In Memoriam

Last fall, our community lost a gay rights pioneer and visionary, Harry Hay, a recipient of SAGE’s 2001 Lifetime Achievement Award. As reported on Advocate.com, Hay became a “homophile,” or gay activist, in the 1940s. In 1950, he helped found one of the original gay organizations, the Mattachine Society. He and his life partner, John Burnside, also launched the Radical Faerie counterculture movement in 1979 – when he was in his late 60s! – which honored the distinctiveness and individuality of gay and lesbian people.

Asked to comment on Harry’s life, Terry Kaelder, SAGE’s Executive Director said “Harry Hay was a true visionary. At a time when gays and lesbians were seen as evil, immoral people, his was a lone voice arguing against this view and for the idea that we were (and are) a discriminated against minority worthy of equal rights. He passionately believed that LGBT people had much to offer the rest of the world and worked until the end of his life for our community’s behalf. His energy, light and leadership will be missed.”

(Sage Matters, Winter, 2002-2003)

‘Cross Linkage’ Factor in Aging

By Jean R. Eckerly, M.D.

We have been discussing aging in articles over the past year. The basic theory as to why cells in the body begin to slow down and eventually stop functioning is cross linkage. An easy analogy is the “paper clips in the drawer.” As long as you can pull them out one at a time they are very functional, but once they begin linking together, trying to use them can be very frustrating. However, unlike the mystery of how paper clips do that, there are some explanations as to why molecules in our cells become cross linked. Free radicals can set the stage, and in [another] article we talked about the importance of aluminum in aging.

The more smoothly our body’s metabolism occurs, the less likely we are to experience cross linkages. Complete digestion of our food prevents “half-way” products from causing cross linkage. We have talked about the importance of digestion and how disruptive the various “antacids” (Zantac, Pepsid, Axcel, Nexium, etc.) can be. Furthermore, it is better to eat several smaller meals than one big one, to give your digestive system an even break.

Our basic energy sources are carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. Carbohydrates are the easiest for the body to process into energy. The prime energy source for the brain and muscles is glucose, which is the sugar that is derived from complex carbohydrates. Fructose is not the same as glucose, but is the sweetener used most in the food industry.

Fats are the most concentrated energy source. Pound for pound, the body derives more than twice as much energy from fat as it does from carbohydrate or protein. Which is why you have to work so hard to burn it off! Unsaturated fats are easier for the body to use, but they also can become rancid (oxidized) more quickly. Therefore, one only derives real benefit from unsaturated fats if they are accompanied by a strong supply of antioxidants.

Proteins provide energy, and also some essential amino acids (those which the body cannot manufacture). It is extremely difficult to digest protein (meat, fowl and fish) without stomach acid.
Consumers Can Now Compare Nursing Homes

Consumers across the nation now have another tool to compare the quality of care in America’s nursing homes under a new government program that discloses quality indicators—such as the prevalence of bed sores to the percentage of residents in physical restraints.

"Nursing homes will have to compete in the quality arena," Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson told a press briefing.

William L. Minnix Jr., president of the nonprofit American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, said the “good homes will shine” under the program and “those [that] refuse to get better will be driven out of business.”

Data on nursing home quality are online at www.medicare.gov or by calling Medicare at (800) 633-4227.

Don’t Count Prescription Drug Savings Just Yet

Even though the White House recently proposed rule changes that will help bring cheaper generic drugs to market sooner, consumers may not see any savings on their drug bills anytime soon.

Political analysts predict a lengthy delay as drugmakers challenge the changes—scheduled to take effect by spring—in court.

The new rules would close some of the legal loopholes that allow drugmakers to block approval and marketing of generic versions of their brand-name drugs. These tactics include repeatedly obtaining 30-month court delays to stymie generic manufacturers.

"It’s important that the president supports closing these loopholes," says AARP analyst Paul Cotton.

"But it’s not absolutely clear the administration has the authority to make these changes and drug companies are almost certain to sue to find out.”

(AARP Bulletin, December 2002)

it’s that time again — treating a cold or the flu

According to a folk saying, wearing a necklace of amber beads will cure a cold. Another myth says that if you catch a falling leaf on the first day of autumn, you won’t catch a cold all winter. These sayings show that people can be very imaginative when looking for cures for the common cold.

The truth is, there is no cure for the cold or flu yet. The best thing you can do is to get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.

Antibiotics will not cure a cold or the flu but some over-the-counter medications may help relieve your symptoms while your body heals itself. The following may help:

For fever and body aches: acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Advil)

For runny or stuffy nose: decongestants like pseudoephedrine (such as Sudafed) or decongestant nose spray like oxymetazoline (such as Afrin—do not use for more than three days at a time)

"Kaiser recommendations' on page 4

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This newsletter is available in Adobe Acrobat Reader via E-mail; request: hendriksen@aol.com 510-652-6906
Medicare HMOs: Charging More... But Often Cutting Back on Benefits to Participants

By Patricia Barry

Many health plans in the troubled Medicare+Choice (M+C) program will charge enrollees higher premiums and copayments in 2003. And many will reduce benefits— with half the plans that cover prescription drugs no longer paying for brand names but only lower-cost generics. The changes continue a trend of rising out-of-pocket costs and weakening benefits that have hit many enrollees in recent years. They show “the continued erosion of M+C plans’ ability to address the benefit limitations of Medicare,” conclude analysts Lori Achman and Marsha Gold in a new report for the Commonwealth Fund research group.

Hardest hit are beneficiaries in fair or poor health, whose out-of-pocket spending more than doubled from 1999 to 2002.

The M+C program—mostly HMOs offering more benefits than fee-for-service Medicare—began in 1998. At first many plans charged no premiums and offered generous drug benefits with nominal copays and no limits on coverage. But, as steeply rising costs outpaced the plans’ federal reimbursements, that all changed.

In 1999, 85 percent of beneficiaries had access to plans with zero premiums, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the agency that runs Medicare. By 2003, that will drop to 30 percent.

Cost sharing—fueled mainly by higher copays for hospital stays and drugs—will rise on average 40 percent from this year to next.

In 2003, 68 percent of M+C enrollees will have access to some drug coverage. But 43 percent will be covered only for generics, up from 30 percent this year, CMS says.

“Today there are onerous premiums attached to plans with drug benefits,” says Tom Snedden, director of Pennsylvania’s PACE program, which helps lower-income beneficiaries pay for drugs. “Most plans now have caps, they’re weighted toward generic-only coverage and the copays are anything but nominal. What a difference—in only five years.”

These trends are hardly surprising, experts say, given that without a Medicare drug benefit the government cannot reimburse plans for covering drugs. The expectation in 1998 that private M+C plans would manage costs so efficiently that they could provide extras like drugs has not worked out in many areas.

“It was never realistic even at the beginning to think that [the M+C program] could make up for the lack of drug coverage in Medicare,” says Gold, a Medicare expert at Mathematica Policy Research in Washington. “Now we’re finding how unrealistic it was.”

‘Medicare HMOs’ on page 5.
'Cross Linkage'
Factor in Aging
(from page 1)

Our path to longevity would consist of eating a well rounded diet of carbohydrate, fat and protein, which should include fresh fruits and vegetables as sources, as well as providing much needed vitamins and minerals. Then we should be sure that we are getting adequate amounts of antioxidants in the form of vitamin E (400-600 units), Vitamin C (500-1000 mg.) and selenium (200 mcg.). We must make sure that we are digesting this food properly in order to gain the full benefits.

Our next concern is to avoid consuming poisons. This includes most food additives, as well as heavy metals (aluminum, lead, cadmium, mercury, etc.). It is wise to consider removing toxic metals from the body through some form of chelation. EDTA chelation therapy has been used since 1942 by a minority of physicians concerned with promoting longevity. There are natural chelating agents such as garlic, citric acid, and even lactic acid, all of which will bind with toxic metals and remove them from the body. Our muscles produce lactic acid when we exercise. Therefore, taking a brisk walk (or its equivalent) for an hour a day could be adequate for this purpose, not to mention the build up of muscle strength. (Dancing would work.)

Similarly, exercise of the brain is important – reading, puzzle games, poker, etc. We have discussed the importance of lecithin for the brain, so an egg a day is a very good thing to eat. Change one thing at a time, one day at a time.

[OLOC Reporter, September 2002]

¡Happy Birthday!

Beth Williams
January 1
Carol Beth
Gerald Felton
January 2
Maggie Rochlin
January 4
Paul Silverman
January 5
Roma Rehfisch
January 7
W. Pigman
January 13
Ina Mae Murri
January 15
Penny Dlugosh
January 17
Bob Compton
January 25
Susan Vanderburgh
January 27
Mary Volz
January 31

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

Medicare Goes Up, Social Security Benefits to Increase 1.4 Percent

By Roberta Yared

Monthly premiums for Medicare Part B will rise to $58.70 in 2003, while Social Security benefits will go up by 1.4 percent.

In January most of America’s 46 million Social Security beneficiaries will get a raise of about $13 a month — the lowest cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in four years. The increase was 2.6 percent last year.

The net Social Security benefit is reduced further, however, because premiums for Medicare Part B are deducted from Social Security payments. The deduction for 2003 is $58.70 monthly, an increase of 8.7 percent from the current premium of $54.

“This year’s catch-up Social Security COLA is modest indeed, compared to the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs and other health-related expenses,” says AARP policy director John Rother. “But unlike most stock market investments, at least Social Security is something everyone can count on.”

For more information on Social Security go to www.ssa.gov, to learn more about Medicare go to www.medicare.gov.

(AARP Bulletin, December 2003)

2003 MEDICARE & SOCIAL SECURITY
MEdICARE
Part B monthly premium $58.70
Part B deductible $100.00
Part A deductible-hospital stay per benefit period $840.00
SOCIAL SECURITY
Cost-of-living adjustment 1.4%
MONTHLY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS
Average, all retired workers $895.00
Average, couple both receiving benefits $1,483.00
Maximum benefit $1,741.00
Sources: Social Security Administration

Sauerkraut, Yes (But Hot Dogs, No)

Cabbage is good, but sauerkraut is even better – in fighting cancer, that is.

The fermented cabbage in sauerkraut may be healthier than raw or cooked cabbage, reports the MTT Agrifood Research Finland, because it contains isothiocyanates, substances that have stopped the growth of cancer in test tube and animal studies. The researchers’ study was reported in the Oct. 23 Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.
Saturday • 12 Noon • Potluck Meeting
• Program at 1 P.M. • January 11

Your name begins with the letters
A through I — Bring a Main Dish
J through R — Bring a Salad
S through Z — Bring a Dessert
San Leandro BART station shuttle is available. Call voice mail day before: 667-9655 to arrange pickup.

Presentation of the Month:

Things You’ve Been Itch’n to Know
Kathy McCarter, R.N., Dermatology

What “bugs you” about your skin? Kathy will discuss common skin complaints and diseases associated with seniors. After all, the skin is the largest organ of the body!

Itch’n to Know More

Winter is fast approaching and with it comes dry, itchy skin—better known as “Winter Itch.” Our skin dries out this time of year when our heaters are turned up high. To help alleviate the itching, after bathing or showering, pat yourself dry and apply plenty of moisturizers. Some good brands are Cetaphil, DML Forte and Norwegian Formula.

Don’t forget your dry lips. Vaseline works well and it’s inexpensive. Put it on several times a day and again at bedtime.

Remember to use sunscreen. Just because the days are overcast, the ultraviolet rays still come through. Use at least a SPF 15. Ingredients Zinc Oxide or Parsol work best.

Take good care of your skin. After all, it is the largest organ of your body!—Kathy McCarter, R.N.

Medicare HMOs Charging More…

(from page 3)

As a result, many plans have exited the program. In 2003, 11 states and the District of Columbia will have no M+C managed care plans.

CMS calculates that if enrollees stay in their present plans their premiums on average will go up from $31 a month this year to $39 in 2003, a 26 percent increase. But many face much steeper hikes. An AARP Bulletin analysis finds that M+C premiums in Pennsylvania, for example, will rise on average from $54 to $84 a month. The average for plans there that cover only generic drugs will go up from $67 to $93 a month.

Plans that include coverage of brand-name drugs tend toward higher premiums. In Massachusetts such plans cost from $90 to $145 a month; in Michigan from $40 to $193.

Plans with zero premiums and reasonable drug benefits still exist, mainly in large urban centers in Florida, California and New York. Elsewhere, most low-premium plans (as well as some with high rates) have higher cost sharing and, often, no drug coverage.

Beneficiaries can compare details of 2003 plans in their county (if any) on the Health Plan Compare site at www.medicare.gov or by calling (800) 633-4227. Experts advise looking beyond premiums to the fine print—and asking plans for precise details of coverage and cost sharing.

(AARP Bulletin, December 2002)

Kaiser recommendations

(from page 2)

In California, flu season usually runs January through March. We recommend that healthy adults get a flu shot in November or December to help protect you all season long.

For Kaiser members it’s a good idea to get a Kaiser Permanente Cold and Flu Self-Care Kit for Adults from a Kaiser Permanente pharmacy before you get a cold or the flu. It includes chicken soup, tea, decongestants, antihistamines, and throat lozenges.

(From Kaiser Members News, Winter 2002)

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Our Mailing List Lavender Seniors does not lend, sell or give away its mailing list to any outside organization.

Your support is crucial to enable the Lavender Seniors to continue its role as a vital resource to our community. Please take a moment and send your donation today.

Here's my gift of: $10 $25 $50 $75 $100 other __________

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City ______________________________
State ______ Zip Code ______________
Home Telephone ____________________
E-mail address ____________________

☐ Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will. ☐ Please contact me to volunteer.

Please make checks payable to
The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors
and mail to:
Lavender Seniors
1395Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro, CA 94577

Thank you for your generosity!
Community Listings

Fellows of East Bay
Second Sunday, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.
Social Club for mature men and their admirers. Monthly Potluck dinner and social held the second Sunday of every month at Oak Center Towers, 1515 Market Street, Oakland.
Bring food and drink to share and a $4 donation.
January 12

East Bay Women’s Support Group
Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays each month
January 10 and 24: 1:15 – 3 P.M.
Meets at Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Senior Men’s Afternoon
1:30 – 3:30 P.M.
2nd and 4th Thursdays
January 9 and 23
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley
Co-sponsored by Pacific Center and Lavender Seniors

Please participate in Needs Assessment
http://intercom.virginia.edu/SurveySuite/Surveys/SAGE/index2.html
SAGE = Senior Action in a Gay Environment
Thank you for your help. Amber Hollibaugh, SAGE Director of Education, Advocacy and Community Building

That’s what?
You see a handsome butch at a party. You go up to her and say, “I’m fantastic in bed.”
— That’s Direct Marketing.
You’re at a party with a bunch of friends and see a handsome butch. One of your friends goes up to her and pointing at you says, “She’s fantastic in bed.”
— That’s Advertising.
You see a handsome butch at a party. You go up to her, and get her telephone number. The next day you call and say, “Hi, I’m fantastic in bed.”
— That’s Telemarketing.
You’re at a party and see a handsome butch. You get up and straighten your dress. You walk up to her and pour her a drink. You say, “May I,” and reach up to straighten her collar brushing your breast lightly against her arm, and then say, “By the way, I’m fantastic in bed.”
— That’s Public Relations.
You’re at a party and see a handsome butch. She walks up to you and says, “I hear you’re fantastic in bed.”
— That’s Brand Recognition.
You’re at a party and see a handsome butch. You talk her into going home with your friend.
— That’s a Sales Rep.
Your friend can’t satisfy her so she calls you.
— That’s Tech Support.
You’re on your way to a party when you realize that there could be handsome butches in all these houses you’re passing. So you climb onto the roof of one situated toward the center and shout at the top of your lungs, “I’m fantastic in bed!”
— That’s Spam.

Women Over Fifty and Friends
WOFF
Meets Saturday, January 4
Pot Luck is at 6 P.M.
(meeting follows)
San Leandro Community Church
Fireside Room
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro
Hosting:
Cam & Cheryl (530) 432-4860
Iris (510) 841-4776

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
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Volunteer Services Program • 1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • 510-667-9655 • lavenderseniors@msn.com