in the Spotlight

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Quote of the Month

"In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is."

Yogi Berra

Pharmacy News

September 2011

Gene-Drug Matchmaker May Find New Uses for Old Medicines, Researchers Say

A computer program that pairs gene information with drug data may help resurrect old medicines for new uses, including an over-the-counter ulcer pill that may be used to treat lung cancer, Stanford University scientists said. By searching through a National Institutes of Health database that catalogs the results of genomic studies, researchers matched symptoms of diseases with the effects of drugs, yielding 1,000 potential new treatments, said Atul Butte, the study's lead researcher.

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Test for Calcium Buildup May Spot Heart Attack, Stroke Risk

Scan may help predict which patients deemed at moderate risk would benefit from statins: study A calcium test performed with the assistance of a CT scanner seems to provide insight into the likelihood that certain patients at moderate risk of heart problems will have a heart attack or stroke, researchers say. The test to detect coronary calcium can help physicians determine whether the patients should take cholesterol-lowering drugs to reduce their cardiovascular risks, the study authors explained

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Mainstay Meds Often Cut Off Accidentally After Hospital Stay

ICU patients most likely to go off their regular regimen, study finds. Many patients who are hospitalized fail to receive their regular medications for chronic conditions during their stay and often fail to restart them when they're discharged, researchers say. Patients treated in the intensive care unit (ICU) are even less likely to resume their regular medication schedule after discharge, probably because there are so many "transitions of care" to different units within the hospital and so many different care teams involved, the study found.

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Cancer Drug Shortages Getting Worse, FDA Says

Since 2010, the number of drugs either in short supply or not available at all has risen dramatically, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Most of these are generic drugs given by injection and used in hospitals to treat serious conditions such as breast and testicular cancer. These shortages are putting patients at risk and compromising their care, experts say. "FDA has been monitoring shortages for the last six years, and in 2010 we saw a large spike in shortages, which was a large jump from the year before," said Valerie Jensen, associate director of the Drug Shortage Program in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "That's what we are continuing to see in 2011. We are still seeing these large numbers of injectable drug shortages."

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Long-Term Antibiotic Use May Lessen COPD Flare-Ups

But treatment, which has side effects, is best for those with frequent complications of the lung disease, experts say. Taking a daily dose of the antibiotic azithromycin may help prevent life-threatening complications of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), researchers say. These complications are commonly referred to as acute exacerbations, and they can cause frequent doctor visits and hospitalizations. Although numerous medications are available to help prevent exacerbations, some people still experience several flare-ups a year.

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FDA Approves Botox to Treat Specific Form of Urinary Incontinence

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved Botox (onabotulinumtoxinA) injection to treat urinary incontinence in people with neurologic conditions such as spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis who have overactivity of the bladder. Uninhibited urinary bladder contractions in people with some neurological conditions can lead to an inability to store urine. Current management of this condition includes medications to relax the bladder and use of a catheter to regularly empty the bladder. The treatment consists of Botox being injected into the bladder resulting in relaxation of the bladder, an increase in its storage capacity and a decrease in urinary incontinence.

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FTC Presses Express Scripts on Merger

Express Scripts Inc.'s ambitious deal to buy rival Medco Health Solutions Inc. is getting an extended review from antitrust regulators, a widely expected development for a merger that would combine two of the biggest pharmacy benefit managers. The Federal Trade Commission has asked for more input from the companies, issuing what is known as a second request for information, according to a filing by Express. The request doesn't indicate that the government will necessarily challenge a deal, but it suggests there are substantive antitrust issues that warrant further investigation.

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Nutrition: A Low-Calorie Meal Is Shown to Pay Off

Some dieters say that eating less at one meal is ineffective, because people compensate by eating more at other meals. Not so, according to a small study in the October issue of the journal Appetite. In fact, eating one reduced-calorie meal a day, and then eating what you want the rest of the day, may be an effective weight-loss technique.

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Study: Boston Schools' Sugary Drinks Ban Paid Off

A new study indicates that the Boston public schools' ban on sugary drinks has paid off, with high school students drinking fewer even when they're not at school. In 2004, Boston public schools banned the on-campus sale of sugar-sweetened beverages, such as soda, sports drinks and fruit drinks. The study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, tracked ninth- through 12th-graders for two years after the ban began. It found sugar-sweetened beverage consumption, inside and outside school, fell from an average of 1.71 servings per day in 2004 to 1.38 servings in 2006.

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Eating Disorders Can Harm Women's Fertility

Anorexic and bulimic patients twice as likely as other women to seek help getting pregnant: study

Women with the eating disorders anorexia and bulimia may take a bit longer to get pregnant than other women, a new study has found. U.K. researchers asked 11,088 pregnant women to complete questionnaires at 12 and 18 weeks of gestation. Of those women, 171 (1.5 percent) had anorexia at some point in their lives, 199 (1.8 percent) had bulimia, and another 82 (0.7 percent) had experienced both conditions. A larger proportion of the women with the eating disorders took more than six months to conceive compared to those with no history of eating disorders (39.5 percent vs 25 percent). However, women with eating disorders weren't more likely to take longer than 12 months to conceive, the investigators found.

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September Health Awareness

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Fruit and Veggies - More Matters Month

Healthy Aging® Month

Leukemia & Lymphoma Awareness Month

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month

National Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month

National Cholesterol Education Month

Click here for the full list of September Health Awareness Topics

CURE: The Faces of Childhood Cancer

I first met Lindsay Simmons almost two years ago. "I just don't know how I got it or why." She told me in her first 11Alive interview. She was in remission, the honored hero in my first marathon raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Since then, she's inspired me to run five marathons. She took dance classes, turned 12, and met a boy at camp. Since then, her Leukemia came back. "It's kind of scary, but I can do it again," she said

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A Record-setting Day At Camp Simcha

On an ordinary day, a 1,340-foot ribbon will reach around a quarter-mile running track. On one recent day, a 1,340-foot gold-colored ribbon reached into the Guinness Book of World Records. Some 300 girls with leukemia and other blood-related illnesses, joined by 300 counselors and staff members, formed the ribbon into the shape of an "awareness ribbon" at Camp Simcha.

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Pass The Fruits and Veggies Please

September marks "Fruits and Veggies - More Matters Month." Learn how to get the right amount of produce in your diet. Do you eat enough fruits and vegetables each day? Most likely the answer is no. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 90 percent of adults and kids don't eat the recommended amount of produce. That's why the CDC has designated September as "Fruits and Veggies – More Matters" Month.

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Health Briefs: September is Healthy Aging Month

September is Healthy Aging Month, and experts emphasize that healthy living beyond age 65 is a focus more than ever before. This year will be the first for retirement of the baby boomers, a group that will significantly add to our aging population during the next 20 years. "The problem is that during the next 20 years, more will be retiring each year, and we're going to potentially have millions retiring and not participating in physical activity," says Whitney Doiron, a board -certified adult and geriatric nurse practitioner at Park Ridge Health. "This sedentary lifestyle leads to more and more problems."

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Modified Ecstasy May Effectively Treat Leukemia, Lymphoma And Myeloma

A modified form of Ecstasy (MDMA) may have enormous potential in the treatment of myeloma, lymphoma and leukemia, scientists from the University of Birmingham, England, wrote in the journal Investigational New Drugs. The modified drug is 100 times more powerful as a cancer-busting compound than Ecstacy, which is already known to be effective against over half of white blood cell cancers. The researchers believe they may eventually be able to create drugs to treat human patients.

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And from the archives....Mrs. Ford Battles Alcohol Addiction

Check out this old article regarding Betty Ford

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FDA advisers set to review J&J, Bayer clot drug

A new anticlotting drug that had been seen as a blockbuster comes under scrutiny by a panel of outside advisers to the Food and Drug Administration Thursday, two days after a negative review by FDA staff. Johnson & Johnson and partner Bayer Healthcare of Germany are seeking U.S. approval of Xarelto for preventing strokes in patients with a common irregular heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation.

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Cholesterol Awareness Is Important Investment in Heart Health

Coronary heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in the United States. While there are multiple risk factors involved in heart disease, cholesterol is one important component of heart health, and something everyone should take into consideration. NorthShore University HealthSystem (NorthShore) cardiologist Jeffrey Marogil, MD, suggests that even those in their twenties should begin the simple process of monitoring their cholesterol levels.

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Diet Alone Helps Lower Bad Cholesterol: Study

A diet based around plants, nuts and high-fiber grains lowered "bad" cholesterol more than a low-saturated-fat diet that was also vegetarian, researchers reported on Tuesday. And the drop in low-density lipoprotein, or LDL cholesterol, was big enough that dietary changes could be an alternative to statin medications for many people, they said.

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Study Links Drinking Pattern to Alcohol's Effect on Heart Health

Levels of LDL or "bad" cholesterol plummeted 40 percent in the daily-moderate drinking mice, but rose 20 percent in the weekend-binge drinking mice, compared to the no-alcohol controls. High levels of bad cholesterol increase the risk of heart disease, and past studies show that every 10 percent increase in LDL results in a 20 percent increase in atherosclerosis risk. Surprisingly, levels of HDL or "good" cholesterol went up in both the moderate and binge drinking groups, which Cullen speculates is an acute or short-term effect.

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