.' But the grade of the ramp may be too steep, or the threshold isn't great. So we step in to make sure things are ADA compliant, and the contractors we use are all aware of that."

"We oversee the entire project, and everything is done with ongoing approval. We make sure the consumer is satisfied with the quality of the work as it's happening, so there are no surprises at the end."

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Casey Ball Helps Disabled and Seniors Live Independently in their Homes

Casey Ball Supports Coordination, LLC (CBSC) was started in April 2013. The owner and CEO, Casey Ball, was a service coordinator for another agency prior to starting CBSC. However, she knew that it could be done better!

What Sets Us Apart

Casey had a vision of a service model that would benefit the clients and ultimately give them a better quality of life. Many other agencies over burden their service coordinators with a high caseload which does not allow for the individual, quality service that the clients need and deserve. At CBSC our service coordinators have a maximum caseload of 40 clients.

Another thing that sets us apart from other agencies is that we are able to service clients in all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Being a locally owned and operated company, it is important to us that we are able to serve our fellow Pennsylvanians. At CBSC we support our clients to exercise self-determination and to be independent, productive, and integrated in all facets of community life. Our clients live, learn, work, and enjoy life in the community by having access to supports, resources, and services.

We provide service coordination for clients under the Medicaid waiver programs. We are currently accepting clients under the Act 150, OBRA, Independence and HIV/AIDS waivers. These programs are designed to help people with disabilities and senior citizens live



independently in their homes, rather than in a nursing facility.

We are now also able to provide service coordination for families of all income levels through our affordable private pay options. It is our hope to be able to enhance the quality of life of not only our clients, but their families and loved ones. We coordinate such things as (PAS) personal assistance services, home delivered meals, (PERS) personal emergency response systems, (DME) durable medical equipment, medical supplies, assistive technology, home modifications, as well as other services and resources.

For the Medicaid waiver programs, there is an enrollment process. Financial and medical qualifications must be met.

How to start the process

The first step in this process is to call Pennsylvania's independent enrollment broker Maximus at 1-877-550-4227. Casey Ball Supports Coordination, LLC supports the Independent living movement and is able to provide assistance with Maximus and the application process.

> For more information, visit **Casey Ball Supports Coordination** website at www.cbsc LLC.org. Remember to like them on Facebook!

You Can Be *Independent...* We Can Help!

Casey Ball Supports Coordination, LLC

Casey Ball Supports Coordination, LLC (CBSC) has been dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals and families across Pennsylvania. CBSC takes great pride in assisting clients in obtaining and maintaining their independence through services and supports. It is our mission to help at-risk individuals remain as independent as possible, through home and community-based supports. We specialize in helping vulnerable populations including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, behavior health conditions, physical and cognitive impairment, and the elderly.

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Parents With Special Needs Children Do Not Have to Go It Alone, Author Says

A new book leads parents on a journey of raising children with disabilities and shares the mental, emotional and spiritual battles families face every day when raising them. It was written by Rev. Dr. Crawford Clark, a pastor, counselor and parent of two special needs children.

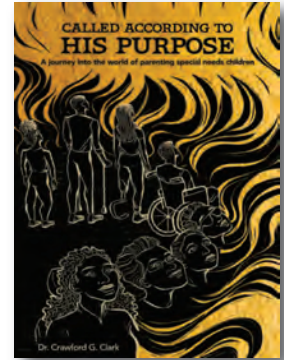
The Clarks have experienced many struggles along their journey with raising their children. As a pastor/counselor, Clark felt it necessary to write a book that helps people to understand that God has a purpose and a plan for those who find themselves in an environment with those with disabilities. The book helps parents understand what is happening and gives practical advice on how to help them with their children.

Called *According to His Purpose: A Journey into the World of Parenting Special Needs Children* (published by WestBow Press) tells readers what it is like to raise children with disabilities, including the difficulties with people not being very sympathetic toward children or parents. He covers subjects such as isolation, identity, idiosyncrasies, education, discipline, community and how God views disabilities. In addition, Clark shares the story of Theodore DeShields, a good friend whose story speaks to everyone. While he was never supposed to be born, he became a strong person of faith who blessed all those around him.

“There are millions of disabled individuals and their caregivers in our world today. This book provides encouragement for those who are caregivers of the disabled and helps them to see a greater purpose behind what they do,” said Clark. “It is written from a very personal perspective, not just from an observant position. In the midst of all the issues that may be associated with special needs individuals, God has a purpose for their existence.”

When asked what he wants readers to take away from the book, Clark answered, “I hope that the story of Theo, which was written by his mother, will be an inspiration to you and that it will help you to see God in a way you never have seen Him before.”

The book is available on Amazon.



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Coffee Break with Judy's Java Joint

Do you know how to make a coffee drink?

By Lois Thomson

Gone are the days when you can just walk into the local coffee shop and ask for a simple cup of coffee, because the options are so varied. Along with black or with sugar and/or cream, the two most common choices are regular or decaffeinated, but the number of others is increasing.

One of the most popular today is espresso. This coffee is stronger than regular black coffee; it is brewed by using high water pressure to force steam through finely ground coffee beans, resulting in a small, concentrated shot. However, if you are concerned about caffeine, this concentrated shot – usually one ounce – contains 63 mg of caffeine. Regular coffee, on the other hand, has 12 to 16 mg per ounce; most people, though, usually consume just one or two shots of espresso at a time, which results in less caffeine than an average mug of the regular.

Another difference between the two is that espresso is thicker than plain black coffee and can be used as a base for making a variety of other coffee drinks. Some of those include:

- **Cappuccino:** A combination of equal parts espresso, steamed milk and milk foam. This is extremely popular among coffee drinkers and has become a staple in even the most common corner coffee shops.
- **Caffe latte:** One shot of espresso with three parts steamed milk

- **Caffe mocha:** Chocolate syrup and whipped cream added to cappuccino or a caffe latte

- **Macchiato:** One shot of espresso with foam milk, often combined with multiple other flavors, such as caramel and vanilla

- **Americano:** One shot of espresso with a cup of hot water, which is also known as a diluted espresso

- **Irish coffee:** One shot of espresso with a dash of whiskey

- **Flat white:** Equal parts espresso and steamed milk

Especially popular during the hot months, iced coffee can either be prepared black or white and poured over ice, or be cold-brewed, meaning that the beans are brewed in cold or room-temperature water for as long as 24 hours.

Perhaps you aren't familiar with some of these, but they might get you thinking about trying something new when heading for your next cup.

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We Are What We Eat. And That Can Be a Scary Thought!

By Nick Jacobs

I am not a geneticist nor a scientist. (For the record and according to Wikipedia, a geneticist is a biologist who studies genetics, the science of genes, heredity, and variation of organisms.)

Yet despite my disclaimer, I have learned a little bit about genetics—just enough to be dangerous as they say—from my time as CEO of two different research institutes. I have spent hundreds of hours listening to genetics professors and scientists discuss their work. Through that exposure and additional research, what I've learned about genetic and chemical alterations in our food chain is enough to make me really wonder.

The actual process of genetically modifying food has been occurring for thousands of years, not through absolute,

irrefutable scientific knowledge but, rather, by trial and error. If we ever had the opportunity to taste tomatoes as they first existed on this earth, we would probably spit them out which might have possibly forever doomed us to a world without Italian food or Heinz ketchup.

Yet over the years, because farmers have cross-pollinated and mixed various fruits and vegetables, we now have many delicious items to choose for our tables. For example, think of the many varieties of apples. That is a form of genetic modification.

We now have genetically altered seeds that are both drought and bug resistant. Sounds good. Except when we realize that any physical impact these plants might have on us is yet to be determined. Similar to the effects of hydrogenated fats, if these “advancements” negatively impact our health, will

we humans again simply be seen as collateral damage?

For most of us, the pesticides we ingest are typically minute, although farm workers are much more at risk. They can be exposed to 1,000 times or more higher concentrations for long periods of time and a handful of pesticides have been linked to higher incidences of cancer.

Our biggest danger from fruits and vegetables comes from bacterial and viral contamination, an ongoing challenge. Science already is finding some links between such afflictions as autism, lactose or gluten intolerance, peanut allergies and the like emanating somehow from these alterations that affected microbes in our digestive tract, our microbiota (the organisms in a particular site, in this case, our bodies.)

Scientific articles I've read describe Aboriginal tribesmen who have microbiomes that are many times more sophisticated than ours. (Microbiomes by definition are a community of microorganisms—such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses—that inhabit a particular environment and especially the collection of microorganisms living in or on the human body, is home to about 100 trillion bacteria and other microbes, collectively known as your microbiome.)

Anyway, these tribesmen have these more-sophisticated microbiomes primarily because they consume many unaltered types of foods by foraging and hunting to sustain themselves.

In our more “civilized” world, we know that industrial food manufacturers have made literally thousands of additives—some tested, some not—to our



foods. In fact, this activity has caused other countries to deny the sale of many U.S. food items within their boundaries. We also know that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not tested every additive nor the potential interactions between them. (As an aside, we don't even know how various medications interact with each other, but if a person is on five or more prescriptions, there is a 100 percent chance they will interact at some level.)

Our bodies are now learning to digest oil-related products from all the plastics we consume. I am sure that our microbiota represents the future of science and the alterations of our microbes via antibiotics, altered foods, additives, and other environmental sources may be contributing in some significant manner to the causes of inflammatory disease and be the source of many of our cancers and heart disease.

So what's the good news? We can take some steps to change our habits and practices. If we seek out fresh vegetables and fruits, avoid those that are overly sprayed with chemicals, the dirty dozen, try not to eat too much junk food and exercise, we just might live to a ripe old age.

Nick Jacobs is a partner with SMR, LLC and founder of the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine, former board member of the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine, Jacobs maintains a website, Healinghospitals.com.

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Create Your Own Products at Honor Your Body's Apothecary Lab

By Lois Thomson

When you walk through the door of the Honor Your Body shop, you will be surrounded by displays of colorful products and fragrances that delight the senses. And the best part is, you will be able to create some of those products on your own.

Carrie Shaley and her mother, Carol, founded Honor Your Body – an LGBTQIA+ small business – seven years ago in Dormont as a massage therapy venture that also sold a variety of products such as soaps, lotions, candles, and essential oils. Carol has sensitive skin and makes all of the products sold in the shop. But now, after enjoying years of success, the two women have decided to expand by opening an Apothecary Lab, where people will be able to come in and make their own wax melts, candles, or soaps.

In a room separate from the product and massage area, Carrie and Carol have set up a workshop where individuals or groups can participate in a class. Carrie said customers first choose whether they want to make a candle, soap, or wax melt. Carol explained, "For wax melts and soap, they will be able to choose molds, and for candles, they will get to choose a tin or a candle jar in one of two sizes."

The guests then select the color and fragrance they want to mix into their product. An assortment of bottles is on display, with a range of fragrances and colors to choose from. The fragrances run the gamut from sweet to pungent, among them fresh cotton, sun-rip-

ened raspberry, plum nectar spice, blue velvet honeyberry, English garden, French lilac, snickerdoodle, coconut lime, and sweet tobacco.

After the selection, Carol said, "They will mix the fragrance with the soap or wax. The soap they will be able to melt in the microwave themselves. For candles, they will get to wick the container as well. They will pour the mixture into the mold or container."

As for the molds, Carrie said, "Anything you can imagine, we probably have," and she is probably right. The molds resemble vinyl ice cube trays, and include designs that would appeal to just about anyone: hearts, animals, flowers, footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, unicorns, dinosaurs, paw prints, a Celtic knot, honeycombs/bees, different types of fish, and cactus, to name a few. And they come in different sizes as well.

Carrie said the lab can support "any size group," from individuals to ones as large as 15. People can book online to reserve a spot.



> For more information, call (412) 212-0231 or visit www.honoryourbodywellness.com.

Carrie Shaley said of Honor Your Body's new Apothecary Lab, "It's a very hands-on activity. We started it right after we came back from Covid, and we had a lot of kids come in; they loved the idea of hands-on and being able to mix the products. We even had people with special needs who came in, and it was a great activity for them to be able to touch and feel."

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New WHS Family Medicine Physician Assistant Ready to Provide Care in Her Hometown

By Andrew Wilson

As a social person with a love for medicine, Kate DuCarme, MPAS, PA-C, believes she has found a perfect fit for her interests and skills.

“Being a physician assistant is the perfect combination for me,” said the new family medicine physician assistant for Washington Health System’s California Family Medicine practice. “I love learning and I love people.”

Physician assistants (soon to be known as physician associates) are licensed healthcare providers who practice medicine in collaboration with a physician and other members of the healthcare team. Specific duties vary depending on the specialty area, but typically include examining, diagnosing, creating and managing patient care plans, and prescribing medication or therapy for the patients they see.

DuCarme says that one of the aspects of family medicine that she is most looking forward to is the opportunity to treat patients of all ages.

“That’s the joy of family medicine,” she said. “Family medicine providers treat patients in all stages of life.”

Of course, the challenge of family medicine is that a practitioner may treat a child in one exam room and a more senior person in the next. Even if both patients happen to be suffering from the same illness, their conditions, and subsequently the treatments, may vary depending due to their age and overall health.

It’s a challenge that DuCarme is relishing.

“It definitely keeps you on your toes,” said DuCarme. “While I was growing up, I was one of those people who wanted to do everything. At various times, I thought of journalism or dance choreography (as a possible career), but health sciences began to appeal to me as I neared high school graduation.”

Born and raised in Washington County and a graduate of Canon-McMillan High School, DuCarme graduated magna cum laude from Gannon University in Erie, Pa., with a B.S. in health science, and a master’s degree in physician assistant science. As part of the master’s program, she completed specialty rotations in internal medicine, general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, pediatrics, oncology, orthopedics, and family medicine.

The rotations were at different practices, mostly throughout western Pennsylvania, but the oncology rotation was at The University of Texas Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. She came to appreciate not just the similarities and differences in the various specialties but also the value of working with so many different medical professionals.

“I think one of the best parts is the variety in the experience that I was able to gain,” she said. “You learn to care not only for the patient’s condition that you’re treating, but you may also have knowledge of where to send them for treatment of an additional issue.”

Her oncology experience taught her the value of preventive screenings and she encourages patients to undergo those screenings when they are due to be done. She understands that no one wants

Introducing



“I want to be an advocate for my patients and empower them to take charge of their own health.”

Kate DuCarme, MPAS, PA-C

to hear that they have cancer, but she tries to impress upon her patients that if cancer is detected early, it usually can be treated more effectively and successfully.

As a lifelong Washington County resident working at WHS, DuCarme is cognizant that many of her patients may be familiar to her as neighbors, friends, or family members of friends. She is looking forward to that.

“I think if people are familiar to me that can be an advantage because it allows me to have a more comprehensive picture of their overall health. I have an even better understanding of how their current condition is impacting their life and how their life is impacting their condition,” she said. However, whether neighbor or stranger, DuCarme believes her training has taught her to be diligent in her work.

“Symptoms don’t come from nowhere,” she said. “I was taught that if things aren’t making sense, you may need to dig a little deeper (to find the reason for the symptoms).”

An avid reader, DuCarme belongs to a book club that meets regularly and also is active in the local community, volunteering for a few after school programs for kids. She teaches dance at some of these programs, which allows her to follow the path of one of her mentors.

“One of my former dance teachers is one of my mentors,” she said. “I find her admirable because she is so committed to her work. She is always reading and learning new techniques to be the best teacher she can be.”

It’s a character trait that DuCarme has taken to heart.

“I try to read as much as I can about medicine, so that I can learn new strategies for caring for my patients and for being the best version of myself,” she said, adding that the ultimate goal she has is to help her patients become better educated about their health. “I want to be an advocate for my patients and empower them to take charge of their own health.”

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Welcome New Provider **Colleen Harriger, MD**

Colleen M. Harriger, M.D. is an orthopedic surgeon and recently joined our WHS Orthopedics and Sports Medicine group after completing her Orthopedic Sports Medicine Fellowship at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. Prior to that, she completed her Orthopedic Surgery Residency at UPMC Hamot in Erie, PA. During her residency, she earned the American Orthopedic Association Resident Leadership Representative award.

Dr. Harriger received her medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. She earned a B.S. in Biology at Gannon University in Erie, PA, graduating summa cum laude.

Dr. Harriger has an impressive background of Sports Medicine team physician experience. She has most recently served as a team physician for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Pittsburgh Riverhounds Soccer Club, Pittsburgh Forge Rugby Club, and high school hockey for Shadyside Academy. She has also worked extensively for USA Rugby, working in Denver, Newfoundland, Canada, and Cape Town, South Africa.



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Damian Garcher, MD

Timothy P. Weyrich, MD
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Timothy Weyrich, MD

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MEDICARE



Senior Health Insurance Solutions Can Help with Difficult Choices

By Lois Thomson

You've likely seen the ads on TV where well-known celebrities tell you about how much you can save on your senior health insurance by calling a certain number. Theresa Lancaster has seen them and she said, "I get calls from my clients asking, 'Why aren't I getting \$400 back a month?'"

Lancaster, an advisor who founded Senior Health Insurance Solutions, said the ads are misleading. "They don't explain that health plans vary by premium, benefits, and an individual's zip code and income. I have to explain that to my clients. I receive a lot of complaints from people who were not aware what they were

signing up for when calling into these centers and felt very pressured."

Lancaster got into the profession of advising people on Medicare plans when her husband reached the point where he had to make such decisions, and she said, "I wanted to make sure he was getting the best healthcare. As I delved into it, I saw it was very intense, very difficult to figure out what his best options were."

She said when coworkers learned what she was doing they began to ask, what do you do, how do you do this? "That's when I got my license. I remember my very first client was so excited about the fact that he was getting an excellent health plan and was going to

save a lot of money. So I thought this is great, I can really help people by doing this."

The help Lancaster provides begins with finding everybody's comfort zone and pointing them in the right direction. "You have a bunch of options when you turn 65 and you need to know what they are. Your direction is going to be determined by your health, your finances, what you're comfortable with – do you want a pay-as-you-go situation or do you want to be completely covered."

Add to that Medicare Part A, Part B, what's covered, what's not, co-pays, plans for prescription drugs, vision, and hearing, and the differences between advantage plans and supple-

ments, and it's no wonder that the choices can be overwhelming.

Lancaster works as an independent broker, and she said by being independent, "You really can help somebody by being totally unbiased. I have a lot of choices and recommendations because I represent almost all of the available carriers in Western Pennsylvania. There are many determining factors and I like to consider them all." There is no charge for her service because the insurance companies pay commissions.

> For more information, call (412) 558-9315 or visit the website www.seniorhealthinsurance.com

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Enrolling in Medicare?

Learn How Medicare Specialists of Pittsburgh Can Help

By **Daniel Casciato**

Now that we are in Medicare's open enrollment period, there are several changes coming in 2023 which includes budget updates, reduction in drug prices, and more. This year's enrollment period began on October 15 and ends on December 7. It's important to familiarize yourselves with these changes heading into open enrollment because that may have an effect on whether you change your current Medicare plan.

Thankfully, you can turn to someone such as John Wells, president of Medicare Specialists of Pittsburgh, an Independent Insurance Agency representing many different companies for your insurance needs. Medicare Specialists carefully selects its carriers in order to provide clients with the best level of service, price and coverage.

One of the biggest concerns that clients have is COVID-related issues, according to Wells. "Many people are concerned about having to go out to review their plans in person," says Wells. "The approach we're taking is to be exceptionally flexible. We could meet in person, here at the office or at someone's home just to stay out of restaurants and coffee shops. We can also do Zoom meetings or hold discussions over the phone with email follow-ups. Whatever our customers feel comfortable with, we should be able to do."

As a bricks-and-mortar business, Wells explains that they have taken precautions for clients who prefer to come into the office and speak face-to-face. For instance, they installed plexiglass panels around the desks and everyone wears a face mask. Temperature checks are also required. No matter which option you choose to meet with Medicare Specialists, a meeting would take approximately one hour.

One way that Wells and his team can help you is to cost out your prescription drug plan that you are currently on.

"We could cost those out with all the variations and different plans available so that you will have hard numbers on your anticipated drug costs," says Wells. "We'll also have a general discussion, as far as what needs you have coming up in regards to overall healthcare, vision, and dental."

Since they often have a new people signing on to Medicare each year, one of the top questions is when to sign up.

"Timing is always on the top of everyone's mind," says Wells. "When should I sign up? Do I need to sign up? I'm continuing to work, so what happens when I'm 67? I didn't have Medicare last year, because I was still working under a group plan. What do I do? These are always the types of questions we get."

If you happen to miss the enrollment period this year, Wells recommends contacting their office to discuss other options.

The two main areas of coverage for a client would be Medicare or Medicare with a supplement. You can also convert your coverage over to a Medicare Advantage Plan.

"We'll discuss how that decision can affect your coverage down the road because at some point, once you choose to go to an Advantage Plan, going back to a supplement is not guaranteed," Wells adds. "We can also help clients with Medicaid and other low income subsidies, PACENET, and entitlements. We can help them assess their current financial situations and find the right plan so they can be sure to afford healthcare."



For more information, call **(412) 343-0344** or visit www.medipgh.com.

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By Crystal Manning

Each fall, older adults face a daunting number of choices as they make important financial commitments and medical predictions for the coming year when selecting their Medicare.

Most Medicare plans change prices, benefits, prescription drug formularies and doctor networks annually. A plan that fits well this year may not next year. Making the wrong choice can cost thousands of dollars in premiums and/or out-of-pocket expense.

Also check for changes in prescription drug coverage. Beginning in 2023, copays for a 30-day supply of any insulin that a Medicare drug plan covers will be capped at \$35. Note that Part D plans will have to adhere to the \$35 copay limit even if an enrollee has not met their annual deductible. The price could be lower if insulin becomes subject to negotiation with drugmakers.

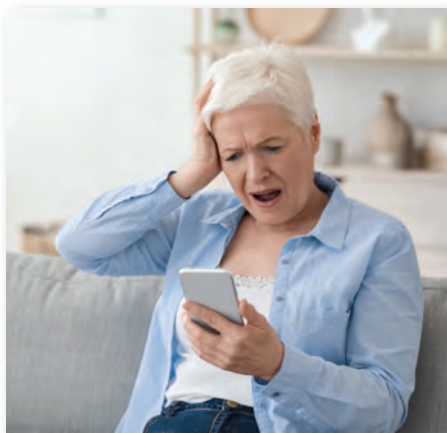
There are many Medicare Advantage plans, and their availability varies depending on where an enrollee lives. Wading through the onslaught of advertisements and mailers can be overwhelming. However, if you're not shopping your Medicare coverage every fall, you're probably paying too much.

During the Annual Election Period, you can make the following changes to your Medicare coverage:

- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan
- Switch from a Medicare Advantage Plan back to the Original Medicare
- Join a Part D prescription drug plan
- Drop your Part D prescription drug plan
- Switch Part D prescription drug plans
- Join a Medigap policy
- Drop your Medigap policy
- Switch Medigap policies

With the Open Enrollment season upon us, remember scammers are ready as well, starting with misleading ads on TV. Each year they

Beware of Medicare Scammers



are after the same thing: personal data like Medicare numbers and bank account information; however, just like Medicare Advantage benefits change, so do the tactics the fraudsters use.

Scammers thrive on changes. They thrive on anything that might confuse the Medicare population and target that. When open enrollment begins, one expects an influx of robocalls, text messages and emails that try to get beneficiaries to reveal their personal information. Mailboxes are flooded with marketing materials, and television commercials are nonstop, although individuals should watch for fraud, also beware of deeds that are lawful but perhaps not in

their best interest.

Television advertisements may look official, and they may even appear to prompt viewers to call what appears to be a government agency. However, many of the commercials are for lead agencies that try to get viewers to call them first and then pass their information to agents and brokers who are often in other states.

Keep material like Social Security numbers, credit card numbers and banking information private. Beneficiaries also received a personal 11-digit Medicare number within the last few years that should stay private. Scammers may even identify themselves as representatives of Medicare or Social Security. But unless a beneficiary has already initiated a claim, they shouldn't be calling. The minute you hear that, you shouldn't even enter a conversation. Just don't talk to them!

This Annual Election Period, decide which Medicare Plan is best for you

Look for changes in monthly premiums, added value benefits, such as a gym membership, dental, vision, and hearing coverage, and many over the counter benefits. Also check out of pocket maximums, Medicare Advantage Out of Pocket Maximums Medicare is allowing Medicare Advantage insurance companies to place MOOPs at a maximum of \$8,300, an increase of 10.3% over last year's max of \$7,550.

Medicare Advantage plans are based on a provider network, which is generally limited to a certain region or state. However, no matter where you are in the United States, all Medicare Advantage plans provide coverage for emergency and urgent care, as well as a hospital stay if you need to be hospitalized. When it comes to other services, going to an in-network provider will usually save you money, though many plans also provide out-of-network or out-of-state coverage alternatives. Also, investigate in Medigap options. These plans allow the ease of going to any Medicare-accepting provider in the United States.

A person can make changes to their Medicare plan for many reasons, such as saving money, expanding coverage, or due to changing circumstances. Understanding the enrollment windows can help people avoid penalties and keep the cost of their plans low.

Contact licensed Medicare Advisor **Crystal Manning** at **(412) 716-4942** or **crystalmanning33@gmail.com** for any questions or advice.

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The Medicare Donut Hole:



An Explanation

The “donut hole” refers to a gap in coverage for Medicare Part D – coverage of prescription medication costs. It’s a gap between what your Part D plan covers and what you pay out of pocket. In the donut hole, you are likely to have to pay higher costs for your prescriptions. Essentially, it means that you have reached a limit and a new phase of coverage.

At the beginning of every calendar year, you have a period of “Initial Coverage” and depending on your health insurance plan, you may have co-payments. When your total drug costs (your plan’s costs + yours) reach the limit of \$4430, you enter the gap.

In the donut hole, you are responsible for up to 25% of the cost of your drugs, up to a total of \$7050. When you reach that limit, you enter the final phase, catastrophic coverage.

The donut hole is different for every individual because it depends on your plan plus the prescription medications that you take.

The donut hole was developed in part in order to encourage people to shop around for the best plan for their individual situation, during the annual enrollment period, and to use generics as much as possible.



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Hearing

Hearing Aids and Insurance Coverage



By **Michelle Mitchell**

Insurance can be a difficult subject to understand. However, at Swift Audiology, we can help guide you through your hearing benefits.

We have participating providers with most major insurances, to include: UPMC, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, United HealthCare, and Humana. Further, we participate with

most policies those companies offer. When you schedule an appointment with us, please be prepared to provide your insurance information and we will get started on verifying your benefits right away!

People are often surprised to find they do, in fact, have a benefit that will help cover the cost of the hearing aids. Our verification process will determine the nature of your benefit, whether it be an allowance or subject to your deductible. These plans allow you more choice to go through a participating provider and enjoy the extended service for the instruments, their care and maintenance, as well as appointments for adjustments.

Some plans administer their benefit through Managed Care Plans. In this case, registration is required and is the only avenue through which a person can access their hearing benefit. While there are benefits to this option, the most obvious downside is the fact that service is only extended through a limited number of visits and does not exceed past the first year. Beyond that first year, expenses for service are paid out of your pocket and usually not covered by insurance. Fortunately, at Swift Audiology, we have providers who do participate with the most common Managed Care Plans. If this is your option, simply state that you would like to be seen at Swift Audiology and you can be scheduled at any of our locations.

The ability to hear impacts many aspects of our overall health. Insurance companies are recognizing the need to include benefits for hearing aids to address this important aspect of our health. Increasing numbers of policies are including insurance coverage-especially in the Medicare Advantage plans. It is ALWAYS worth looking into.

When you come to your first appointment, your hearing health professional will have the results from the insurance verification we conducted. She will be able to explain your benefit to you in a concise manner. Should you have further questions or require more clarification, we have a dedicated Insurance Administrator available to you. After you are fit with the hearing aids, we will file an insurance claim on your behalf and will follow up as is necessary.

Navigating the insurance landscape can be confusing and frustrating. What it means and how it fits together regarding your hearing health is made easier and understandable at Swift Audiology. We are here to help you understand your benefit and file claims on your behalf to get the most out of your policy.

> Michelle Mitchell is an Insurance Specialist at **Swift Audiology**. The practice provides hearing loss services, hearing protection, and medical hearing aid devices to patients at 4 offices throughout Pittsburgh region. For more information, visit swiftaudiology.com or call **(412) 274-7285**.

“Mom’s back to work and grandma is on duty. What can we find to get into that she won’t hear us? We better think quick – her hearing test at Swift Audiology is next week! Hurry, I’ll bet we can find the treats and Grandma won’t hear us!”

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WPAGH9/22

HOSPICE CARE

Hospice Helps Patients Remain at Home Instead of a Hospital



By **Evalisa McClure**

Facing a life-limiting diagnosis is rarely simple. When patients are ready to focus on comfort and quality of life, they may not want an expensive stay in the hospital or skilled nursing facility.

Hospice offers an alternative—particularly during COVID-19's heightened risks and restrictions.

Whether the patient has decided the side-effects of their current treatment

plan outweigh its benefits, or their care provider has recommended end-of-life care, VITAS Healthcare makes transitioning to hospice care easy and safe for patients, families, caregivers, and physicians.

Hospice transitions begin with a team of specialists who confirm the patient's hospice eligibility with a short assessment. Questions are asked and answered, and VITAS supports the patient's and family's informed decisions about their preferences for end-of-life care. The patient's needs and goals come first, and reasonable efforts are made to care for the patient wherever they're most comfortable. In most cases, this means home.

The VITAS team—physician, nurse hospice aide, social worker, chaplain, and volunteer—then develops a personalized plan, includ-

ing any equipment and supplies the patient may require. Patients leaving a hospital or skilled nursing facility can still benefit from any specialized medical equipment they may have used in their care facility—right from the comfort of their home. Medicines that improve quality of life are delivered as well.

At home, hospice patients receive day-to-day care from a family caregiver with plenty of assistance and training from the hospice team, either in-person or via telehealth. Each week, team members visit on a schedule designed to meet the patient's needs. Hospice patients also face fewer restrictions at home than in a facility, so families can work out a visitation plan that's best for them.

If symptoms flare up and additional support is needed, VITAS offers Intensive Comfort Care® with 24/7 support from a crisis nurse until symptoms are back under control. Even as levels of service change, Medicare or private insurance continues to cover the cost of care 100%.

Most patients with advanced illness want to be home near the end of life. VITAS has the expertise, resources, and personnel to make that happen.

Evalisa McClure is general manager for **VITAS Healthcare** in Pittsburgh. For more information about end-of-life care services, call the nation's leading provider at **(866) 759-6695** or visit **VITAS.com**.

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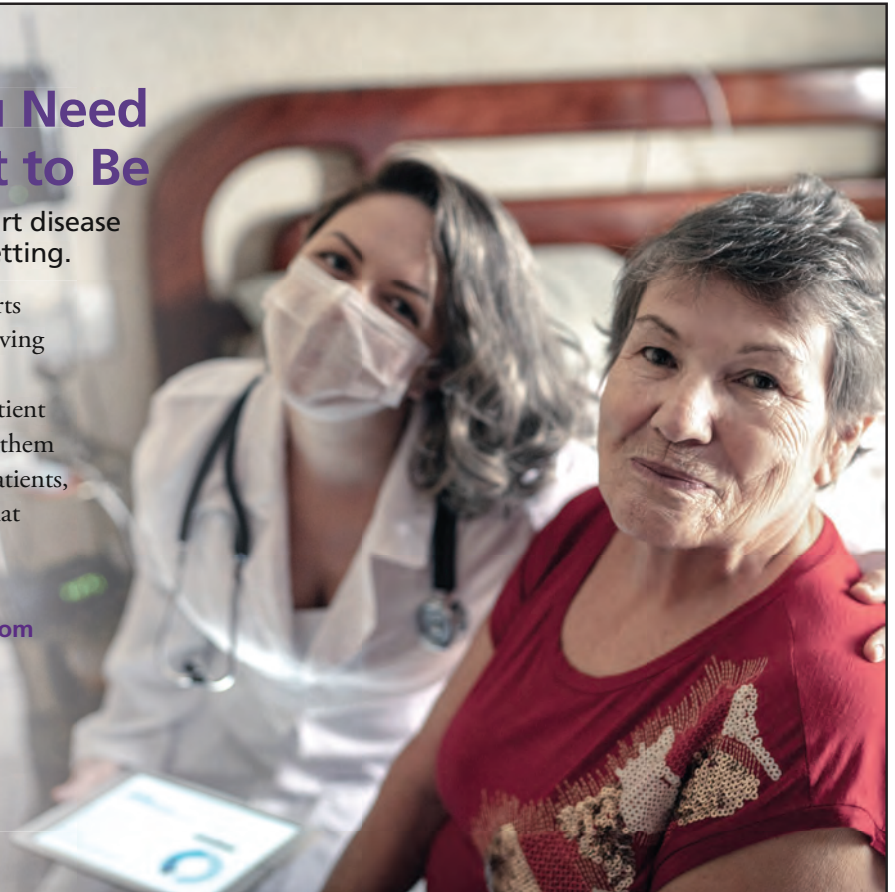
Wherever an advanced heart disease patient wants to be, VITAS® Healthcare meets them there. Our hospice services surround patients, families, and caregivers with support that elevates quality of life.

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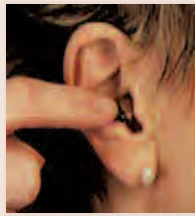
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Senior Living



Dealing with Grief During the Holidays

By Terri Averi, MSN

Dealing with grief is never easy. Whether you are dealing with a recent loss or one from a time ago, your feelings are valid. Although grief is universal, we all process it differently. The holidays can be a challenging time.

During the holidays, remember the 3 C's of coping. They are Choose, Connect, and Communicate. You can choose what is right for you. You get to choose what you will attend, where you will go and how you will do it. So often with loss, we feel no control. Choice is our means of control.

Connecting is important. You may want to isolate and shut down to avoid difficult conversations. You do not have to interact with everyone however often they are sharing in your grief/loss.

Communication is the last "C." Tell people what you need. There is often support from others, but they wait for you to give them a signal.

The holidays can be stressful enough without grief. We are constantly bombarded with pictures of a beautiful Christmas. It includes the perfect setting where family is laughing and swirling about. In reality, many people struggle with just the normal day to day living. Feelings of grief may add to that burden. You may feel more fatigued, sad, isolative, and unable to participate. Those are common symptoms of grief and loss. You will grieve at your own pace and in your own time. Grief is a normal process. We cannot avoid it, but we can take steps to move through it.

The following items are suggestions to help navigate the holiday season. First, acknowledge that this holiday will be different. Second, decide what traditions you want to keep, remove, or begin. Think of your loved one to help you make this decision. Third, be open with others. Let them know what you need or do not need. Fourth, keep physically active. Exercise produces natural endorphins that ease our mood. Fifth, avoid alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant, and it can make your sadness more intense. Sixth, do something positive that makes you feel good. You are allowed to feel good. Finally, realize that all or some of these may or may not work. You will get through this.

Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a new landscape."

- C. S. Lewis, 'A Grief Observed.'



Terri Averi is Supportive Care Manager at Community LIFE.

Winter Power Failures: Be Prepared!



Most people in our region will experience at least one power outage every winter, of several hours duration. Here are some tips for preparing for and managing this seasonal inevitability.

1. Pay attention to the weather forecast. Know what's coming.
2. Make sure your phone and other essential devices are fully charged. Unplug sensitive electronics.
3. Place a flashlight in every room and make sure the batteries are good. Have extras!
4. Stock up in early winter with bottled water, toilet paper and pantry items that are ready to eat, like peanut butter, snacks or canned tuna.
5. Keep your prescriptions filled and organized. Make sure you can see what you are taking.
6. Candles are helpful but are also a fire hazard. Use flameless candles. Better to purchase a battery operated lamp that you can easily carry. There are lamps that come with a radio.
7. If you use a medical device like CPAP, consider buying a generator. Portable generators can cost as little as \$400.
8. Avoid opening the refrigerator or freezer. Food will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours if you do not open the freezer door.

Dehydration in Seniors

Dehydration is a common problem for seniors, and has numerous ill effects on the body's organs. It is a major factor in the development of urinary tract infections, constipation, itchy skin, dry mouth and dental problems, and dangerous blood clots. Every organ needs water! As we age and lose muscle, we have less storage space for water.

Don't assess your hydration status by thirst! Thirst is a later sign of dehydration, and is less accurate as we age. Instead of going by thirst, pay attention to the color and frequency of your urine. Your urine should never be dark – if it is, you need to drink some water right away. Ideally, urine should be a light straw color or the color of pale lemonade. If you gauge hydration in this way, you don't have to keep track of your fluid intake. During the day you should urinate about every three hours.

One way to combat dehydration: as soon as you wake up, drink a full glass of water – or two. If you take diuretics, or have heart disease, ask your doctor about the best daily amount of fluid for you.

Choosing a Medicare Plan

Theresa Lancaster shared her advice on choosing a Medicare plan: "First, if you do have a plan, make sure you understand what you have. For example, do you have a supplement or an advantage plan? Second, deal with a local, independent broker when looking for insurance like this for your health. It doesn't have to be me, but it's an extremely important decision. You want to work with somebody you trust, somebody who's familiar with everything in your area locally."



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SENIOR LIVING

Aging Gracefully: A Story from Southminster Place

"My mother was a beautiful woman, right up until the day she died," said Mary, a resident in our Southminster Place community. "I hope I'm aging as gracefully as she did – I'm trying to!"

Mary believes having the wonderful support of her children and her husband Chuck—and her commitment to taking care of herself — have been essential to her aging well both physically and emotionally.

Mary never envisioned living in a care community, but she's grateful for the support and fellowship at Southminster Place.

"They do everything for us so that we don't have to worry about it. I started to hate having to cook later in my life, so having that done for me is so helpful," Mary said. "Being able to interact with people my age who are in similar life circumstances is great as well – the community feeling is wonderful."

Vicki, Mary's daughter, appreciates that Southminster team members are ready to help if either she or her husband experience a health event or injury.

"My dad has had a couple of episodes where I couldn't get there quickly, the nurse called me right away to tell me what was happening. I take comfort knowing the team is right there to take care of them. They're warm, friendly and wonderful caregivers," Vicki said.

Prior to moving into Southminster Place, Mary and



Mary

Chuck had downsized from a large home to an independent living patio home on the Presbyterian SeniorCare Network Washington campus. When Vicki saw that they needed more assistance, she guided them toward a personal care community still within the Network.

"The very first time I called Southminster I spoke to Tara, a Sales Advisor," Vicki said. "She stayed involved every step of the way—always helpful, always available when my parents needed her. She's just been so wonderful to us."

At Presbyterian SeniorCare Network, taking caring for older adults is our calling. Stories like this one about Mary and her family remind us of why we love what we do.

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Moving your body is an important part of wellness. The exercise programs are designed to help build strength and flexibility at your own pace. Anthology of McCandless's mission is to help you to



achieve your goals and assist in creating fitness plans that address your concerns.

Elements Life Enrichment

Finding new hobbies, learning something new or taking part in exciting outings are all part of a healthy, active lifestyle. Anthology of McCandless incorporates everything from poker games to movie nights to book clubs and educational seminars in their Elements Life Enrichment program.

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Virtue Memory Care Neighborhoods are designed for residents to thrive in mind, body and spirit. As part of the rigorous orientation program, each team member has a specialized background in dementia care and receives additional mandatory training each year.



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WCHA's Grand View Senior Residences Progressing

Westmoreland County Housing Authority (WCHA) is preparing the groundwork for construction later this year of its newest apartment building for low-income seniors in the Norwin area – Grand View Senior Residences.



With completion expected early in 2024, the building will feature fifty (50) apartments, forty-six (46) one-bedroom and four two-bedroom units, for residents aged 62 and older, including eight set aside preference for veterans; six fully accessible, and one for the hearing-vision impaired.

It will be the authority's third new construction project in the last decade, joining South Greengate Commons in Hempfield Township, which opened in 2013, and its adjoining sister facility, Odin View Apartments, which was completed 2020. Both facilities represent 92 units of affordable senior 62+ housing.

"Our senior population continues to grow and we as an authority have made it a priority to build new facilities. These projects are critical to provide expanded opportunities for seniors to have quality places to live within Westmoreland County," said Michael L. Washowich, Executive Director.

All of the units will be visitable with an "age-in-place philosophy" – allowing seniors to continue to lead productive independent lives.

In addition to the spacious apartments, the building's amenities will include first floor a Community Room with an additional kitchen area, a connecting porch of similar scale, centrally located common space screened-in porches on two to four floors, four laundry rooms, individual resident storage units on each floor and a dog washroom.

The ground-floor amenities offer engaging community space that connects to the exterior through patios and outdoor program areas promoting a healthy active lifestyle including a concrete walking trail, community gardening space, and a fenced play area for dogs.

Located off Laurel Avenue, directly behind Norwin Public Library, Grand View has received wide support from state, county and local government officials.

"Grand View Senior Residences will serve as the home for county seniors for years to come," said Washowich.

Grand View Senior Residences' location offers convenient access to community amenities as it is near the Route 30 corridor. The Grand View site will include public transportation, easy access to health and retail stores, home health agencies and medical facilities.

A partnership with the Westmoreland County Veterans Association (WVA), as the lead agency, has the collaborative capacity to serve the targeted Supportive Housing Veteran population.

Veteran-specific services will be provided by the WVA, such as applying for entitlements, referrals for benefits, providing grave markers, housebound aid and attendance, disability/widows pension guidance, outreach and identification of service-connected disability.

For services that require transportation, the WVA administers the

DAV shuttle which provides free transport to both Pittsburgh VA hospitals. The nearest Veterans of Foreign Wars post is located less than two miles west. The Supportive Services Program, available to all residents, will provide a variety of outreach to address educational and financial limitations, maintain health and independence, promote access to services and socialization while promoting the ability to maintain the highest possible levels of function, participation and dignity in the community.

> For more information, visit www.wchaonline.com

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SENIOR LIVING

Options for Senior Living



Aging is a time of transitions, and as one's needs change, there is often a need to consider a change in living arrangements. There is a continuum of senior living options to choose from, and choosing well means considering all of one's current needs as well as anticipated future needs. Here are some brief definitions of senior living options.

Aging in place: remaining in one's home, with adaptations and supports to ensure safety and comfort; such adaptations may include a stair lift, step-in shower and personal safety monitors

Independent living: an apartment within a community for adults age 55+, without support services such as meals; usually there are activities and amenities offered

Personal care: a supportive option for those who are mostly independent but need assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing and dressing; residents have rooms; meals and medications are provided as well as social activities

Assisted Living: a care alternative that consists of small apartments with kitchenettes and private baths; services include meals in a dining room, activities, and assistance with activities of daily living as needed

Memory care: licensed assisted living or personal care settings that specialize in care of those with Alzheimer's and dementia; these places have specially trained staff and are locked for resident safety

Senior housing: affordable apartments for seniors age 62 or older

Continuing care retirement community: an option that combines many of the senior living options; CCRC is a flexible living option in which residents generally start out living independently, but may later transfer to a higher level of care as their needs for medical or functional support change

Skilled nursing care: 24-hour skilled nursing and medical care, along with needed rehab and other therapies, for those who need continuous care, medication and monitoring

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Seniors Helping Seniors of Southwestern PA
412-944-2470
www.swpaSeniorCare.com

SENIOR LIVING

Anthology of McCandless
Personal Care | Memory Care
8651 Carey Lane, Pittsburgh, PA
412-336-8371
AnthologyMcCandless.com
You want the best for your loved one and so do we. Join us to get a glimpse of how we empower connections and practice smart compassion.

Baptist Senior Family
Baptist Homes 412-563-6550
Providence Point 412-489-3560
BaptistSeniorFamily.org

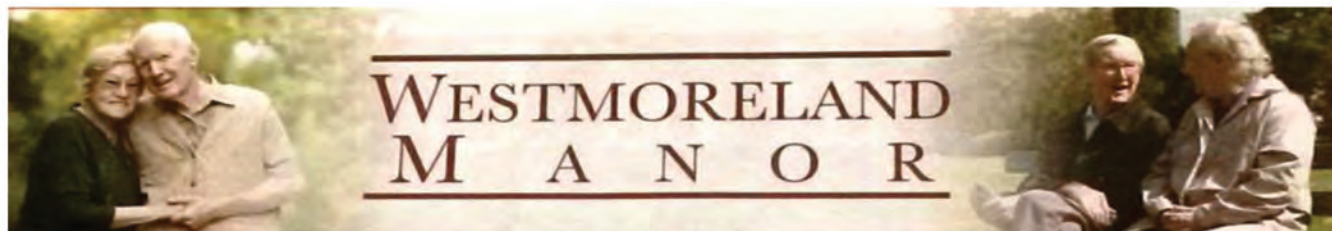
Brightwood Plaza Apartments
4940 Brightwood Rd, Bethel Park
412-831-9454
brightwoodplaza@verizon.net

Christian Housing, Inc
412-646-5193
www.christian-housing.org
Safe, comfortable, community living for adult seniors and persons with disabilities at 15 facilities throughout Pittsburgh area, as well as Greensburg, Elk County and Indiana, PA.

CMS Housing
800-545-1833 • www.cmshousing.com

Grand View Senior Residences
Irwin, PA • 1-800-WCHA-NOW
wchaonline.com
WCHA's newest housing endeavor

Heritage Valley Senior Living
412-331-6139
https://www.heritagevalley.org/
services/senior-living/
Independent Living; Personal Care, Memory Care



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Dr. Thomas DeGregory, Medical Director

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(724) 830-4022
2480 South Grande Boulevard, Greensburg, PA 15601

www.westmorelandmanor.org

We also offer the Eagle Tree Independent Living Apartments in a Protective Environment



SENIOR LIVING

Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh
412-961-1651 • www.hacp.org
Offers seniors safe housing and a high quality of life. Amenities such as security cameras, appliances, digital literacy services, Tenet Council events and more.

Quemahoning Towers
814-467-5041 or 814-467-5423
klivengood@shms-actionhousing.org

Westmoreland County Housing Authority
1-800-WCHA-NOW
wchaonline.com

SENIOR SERVICES

Community Life
1-866-419-1693 www.commlife.org

LIFE Pittsburgh
412-388-8050
www.lifepittsburgh.org

Seniors Helping Seniors of Southwestern PA
412-944-2470
www.swpaSeniorCare.com

SKILLED NURSING & REHABILITATION

ProMedica
412-498-9375 • www.promedica.org
ProMedica Bethel Park 412-831-6050
ProMedica Greentree 412-344-7744
ProMedica Monroeville 412-856-7071
ProMedica North Hills 412-369-9955
ProMedica Peters Twp 724-941-3080
ProMedica Pittsburgh 412-665-2400
ProMedica Shadyside 412-362-3500
ProMedica Whitehall 412-884-3500

Westmoreland Manor
724-830-4022
www.westmorelandmanor.org

SUPPORT GROUPS

VITAS Healthcare Family and Caregiver Support
800-723-3233
VITAS.com

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Westmoreland Transit
1 (800) 221-9282
Door-to-door service to older adults 65+ and people with disabilities. Older Adults 65+ ride FREE, Commuter service to Pittsburgh



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LIFE Pittsburgh is an all-inclusive program for individuals 55+ who want to stay in their home, but need supportive services to do so. Our coordinated plan of care includes medical, social and daily living support. At LIFE Pittsburgh, seniors are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. LIFE Pittsburgh goes beyond simply “treating medical problems” to actually improving the quality of life for most of our Participants. There is no cost to receive LIFE Pittsburgh services for those who qualify.



www.lifepittsburgh.org

412-388-8050 TTY:711

Westmoreland County Transit Authority Can Take You There

Thinking of planning a day with friends for a trip to the city? How will you all get there? Westmoreland County Transit Authority can safely and reliably take you to and from your destination. Whether you choose to take one of our Westmoreland Transit fixed-route buses or decide to utilize GO Westmoreland, we'll work with you to coordinate your trip. If you would like to travel with Westmoreland Transit using the fixed-route service, you can review all our service areas and schedules online at www.westmorelandtransit.com/schedules/. After choosing where and when you and your group would like to go you can either call us at (724) 834-9282 or email us at customerservice@westmorelandtransit.com and we'll help you coordinate your day!

The GO Westmoreland Senior Shared-Ride Program is a feasible



alternative to driving, that strives to assist older adults with active aging and independent living. Riding with GO Westmoreland allows older adults to confidently get to their destination, no matter the occasion. Funding for this door-to-door program is provided by the Pennsylvania State Lottery. Once enrolled in the program, older adults 65+ may travel at a discounted rate.

If you decide to use GO Westmoreland for your event, just give us a call at (724) 832-2706 or email us at customerservice@westmorelandtransit.com with the details of your event and we will get everything coordinated for your day!

Whether you're taking a trip with friends for lunch, or visiting a museum for the day, Westmoreland County Transit Authority would be happy to take you there!



Westmoreland County *Transit Authority*

41 Bell Way, Greensburg, PA 15601

Happy Fall!



Westmoreland Transit

- Local bus service in Westmoreland County
- Commuter service to Pittsburgh
- Discounts for frequent riders
- Ages 65 + ride FREE

724-834-9282



GO Westmoreland

- Shared-ride, Door-to-Door Transportation
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724-832-2706

www.westmorelandtransit.com

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Arnold Tower
Derry Garden Apartments
Eastgate Manor

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Monessen House
Scottdale Manor
South Greengate Commons
Valley Manor
Odin View

Family Housing

Arnold Townhouses
Latrobe Townhouses
Shaner Heights
Kensington Manor
New Florence Manor
Penn Manor
East Ken Manor
Vandergrift Townhouses
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Eastmont Estates
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Mt. Pleasant–Broad Street
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Park Manor
Jeannette Townhouses
Lower Burrell Townhouses
Walnut Avenue Apartments



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Jeffrey C. Liu, M.D.



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