

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Healthbeat

Oral contraceptives may ease women with severe PMS

A new clinical trial at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill using a popular low-dose contraceptive could uncover a more effective treatment for the 5 to 10 percent of women who suffer from premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).

PMDD is much more severe than premenstrual syndrome, or PMS. The disorder interferes with a woman's ability to function effectively several days out of each month, every month. Physical symptoms include bloating, low energy, heart palpitations and joint or muscle pain. Far more disruptive emotional symptoms include irritability, anxiety, depression, mood swings, difficulty focusing and trouble sleeping. For many women with PMDD, five or more of these symptoms occur the week before menstruation starts and disappear a few days after the period begins.

The National Institute of Mental Health awarded UNC a \$3 million grant for a five-year clinical trial using a low-dose contraceptive called YAZ (ethinyl estradiol/drospirenone). The trial is based on previous research by Dr. David Rubinow, the Asad Meymandi Distinguished Professor and chair of psychiatry in the UNC School of Medicine.

Rubinow discovered it is the change in — not the level of — reproductive hormones that triggers depression in women who are susceptible to PMDD. In other words, women with the disorder don't have abnormal levels of reproductive hormones, but are more sensitive to the shifts in them that occur prior to menstruation. That sensitivity triggers mood symptoms.

"This study will potentially demonstrate that it is the regimen of administration of birth control pills rather than their specific formulation that results in successful treatment of PMDD," Rubinow said. His colleague and fellow co-principal investigator of the trial, Susan Girdler, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry, added: "If we can eliminate the hormone cycling, we should eliminate the PMDD symptoms."

Baptist weight loss surgery team gets accreditation

Adolfo "Fuzz" Fernandez and his team at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center's Bariatric Surgery Program have been awarded a 3-year accreditation as an American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence, one of the field's highest levels of recognition.

The ASMBS, a leader in research and development of weight loss surgery, promotes the delivery of bariatric surgical care with the highest levels of efficacy, efficiency, and patient safety. To qualify, the surgeon and hospital must meet stringent requirements. Surgeons must complete at least 50 bariatric surgeries per year with a minimum lifetime experience of 125 surgeries. In 2007, Fernandez performed 134 bariatric surgeries and is projected to complete 200 surgeries in 2008.

The Bariatric Surgery Program at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center provides Roux-Y gastric bypass and gastric banding procedures to treat patient obesity by limiting the capacity for food intake. Fernandez also performs sleeve gastrectomies, procedures that create a long tube to restrict the stomach and reduce the amount of food a patient can consume. This procedure is recognized by the ASMBS but is still considered experimental.

Kidney patients prepare to gather in Nation's Capital

The American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP) will hold its 35th Annual Convention in Washington, D.C., Aug. 28-31.

The Convention is being held at the Grand Hyatt Washington located on H Street NW. During this four-day event, attendees participate in educational sessions for those with chronic kidney disease (CKD) to long-term dialysis and transplant patients. Participants also learn about various treatments for each stage of kidney disease.

"We are excited to be in our Nation's Capitol helping kidney patients and their families obtain the information they need and want to live healthy productive lives," stated AAKP President and two-time kidney transplant recipient Roberta Wager, RN, MSN. "We're also celebrating the 35th anniversary of our Annual Convention which continues to grow and that means patients are really benefiting from the work we do year round."

It is estimated 26 million people in the United States suffer from chronic kidney disease. Diabetes and high blood pressure are the leading causes of kidney disease. Those with a family history of kidney disease and minorities have an increased risk of developing the disease. The AAKP Annual Convention is the largest national convention of its kind to provide kidney disease patients, as well as their friends and family members the opportunity to discuss their concerns and share their experiences while learning about important issues affecting their healthcare. The Convention also hosts exciting social events where kidney patients can interact on a person-to-person basis with fellow patients and healthcare professionals.

Grants available to fight disparities

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) is investing millions of dollars to eliminate health disparities between white and minority Tarheel residents.

Over the next three years, the Fund will make \$7.5 million in grants available to agencies and initiatives that target disparities.

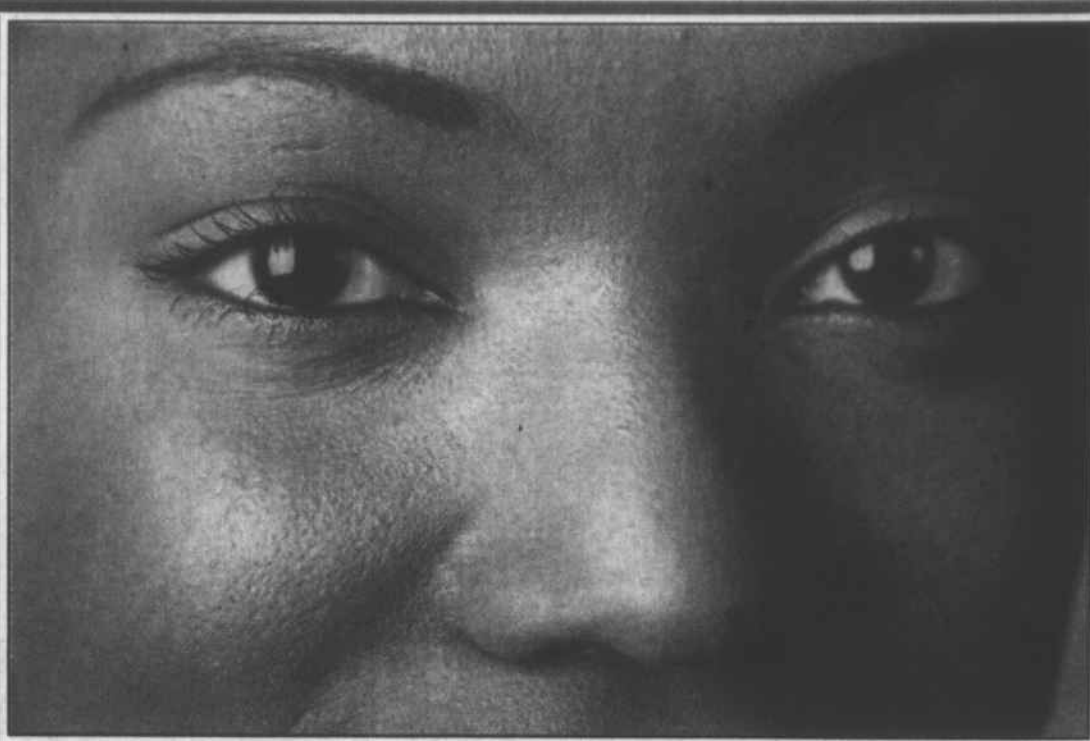
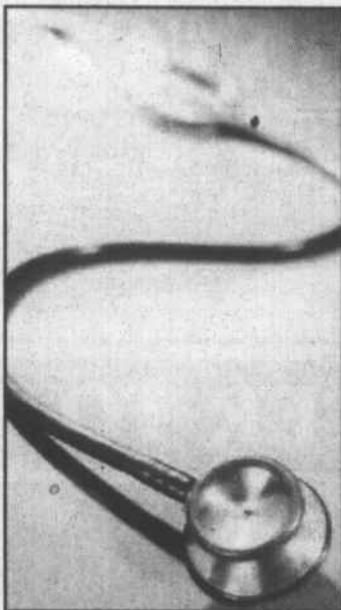
Last week, HWTF began accepting applications from eligible organizations with documented experience and success in developing and implementing services to reduce disparities in health status by providing services to one or more of the groups targeted in the HWTF Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative (HDI) or facilitating the development of such services.

Funds are available to initiate new projects, or to expand existing projects that are specifically designed to focus on reducing health disparities related to diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer among adults. Funds are also available for efforts designed to increase the cultural competency of health care providers in North Carolina and to increase the quality of services provided to African American, American Indian, Latino and low-income patients with diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Organizations such as state agencies and nonprofits with a significant purpose of promoting the public's health are among those eligible for funds.

Proposal and other application materials are available at www.healthwellnc.com. Final applications must be received by Oct. 1.

A regional informational session about the grants will be held Sept. 3 at the Guilford County Department of Public Health in Greensboro from 9 a.m. — 12 p.m. in room 122.

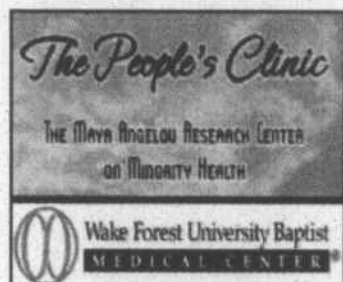


Breast Cancer Navigation Programs: A Compass in a Time of Storm

Approximately 1,500 Americans die of cancer each day. A disproportionate number of people who die from this disease are poor and underserved. Although disparities in outcome have been attributed to a lot of different issues, many researchers have considered difficulties in navigating the medical system as a primary cause of these disparities.

Effective cancer care is critically dependent on the delivery of care during the critical window of opportunity.

This critical window exists between the point of the suspicious finding to the resolution of the finding by further diagnosis and treatment. Minority patients, however, face significant barriers during this window of opportunity for cure.



Difficulties in navigating the medical system magnify financial, communication, and information barriers. In addition, inherent distrust of the medical establishment establishes emotional barriers to treatment. Because these barriers ultimately impact survival in patients with cancer, navigation

programs have been created to guide patients through the complex treatment situations that are part of the multidisciplinary care of patients with cancer.

Therefore, the growth of such navigation programs is essential to eliminate disparities in cancer care. This article will discuss current patient navigation programs and their usefulness in patients.

What is the role of a patient navigator?

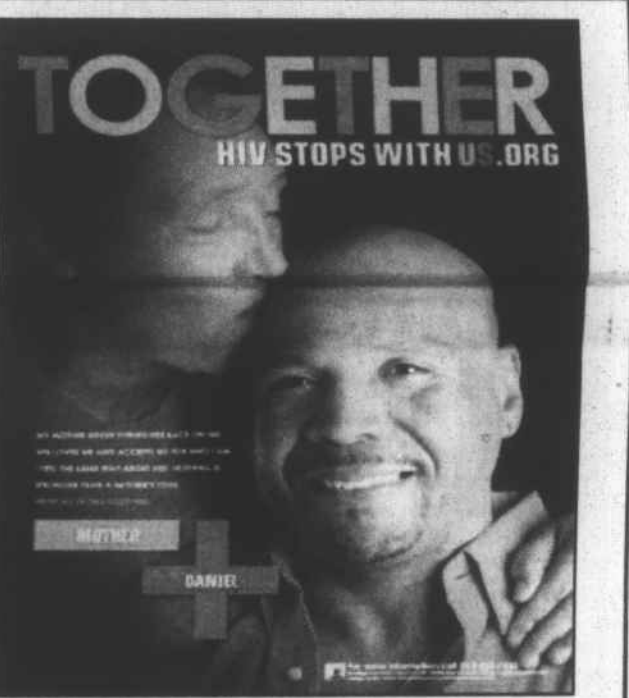
Navigators bridge the gaps in women's access to care. Specifically, patient navigators connect patients with resources, facilitate interaction and communication with healthcare staff

See Cancer on A11

MOTHER & SON

PRNewsFoto/Better World Advertising, Duane Cramer

Daniel of Oakland, Calif., is one of 12 HIV-positive spokesmodels featured in a nationwide advertising campaign, HIV Stops With Us. Also pictured in the ad, which was shot by world-renowned photographer Duane Cramer, is Daniel's mother.



Push for organ donors to be stronger next month

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

A Burlington couple that took up the cause of promoting organ donation after the death of their son has convinced Gov. Mike Easley to proclaim next month as Organ Donation Awareness Month in North Carolina.

Bruce and Mary Jo Collins lost their son, Christopher Duffy, almost three years ago. Christopher had been on dialysis for more than two years, awaiting a kidney transplant. They have dedicated their lives to educating others about organ donation in the hopes that other families will be spared the pain they experienced.

Mary Jo Collins convinced the Governor's office to approve September 2008 as Organ Donation Awareness Month. The governor's proclamation approving the month only applies to September of this year, but Collins is trying to get a law passed so it will be celebrated annually in September.

"My senator, Tony Foreist, has assured me that when the legislature meets in 2009, he is behind me 100 percent to try to make it a North Carolina general statute, so we do not have to worry about renewing a proclamation every year," she said. "A law will give it more punch."

Sen. Foreist, D-Alamance, will introduce the bill in the January session of the General Assembly.

The Collinses, who are Carolina Donor Services volunteers, will work closely with the agency to help educate North Carolinians about donation and the new Proclamation.

In observance of Organ Donation Awareness Month, students at community colleges throughout the state will be encouraged to sign up to become organ donors during next month's Community College Challenge across North Carolina. Through the online registry at www.donatelifenc.org students will be able to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and indicate the college they attend. After a month's worth of activities on each campus geared at educating the students about donation, a donor drive will take place. The school with the most registrants will win the challenge and be recognized with a plaque.

Folwell thanked for working to save lives

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

State Rep. Dale Folwell (R-Winston-Salem) was presented a Certificate of Appreciation during the American Red Cross Celebration of Excellence for his dedication in helping to pass Senate Bill 1651/Anatomical Gifts, which lowers the minimum age for blood donation from 17 to 16. Several other states already permit 16-year-olds to donate blood.

After co-sponsoring similar legislation in the House (HB 2223), Folwell rallied support for the Senate bill among his House colleagues. The primary sponsors of the bill were Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R - Cabarrus) and Rep. Deborah Ross (D -Wake).

Folwell hopes that the change allows the American Red Cross and all those who support local blood drives to better meet the ever-increasing need for blood in North Carolina.

Every two seconds, someone needs a blood transfusion. The expanded pool of potential donors is likely to increase North Carolina's blood supply by more than 20,000 pints per year, helping thousands of recipients.

Folwell's award was presented recently at the Koury Center by Robert Fechner, CEO of the American Red Cross - Carolinas Region.

Folwell is well-known for his work involving organ and tissue donation. In 2007, he was instrumental in the passage of The Heart Prevails legislation, enabling legal consent for organ and eye donation through the state driver's license donor registry. Previously, the registry represented only an intent to donate. This legislation has resulted in a 50 percent increase in organ recipients in North Carolina in the first 6 months of 2008 according to the North Carolina Eye and Tissue Bank.

In his remarks, Folwell acknowledged the support of every member of the House and Senate who voted for the change. He also expressed appreciation to Barry Porter of the Triangle Chapter of the American Red Cross and Hugh Quinn of the Winston-Salem Chapter for their assistance and support.



Folwell



Fernandez

Organ Donation

It's all about LIFE

Share your life

Nearly 80,000 Americans are waiting for life-saving organ transplants and hundreds of thousands more could benefit from tissue transplants. Unfortunately, the need for donors is much greater than the actual number of donors. Your commitment to organ and tissue donation can save lives.

Share your decision

The most important part of deciding to be a donor is telling your family. Talking about donation does not mean talking about death. It is talking about the opportunity to give another person a second chance at LIFE. Even if you have signed a donor card or indicated your wish to donate on your driver's license, you need to tell your family since they will be consulted before donation can take place.

TALK TO YOUR FAMILY ABOUT SHARING YOUR LIFE

Sign this card below in your family's presence and carry it in your wallet.

My Commitment to Preserve Life

California Donor Card

I have spoken to my family about organ and tissue donation. I wish to donate.

I may need organs and tissue only the following organs and tissues:

The following people have witnessed my commitment to be a donor:

Donor Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

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