

your

BENEFIT MESSENGER

THE NMRHCA'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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NEW WEBSITE TO BE UNVEILED

For the past several months NMRHCA's website has been under construction. NMRHCA is thrilled to be unveiling its new website in July. We have undergone a much overdue makeover. Our website is just one component of the overhaul of our entire retiree system. (See Careview Article on page 2)

After months of research, designing, brainstorming, and hard work, the new website will now have a clean new feel and face for our retirees, employees, and employers. We have trimmed much of the fatty material that congested its predecessor for a much more aesthetically pleasing and more easily navigable online experience.

"We are excited to bring a new and improved resource to our retirees, active employees, and participating employers," said Mark Tyndall, Executive Director. "The new website doesn't just feel better, it functions better with some new features that will be very useful to all involved."

With more than 50,000 hits per month, the website will be a one stop shop for all stakeholders. More than a mere face-lift, the site underwent a transformation from top to bottom. The aim is to make

the site more user friendly while providing accurate information.

Retirees, active employees, and employers will notice boxes specifically tailored for their specific needs with icons that will be much larger to click on. There will be improved resources, with streaming videos giving information on how to improve your health. While there is so much more to mention, it would be better to visit the website when its unveiled. So be on the lookout in July and take a few minutes to click around. We think you will be pleasantly pleased at the ease with which you can access it all.

WHY PROPER GUM CARE MAKES YOU A HEALTHIER PERSON

Article provided by © United Concordia

The longer that bacteria hang out on your teeth, the more chances inflammation or gingivitis can occur. Those bacteria create acid that can eat away at your gums and eventually lead to tooth loss. Gingivitis is a mild form of gum disease. It can cause redness, swelling and bleeding of the gums. The great news is that gum disease can usually be pre-

vented with regular home and professional dental care.

Here's how you can take care of your gums and avoid gum disease down the road:

3 steps to proper gum care

1. FLOSS: Flossing is the most important thing you can do to take care of your gums. Why? Because flossing helps you get rid of food particles that get stuck between your teeth. Floss comes in many different types. Your dentist can help you figure out what floss is right for you.

2. BRUSH GUMS: That's right. Gently brush your toothbrush over your gums in a circular motion just as you would when brushing your teeth. This helps to remove any foreign debris that may not even be noticeable.

3. SEE YOUR DENTIST: Visit your dentist regularly (usually every six months) for checkup and cleanings. If gum disease is detected early, your dentist can recommend a treatment plan to stop it from spreading and can minimize the damage

INTRODUCING CAREVIEW - YOUR NEW BENEFITS SYSTEM

At the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority, we are committed to your health and wellness throughout your retirement years. That is why we are bringing CareView to you--a new retiree benefit system to provide greater efficiency for your benefit needs. CareView will make it easier than ever to manage your coverage and benefits, and stay up to date on all matters regarding your healthcare.



Our current system has been in use since the inception of the agency, and the system has served us well. However, over the years it became evident that a new system was needed to keep up with our evolving

needs. Over the last several months we have been working hard in creating a system that will serve your needs more efficiently.

CareView will allow you to make secure and reliable changes to your personal information, make changes during switch enrollment, allow you to review your yearly tax information, and much more.

We hope that by allowing you to access your important benefit plan information, you can easily make informed decisions that are key to you. In the coming months you will receive more information about CareView and the various ways that you can interact with the system via our website.

THE DECISION TO QUIT SMOKING - CRAVINGS

The urge to smoke will come and go. There are people, places, things, and situations that may trigger the urge to smoke. How are you going to handle it?

IDENTIFY SMOKING TRIGGERS

Everyone who smokes has smoking triggers. Knowing your triggers helps you stay in control. At first, you might want to avoid triggers all together. After staying quit for awhile, you may be able to find other ways to handle your triggers. Here are some common smoking triggers:

- *Feeling stressed*
- *Feeling down*
- *Talking on the phone*
- *Drinking alcohol*
- *Watching TV*
- *Driving*
- *Finishing a meal*
- *Taking a work break*
- *Going to a bar*
- *Seeing someone else smoke*
- *Cooling off after a fight*
- *Feeling lonely*
- *Drinking coffee*

PLAN HOW TO HANDLE CRAVINGS

You won't be able to avoid all smoking triggers, so it's important to make a plan for how to handle cravings. Remember, cravings typically last 5 to 10 minutes. It might be uncomfortable, but try to wait it out. Make a list of things you can do to distract yourself, like:

- Call or text someone. You don't have to do this alone, lean on the people you trust to distract you. Or call 1-877-44U-QUIT to talk to an expert (for free) about quitting smoking.
- Wait 15 minutes. Challenge yourself to read a magazine, listen to music, or play your favorite game for 15 minutes. Cravings only last a few minutes!
- Take a walk or jog. Don't have time? Go up and down the stairs a few times. Physical activity, even in short bursts, can help boost your energy and beat a craving.
- Review your reason for quitting. Just one puff will feed your craving and make it stronger. Starve the craving by reminding yourself why you want to be smoke free.
- Go to a smoke free zone. Most public places don't allow smoking. Go to a movie, a store, or any other smoke free public place where you're forced not to smoke.
- Calculate your savings. Cigarettes are expensive. Add up all the money you're saving and decide what you're going to buy with it.
- Keep your mouth busy. Bum a stick of gum instead of a cigarette, or keep hard candy with you. Drinking water also works!
- Do something else. When a craving hits, stop what you're doing immediately and do something else. Simply changing your routine can help you shake off a craving.
- Take deep breaths. Breathe through your craving by inhaling (through your nose) and exhaling (through your mouth). Repeat this 10 time or

until you're feeling more relaxed.

Cravings will come and go. Remember, trying something to beat the urge to smoke is always better than not trying anything. Do what works best for you when a craving hits. Just don't smoke. Not even one puff!

For more tips and information on quitting smoking visit www.smokefree.gov.

MAKE PLANS FOR END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS

Article courtesy of Lorrie Griego / Program Manager, Advance Care Planning, Presbyterian Healthcare Services and Dr. Nancy Guinn / Medical Director, Presbyterian Home Health-care, Presbyterian Healthcare Services

Published in the Albuquerque Journal on April 14, 2014 Guest Columns - Opinions

Wednesday, April 16, is National Healthcare Decisions Day, which is focused on encouraging people to think about advance care planning and health care advance directives. You might ask, why do we need a day devoted to advance directives – don't we all know the importance of sharing our health care preferences?

Unfortunately, the answer is no.

National data from The Conversation Project, an organization dedicated to helping people talk about end-of-life wishes, show that most people say advance directives are important but only about 30 percent of us have one.

We have lots of excuses. "They're expensive." "I'm too young." Or even just, "Yuck, that's too hard to talk about."

Here are a few facts: You don't need an attorney to create a health care advance directive. In New Mexico there is no requirement that your advance directive be notarized or even witnessed. You can ask your health care provider for a form or find it online by searching for "advance directive" at www.phs.org. Every person over the age of 18 should have an advance directive; in short, they should be a routine

part of our health care.

On Wednesday, Advance Directive Ambassadors from Presbyterian Healthcare Services can help start the conversation. They will answer questions about advance care planning and provide advance directive documents at all Presbyterian Medical Group locations in Albuquerque from 9 a.m. to noon. The city of Albuquerque will also have ambassadors at senior and multi-generational centers during the same hours.

An advance directive is about choosing the type of care that you would or would not want. You can choose every treatment known, something in between, or no treatment at all. They represent the full spectrum of your medical preferences.

Talking about the care that we or our loved ones would want in the face of a serious illness can be tough. But the risk of not talking is that we place our loved ones in the difficult position of having to guess our wishes.

This can place entire families in turmoil.

Once you talk with your family, write it down. People will often say that their spouse or children know what they want, so it is unnecessary to create a formal advance directive. We may think they know because we've made vague statements, like "Make sure I never end up like that," but this can lead to more confusion.

Verbal instructions are rarely as specific as the wishes that can be documented in an advance directive. In addition, when a medical professional is asking someone to make a health care decision because their loved one can't, fear, panic and grief can take over. Rarely is there time to say, "Let me think this over and get back to you."

Let's use Wednesday, National Healthcare Decisions Day, to give ourselves and our loved ones the peace of knowing that in a stressful health care situation there will be no need to guess. Create an advance directive, make sure your health care provider has a

copy, and share your wishes with loved ones.

HOW CAN I FEEL EVEN BETTER WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)?

Article by WebMD

When you're living with RA, there are days you feel OK, but you wouldn't call them "good days." You don't feel at the top of your game. Perhaps you're worried that a flare is just around the corner. With today's improved RA treatments, OK isn't good enough!

ARE YOU GETTING REGULAR CHECKUPS AND SEEING A SPECIALIST?

Even when your RA is less active, regular check-ins with your doctor are important. The Arthritis Foundation recommends seeing your doctor at least once a year to manage your RA.

If you are not already seeing a rheumatologist, consider asking for a referral to one. Studies have shown that people with RA who see a rheumatologist regularly (several times a year) do better than people who don't. A rheumatologist specializes in the treatment of RA, and may be able to tweak your treatment to help you feel even better.

HAVE YOU WORKED WITH A PHYSICAL THERAPIST OR AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

Take advantage of these "OK" days to work with a physical or occupational therapist to strengthen your muscles and improve your flexibility. The therapist can show you the safest ways to move your body for everyday tasks, like lifting a box, to help protect your joints. They can also teach you exercises to do at home safely. You want to build strength without overdoing it and triggering a flare.

If you haven't tried one, get a referral from your doctor. An occupational therapist shows you ways to do specific tasks at home or at work. A physical therapist helps keep you moving, stronger and more flexible. No matter which type of therapist you choose, it's best to see someone who has experience-

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working with people who have arthritis.

HAVE YOU TRIED PILATES, TAI CHI, OR YOGA?

These slow, gentle, flowing exercises help increase balance and flexibility. They may even help reduce pain. Research by the Arthritis Foundation showed that yoga poses, breathing, and relaxation significantly reduce joint tenderness and swelling in some people with RA. Tai chi has been shown to help reduce chronic pain. Pilates strengthens your core, taking pressure off your joints.

All of these holistic exercises benefit your mind and your body. They're meditative, and they increase strength and balance. But perhaps their greatest benefit is that they help reduce stress. Just having RA can increase your stress levels. And stress itself can increase your sensation of pain. If you haven't already, try one of these mindful exercises to unwind and get stronger, all at the same time.

ARE YOU EATING HEALTHY FOODS TO FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

By knowing what foods to incorporate into their diet, people with RA are able to reduce inflammation and improve their overall health.

Studies have shown that following a Mediterranean diet can help reduce inflammation. A Mediterra-

nean diet is high in omega-3 fatty acids, which help reduce inflammation, improve joint pain, and boost your immune system.

Walnuts and cold-water fish, such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, and anchovies, are a great source. Using oil, such as canola, nut, and flaxseed oils, are also another way to incorporate omega-3s into your diet. Try cooking with them or using them for salad dressings. These are healthier options than hydrogenated oils or oils that are high in saturated fats. Along with omega-3s, it's important to have adequate amounts of iron and folic acid to protect against anemia.

Studies show that 60% of the people with RA have anemia. Good sources of folic acid are beets, lentils, and beans, such as garbanzos and black beans. Dark leafy greens like spinach and kale are not only high in folic acid, but are also high in antioxidants, which have been shown to be helpful in minimizing RA symptoms and boosting the immune system.

RA can be different for everyone, so it's important to figure out what works best for you. But in general, aim for eating a diet that's low in saturated fat, as well as high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein.

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