

Health & Science

Patient care for diverse groups in city & country

Lorna Fairveather of the Caribbean Women's Health Association of New York addresses health care for an ethnically diverse, inner city constituency.

Ms. Fairveather will discuss the association's challenging work delivering maternal child health and HIV/AIDS education services to Latinos, Caribbean Americans and African Americans in Brooklyn and Queens,

two boroughs in New York City.

Dr. Sandra K. Oliver, a Research Facilitator with Scott and White Memorial Hospital in Temple, Texas, examines the role of telecommunications in facilitating graduate nursing education and nursing care in rural central Texas.

Based on distance learning, the graduate nursing program was established in 1992 by Scott and White

Memorial Hospital and Texas A&M College of Medicine.

It has served important functions of advancing nursing education and patient care in an area of population growth and shrinking resources for health care.

Informatics & Immunization

A full-day workshop explores the emerging area of Nursing Informatics. It will focus on increasingly sophis-

ticated health care systems requiring nurses and other health care professionals to apply information management principles to patient care.

The workshop also covers use of the Internet for health care.

Other sessions review the National Black Nurses Association's campaign to immunize children and national activities of the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, part

of the federal Department of Health & Human Services.

In addition to educational sessions, featured programs at the five-day Convention include a panel discussion on assisted suicide and demonstrations on health care technology by Digital Equipment Corporation.

The National League for Nursing is a leader in advancing the health of

diverse communities through nursing.

The National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC), an independent affiliate of the NLN, is the official accrediting body of the country's nursing schools.

In order to learn more about NLN, including convention updates, visit the league's web site on line at <http://222.nln.org>.

Early Sign of Alzheimer's Found

An impaired ability to remember a tale within a half hour of hearing it is the earliest known marker for Alzheimer's disease in individuals aged 80 years and older.

"Verbal memory impairment is a presymptomatic sign of dementia of the Alzheimer's type in the oldest old," write researchers in the May issue of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. Dr. Diane B. Howieson and colleagues at the

Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland came to this conclusion following their study of 139 healthy individuals aged 65 to 104 years.

Most of the study participants were followed for at least three years. Each year, the study subjects were given a series of neuropsychological

tests to assess their brain function, as well as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans. Eighteen of them developed some type of dementia; 16 of these were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. These patients were compared with 31 nondemented controls, all of whom were aged 80 years or older.

On the basis of the test results, patients who developed Alzheimer's dementia were found to have had "measurable cognitive decline before the dementia (became) clinically evident." Verbal memory impairment — especially

trouble remembering two short stories within a half hour of hearing them — was specifically noted at the beginning of the study in the subjects who

went on to develop Alzheimer's disease, an average of 2.8 years prior to the onset of clinical symptoms.

"Alzheimer's disease has an insidious onset, and therefore, it is expected that there is a preclinical stage," write the researchers. X-ray and other imaging studies have suggested that changes in brain cells may precede actual symptoms of the disease by "an extended period of years," they explain.

The authors point out that the early detection of Alzheimer's will be advantageous, because "when new treatments are found for Alzheimer's disease, it will be imperative that treatment be given at the earliest clinical signs before further irreparable damage ensues."

County health clinics get reprieve

Multnomah County Health Clinics in Gresham and North Portland will not close on July 1 as previously planned. The Board of County Commissioners has reached an informal decision to spend \$650,000 to keep the clinics open until Sept. 1 while a possible funding strategy is completed.

The money is available due to the passage of Ballot Measure 50. The Board has been considering a bud-

get based on Ballot Measure 47 that would have required more than \$27 million in cuts.

Under Measure 50, the cut amount drops to about \$24 million.

The additional funding will allow the Board of Commissioners to consider saving some library, health and other county services that would otherwise be cut.

The County is working with private healthcare providers and the

State of Oregon to develop a plan for providing health services to uninsured County residents.

Not closing the clinics on July 1 provides some time to work out the elements of the partnership.

A final budget for the coming fiscal year is expected to be adopted by June 16. The next public hearing on the County budget is Wednesday, June 4 at 6:30 p.m. at the Gresham Public Library, 385 NW Miller.

Oregon House passes PKU bill

The Oregon House unanimously passed House Bill 2388 which mandates that insurance companies pay for medical foods for children with phenylketonuria (PKU).

PKU is a hereditary disease that affects about one in 10,000 babies born in the US. Because of their disease, the children lack an enzyme needed to break down phenylala-

nine, an amino acid found in most food.

Without costly nutritional supplements, children with PKU experience a buildup of phenylalanine.

SIDS linked to cigarette smoke, second-hand mattresses

Infants who sleep on their stomach or who are exposed to cigarette smoke are at greatest risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), a new study confirms. But a surprising finding was that children that slept on second-hand mattresses were at greater risk as well, according to a report in the *British Medical Journal*.

"However, this increased risk was not established for mattresses totally covered by polyvinyl chloride," reported lead study author Hazel Brooke, the executive director of the Scottish Cot Death Trust at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow, Scotland. "Sleeping on an old mattress may be important but needs confirmation before recommendations can be made," she wrote. It's not clear why the type of mattress would make any difference in SIDS risk, although polyvinyl chloride, a type of plastic, may be cleaner than other mattresses.

In the new study, Brooke and colleagues compared 201 children who died of SIDS to 276 healthy infants, and found that infants who died of SIDS were more than five times as likely as other babies to have two parents who smoked.

The researchers also found that SIDS babies were nearly seven times as likely to sleep on their stomachs, thought relatively few infants — 9% — in the study slept in that position. A massive SIDS prevention campaign launched in the U.K. in the early 1990s has reduced the number of babies that are put to bed face-down. Since then, the number of SIDS deaths have dropped.

A similar campaign by the American Academy of Pediatrics called "Back to Sleep" was followed by a 15% to 20% drop in SIDS deaths in the U.S. since the program was launched in 1992.

But the British study has uncovered a new potential danger. "A new finding was an increased risk of dying of the syndrome for infants who slept at night

on a mattress previously used by another infant or adult," Brooke wrote. Babies who slept on a used mattress had more than twice the risk of SIDS as other infants, though that was not true for those using a polyvinyl chloride-covered bed.

The cause of SIDS is unknown, but it is thought that infants who sleep on their stomach in soft bedding are at greater risk because they are re-breathing carbon dioxide-rich air that is trapped in the bedding. Another theory is that household fungi may interact with chemicals released by the fire-retardant plastic covering on some infant mattresses, releasing toxic gases.

However, the new finding would seem to contradict that hypothesis, the authors noted. Because so many parents are now putting infants to sleep on their back, "parental smoking is currently the most modifiable risk factor in the sudden infant death syndrome," according to the report. About two out of three SIDS deaths could be prevented if mothers did not smoke during or after pregnancy.

"Sleeping on an old mattress may be a new modifiable risk factor, but merits further investigation," the authors concluded.

"TALL Oaks

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David Everett - 1997

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Stroke risks

More than 50% of the people who are at increased risk for a stroke are unaware of it, a new study shows.


A national survey of patients with high stroke potential also finds that 28% did not recall their doctors telling them about their increased risk.

And in a related study, only about 25% of stroke patients correctly see their symptoms as stroke-related.

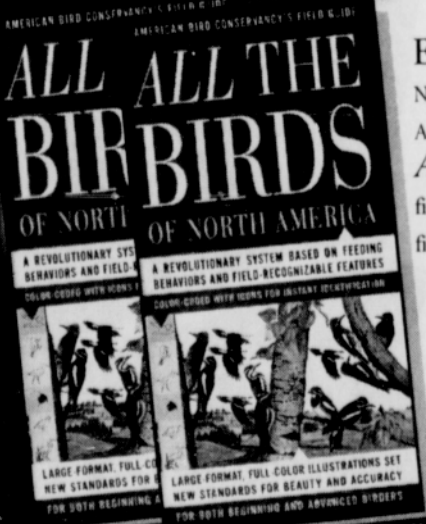
Findings of the first study are based on survey responses of more than 1,200 participants in the nationwide Patient Outcomes Research Team (PORT) study aimed at stroke prevention.

"Patients were selected because they had factors that put them at increased risk of having a stroke," says study co-author Dr. Larry Goldstein, associate professor of neurology at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Among participants' stroke risk factors were atrial fibrillation (a heart rhythm irregularity), narrowing of the carotid arteries that feed blood to the brain, high blood pressure, heart disease, or a "It is also important that persons with this disease have an opportunity to participate in planning for their health care and future," the Oregon team concludes.



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