

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Healthbeat

### California 10-year-old is coping with breast cancer

LA MIRADA, Calif. (AP) — Ten-year-old Hannah Powell-Auslam is trying to remain brave as she copes with a rare form of breast cancer.

"I feel like a kid inside but sometimes I feel like an adult, when I'm always at the hospital," Hannah told ABC's "Good Morning America" in an interview that aired last week.

The fifth-grader at Escalona Elementary School in this Los Angeles bedroom community complained of itching in her side in April. Her mother discovered a lump, and that led to a diagnosis of breast cancer.

Her family said she was diagnosed with invasive secretory carcinoma, a type discovered in children in the 1960s.

"Hannah's prognosis is very good and the type of cancer is very slow growing," her father, Jeremy, said in an e-mail last week.

Children still represent only a fraction of a percent of all breast cancer cases.

Hannah had surgery and has begun chemotherapy.

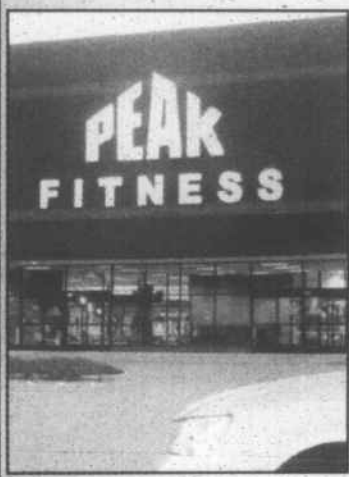
"You feel like you're sick all the time. You just want to go lay in bed," she said.

The show filmed Hannah at home getting her head shaved rather than waiting for chemotherapy to take its toll. Other family members got buzz cuts, too, in solidarity.

"I might be just a little bit afraid. I love my hair. I worked so hard to grow it," Hannah said before the event.

### Peak Fitness stopped from charging members up front

Peak Fitness centers throughout the state have been barred from selling prepaid gym memberships and collecting fees other than monthly payments until the company can secure bonds for each of its health clubs. Attorney General Roy Cooper announced last week.



"Consumers shouldn't be left out in the cold when their health club closes," Cooper said. "These clubs must follow the law before they take upfront money from new members."

Peak agreed to stop selling prepaid membership after Cooper filed suit against the company last week. Bonds are

required for fitness centers by state law so that consumers can be reimbursed if the health club closes and the company doesn't have money to refund consumers who paid in advance.

Cooper's office was notified in March that Peak Fitness' bonding company was canceling all of Peak Fitness' bonds as of May 12. Peak Fitness has not been able to secure replacement bonds.

This was not the first time that the Attorney General's Office has focused on Peak Fitness. Earlier this year, Peak agreed to make substantial changes to customer service, contracts and billings at all of its health clubs across North Carolina. Since then, Peak Fitness has abruptly closed gyms in Charlotte, Garner, Knightdale, Raleigh and Winston-Salem. Also, Peak Holdings, a subsidiary of Peak Fitness, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April.

In the past five years, Cooper's office has received more than 500 complaints regarding Peak-related health clubs.

### FDA set to approve use of psychiatric drugs for kids

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three blockbuster psychiatric drugs currently approved for adults also appear to work in adolescents, though federal health officials have concerns about exposing younger patients to the drugs' side effects.

The Food and Drug Administration is reviewing drugs from AstraZeneca PLC, Eli Lilly & Co. and Pfizer Inc. for use in patients between the ages of 10 and 17. The drugs — already approved to treat schizophrenia and bipolar mania in adults — had combined sales of more than \$7.4 billion last year, according to IMS Health.

With only two anti-psychotic drugs currently approved for younger patients, a positive decision for the three drugs would significantly increase competition in the space — and expand sales of products that already are big sellers.

Anti-psychotic drugs were the top-selling group of prescription medications in the U.S. last year with sales of \$14.6 billion, according to the health care analysis firm.

The FDA has released its review of the three drugs ahead of a meeting this week where outside experts will weigh in on the drugs' risks and benefits. But FDA reviewers say they are wary of exposing youngsters to the drugs' side effects, including weight gain and high blood sugar, "because they may be exposed for many decades."

Many doctors already prescribe the medications to children and adolescents, although regulators have not officially cleared that use. Physicians are free to prescribe medicines as they see fit, though companies can only promote them for FDA-approved indications.

## Grants to make more North Carolinians smile

Almost half of blacks and more than 50 percent of Hispanics skip dental visits.

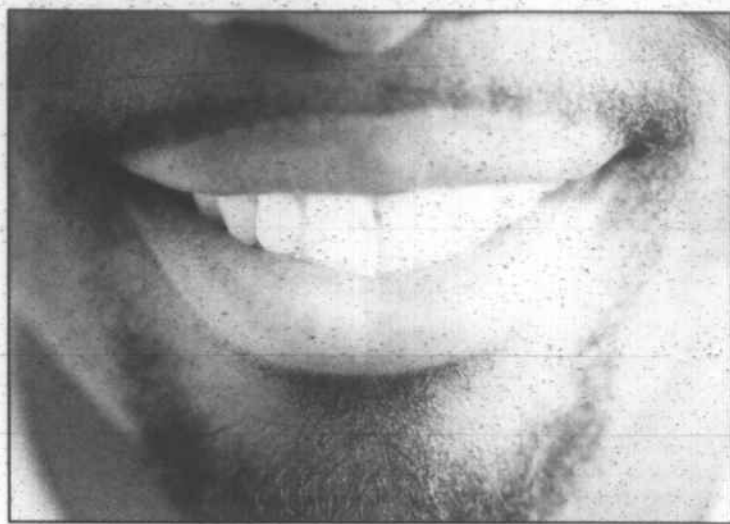
CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

A large number of adult North Carolinians do not regularly visit a dentist.

According to the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), in 2006, about 32 percent of North Carolina adults reported not visiting a dentist within the last year. Minorities were even more likely to forgo dental appointments. Thirty-nine percent of Native Americans; 42 percent of African-Americans and 56 percent of Hispanics said they did not see a dentist within the past year.

To address the problem, HWTF has awarded a \$930,000 to seven organizations across the state as part of its Oral Health Initiative (OHI).

The organizations will use the funds to increase access to



treatment and preventive services for low-income and high-need populations and to train dental and other health care providers to better serve these populations.

Untreated oral health prob-

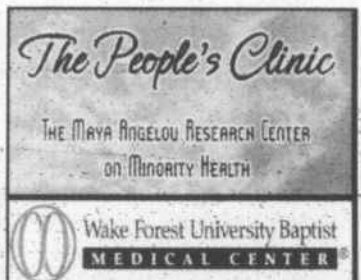
lems can have significant consequences on other health issues. Research has shown associations between chronic oral health infections and other serious conditions, such as diabetes, heart and lung diseases.

stroke, low birth weight and premature births.

"It is unfortunate that many North Carolina citizens do not receive basic dental care which is so critical for overall good health," said Vandana Shah, HWTF Executive Director. "We hope that these grant funds will provide more North Carolina citizens with access to high quality, accessible oral health care."

HWTF also points out that financial, transportation, child care and work schedule barriers keep adults from dentists. These challenges are more pronounced in rural areas of the state where the number of practicing dental professionals is limited or non-existent, according to the agency. Based on 2004 data, 60 North Carolina counties were considered dental health shortage areas.

## PREGNANCY PLANNING AND THE FIRST TRIMESTER



Bringing a new life into the world can be one of the most exciting things a family can experience, but it is important to plan for your pregnancy and stay healthy during your pregnancy so you and your baby are as healthy as possible. Over the next couple of weeks, we will have a three-part series on pregnancy planning and what to expect with each trimester.

There are several simple things you can do before conceiving that will improve your chances of having a healthier baby. These things are part of preconception care. Many critical stages of fetal development occur even before you know you are pregnant, so it is important to make healthy changes early.

— Take Folic Acid every day. All women who are able to become pregnant should take a multivitamin every day. The vitamin should include 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid, a kind of B vitamin. Folic Acid can prevent neural tube defects—that is, birth defects that affect brain and spinal cord development.

— Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Simple behavioral changes can reduce the risk of ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), low birth weight, birth defects, and preterm labor. Some things you can do include eating a healthy, balanced diet; getting regular exercise of at least 30 minutes a day, five times a week; stopping smoking/avoiding sec-



ondhand smoke; NOT drinking alcohol or abusing drugs; reducing your stress level; and avoiding hazardous chemicals and high temperatures (like hot tubs or saunas).

— Get a pre-pregnancy health checkup. This checkup should occur before you get pregnant and should include a dental checkup, because oral health is an important contributor to overall health. Make sure you are up to date with all your immuniza-

tions; be screened for any sexually transmitted infections (STIs); plan for treating pre-existing medical conditions (diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.); and review your personal and family medical history. If you use birth control, discuss stopping it with your doctor, as some birth control methods may cause birth defects if pregnancy occurs while the medication is still in

## Russell promoted at Wake

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Vickie Russell has been named associate vice president of Wake Forest University Physicians (WFUP), an operational role that will include business development and direct liaison work with the clinical departments.

WFUP is the organization comprising the physicians who are the School of Medicine's board certified medical faculty and attending staff of N.C. Baptist Hospital. WFUP outpatient clinics include about 85 medical and surgical specialties or subspecialties.

Russell has been vice chair for administration and finance in the



Department of Internal Medicine since 1998. She began her career at Wake Forest University Health Sciences in the dean's office in 1980 after graduating from Salem College with a bachelor's in economics. In 1986 she moved to the Department of Internal Medicine administration before moving to Charleston in 1994 to take a position at the Medical University of South Carolina. In 1998 she returned to the Department of Internal Medicine as vice chair for administration and finance.

"My goal is to bridge the clinical departments with WFUP administration as the institution moves even closer to a united medical center structure, and to facilitate development of a premier, integrated group practice throughout the organization," she said.

## Misperceptions may keep Hispanic women from taking vitamins

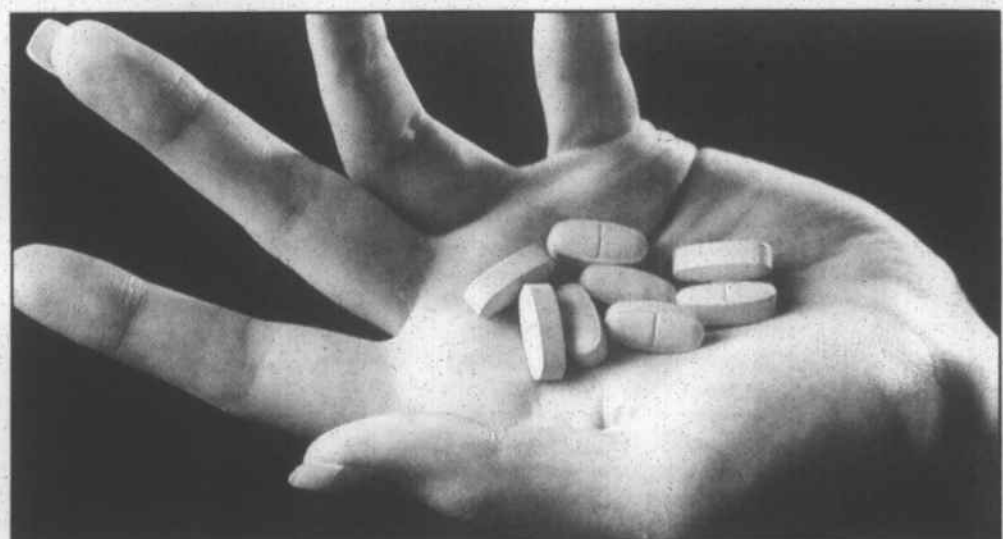
CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Not enough Hispanic women in North Carolina are taking multivitamins with folic acid, which has state health officials concerned because Hispanics have a significantly higher risk of having babies with birth defects of the brain (called anencephaly) and spine (spina bifida).

Recently, the American Journal of Health Education published a study conducted by the North Carolina Folic Acid Campaign, a collaboration between the North Carolina Folic Acid Council and the March of Dimes, and found that only one-third of Hispanic women took a daily multivitamin with folic acid. All women of childbearing age should take a daily multivitamin with folic acid, to reduce their risk of having a baby with these birth defects, health officials say. This recommendation is especially vital for Hispanics, whose risk of having an infant with a birth defect is double that of non-Hispanic whites and blacks.

Research shows that up to 70 percent of birth defects of the brain and spine, known as neural tube defects (NTD), may be prevented with adequate folic acid intake before and during the early weeks of pregnancy.

Several myths about multivitamins may be keeping Hispanics from taking them, according to the study. Some Hispanic women believe that multivitamins are expensive; are only needed for pregnant women;



and can cause weight gain and/or increase their appetite. In reality, according to health officials, the vitamins are relatively inexpensive; every woman needs to take a daily multivitamin regardless of their pregnancy intentions; and currently no research exists to prove or disprove the belief about weight gain and/or increased appetite from a multivitamin.

This study also highlighted the important role of health care providers in educating Hispanic women about multivitamins, folic acid and birth defects. Ninety-nine percent of respondents who did not take a daily multivitamin reported that they would do so upon the

recommendation of their health care providers (vs. 88-percent of all women of childbearing age nationally).

"This is good news for the health care community. Health care providers play a critical role in increasing knowledge and influencing behavior to increase the consumption of multivitamins among Hispanic women," said Leslie deRosset, Latino Campaign Coordinator and lead author of the study. "They should be prepared at every available opportunity to counsel women about their risk and the potential benefits of pre-conceptual folic acid consumption."

See Pregnancy on A9