



The Hamaspik Gazette

News of Hamaspik
Agencies and
General Health

SEPTEMBER '17 • ISSUENO.152



GAZETTE SURVEY

The GAZETTE asks YOU:

WHAT DO YOU TAKE FOR HEADACHES?

A: TYLENOL; B: ADVIL; C: OTHER; D: NOTHING

Respond to: survey@hamaspik.org



HEALTH STAT

HEALTHCARE QUALITY, 2016

	Per-capita spending	Global ranking
U.K.	\$4,094	1
U.S.	\$9,364	11

Source: global comparison report, The Commonwealth Fund, July 14



HEALTH QUOTE

HAVING SOMEONE OUTSIDE WHO IS PAYING ATTENTION AND WHO CARES IS MORE IMPORTANT.

—Dr. Mary Mittelman of NYU Langone's Alzheimer's family program, on emotional support for caregivers, NY Times, Aug. 4



HEALTH TIP

COOL OFF WITH HOT DRINKS

Two recent studies say that the extra sweating caused by drinking hot drinks on hot days will actually cool you off faster than drinking cold drinks on hot days.

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BRIDGING DIFFERENCES IN BROOKLYN

FOR THE GENTLEMEN OF HAMASPIK OF KINGS COUNTY'S DAY HAB ON A SUMMER'S DAY PARK OUTING, FACES SHINE WITH HAPPINESS AS THEY ENJOY THE SAME FUN IN THE SUN AS ANYONE



HEALTH NEWS

To Be Sure You're In Good Shape, Be Positive!

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HAMASPIK NEWS

Amidst Organized Chaos of Massive Expansion Project, Community Supports Continue Unchecked at Hamaspik's Borough Park Complex

December 2017 Grand Opening Date Kept on Target by Rapid Construction

"The excitement of the employees and clients that visit the building is something that I cannot even describe."

So wrote Hamaspik of Kings County Director of Development Naftali Tessler in an August 4 e-mail to the Gazette.

The reference was to the rapidly-completing massive expansion project currently taking place at 4102 14th Avenue, home to Hamaspik of Kings County in the heart of Brooklyn's Borough Park.

The expansion project's architect vis-

ited the site that same day, Mr. Tessler reported—coming away "extremely satisfied with the progress" and "amazed" at the project's professional execution.

The day before that, the project's hired construction engineer paid a visit, likewise coming away "very happy" with the site's progress.

And on August 10, a key meeting of Hamaspik leadership—including newly-tapped Hamaspik of Kings County Asso-

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Hamaspik Gazette
Published and Copyrighted August '17 by:
NYSHA Inc., 58 Rt. 59, Suite 1,
Monsey, NY 10952

Services Provided by NYSHA AGENCIES

OPWDD

COMMUNITY HABILITATION

Providing: A personal worker to work on daily living skill goals

HOME BASED RESPITE

Providing: Relief for parents of special needs individuals

AFTER SCHOOL RESPITE

Providing: A respite program for after school hours and school vacations

DAY HAB PROGRAM

Providing: A day program for adults with special needs

SUPPLEMENTAL DAY HAB PROGRAM

Providing: an extended day program for adults with special needs

CAMP NESHOMAH

Providing: A day program for children with special needs during summer and winter school breaks

INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTIAL ALTERNATIVE (IRA)

Providing: A supervised residence for individuals who need out-of-home placement

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Apartments and supports for individuals who can live independently

ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION

Providing: Home modifications for special needs individuals

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Providing: Support and job coaching for individuals with disabilities to be employed and to maintain employment

ENHANCED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Providing: Job developing and coaching for people with any type of disability

MEDICAID SERVICE COORDINATION

Providing: An advocate for the individual to access and coordinate available benefits

HOME FAMILY CARE

Providing: A family to care for an individual with special needs

INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY

Providing: A facility for individuals who are medically involved and developmentally delayed

IBS

Providing: Intensive Behavior Services

PLAN OF CARE SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Support for families of individuals with special needs

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Reimbursement for out of ordinary expenses for items or services not covered by Medicaid

PARENTAL RETREATS

Providing: Getaways and retreats for parents of special needs individuals

SELF DIRECTION

Fiscal Intermediary (FI) — providing: accounting and billing for vendors that support individuals who self-direct their own supports

Broker — providing: one-on-one, independent brokering of all necessary services and supports to individuals who self-direct their own supports

DOH

CARE AT HOME

Providing: Nursing · Personal care aide · Therapy · Respite · Medical supplies · Adaptive technology · Service coordination

EARLY INTERVENTION

Providing: Multidisciplinary and supplemental Evaluations · Home and community based services · Center based services · Parent/ child groups · Ongoing service coordination · Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Special education · Nutrition · Social work · Family training · Vision services · Bilingual providers · Play therapy · Family counseling

NURSING HOME TRANSITION AND DIVERSION WAIVER PROGRAM (NHTD)

Providing: Service Coordination · Assistive

technology · Moving assistance · Community transitional services · Home community support services · E-Mods · Independent living skills · Positive behavioral interventions · Structured day program

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Providing: Service Coordination · Independent living skills training · Day programs · Rent subsidy · Medical equipment · E-Mods · Transportation · Community transmittal services · Home community support services

CHILD & ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Providing: Breakfast · Lunch · Supper · Snack

HEALTH HOME SERVING CHILDREN (HHSC)

Providing: Intensive, comprehensive care management and family/community support services for children with chronic condition(s) and/ or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care

SENIOR DINING/SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM (SHNOIS CHAIM)

Providing: Daily onsite lunches and social/ educational activities for community seniors (Orange County only)

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA)

Providing: behavior modification for children with autism covered by private insurance

LHCSA - HAMASPIKCARE

PERSONAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Home Health Aides · Homemakers · Personal Care Aides · Housekeepers · HCSS aides

COUNSELING SERVICES

Providing: Dietician/Nutrition counselors · Social Workers

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Providing: Physical therapy · Speech therapy · Occupational therapy · individuals

PACE-CDPAS

Providing: Personal care aides for people in need

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

Providing: Minor maintenance for qualified

SOCIAL MODEL

Providing: A social day program for senior patients

NURSING SERVICES

Providing: Skilled observation and assessment · Care planning · paraprofessional supervision · clinical monitoring and coordination · Medication management · physician-ordered nursing intervention and skill treatments

HAMASPIK CHOICE

A Managed Long Term Care Plan (MLTCP) approved by New York State

HCR

ACCESS TO HOME

Providing: Home modifications for people with physical disabilities

RESTORE

Providing: Emergency house repairs for senior citizens

HOME REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Providing: Remodeling dilapidated homes for low income home owners

NYSED

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Providing: Employment planning · Job development · Job placement

JOB COACHING

Intensive and ongoing support for individuals with physical, mental and/ or developmental disabilities to become employed and to maintain employment

NYSHA

ARTICLE 16 CLINIC

Providing: Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Psychology · Social work · Psychiatry · Nursing · Nutrition

TRAINING

Providing: SCIP · CPR & first aid · Orientation · MSC CORE · AMAP · Annual Updates · Com-Hab/Respite · Family Care training · Supportive Employment

CENTRAL INTAKE

Providing: The first contact for a person or family in need of Hamaspiik services

HAMASPIK GAZETTE

Providing: A bilingual monthly newspaper informing the community of available Hamaspiik services

OMH

HEALTH AND RECOVERY PLAN (HARP)

Providing: long-term social, emotional, employment, peer-support and other mental-illness recovery supports

● ► PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY NEWS

Gov. Cuomo Signs New York School E-Cig Ban

Albany, NY — On July 25, New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation to immediately ban the use of electronic ciga-

rettes (e-cigs) on all public and private school grounds in New York State.

can cause addiction and harm the developing brain.

“Nicotine use in any form has shown to be



rettes (e-cigs) on all public and private school grounds in New York State.

Usage of the common and ever-popular devices has exploded in recent years. A state Dept. of Health (DOH) survey found that New York high schoolers using e-cigs doubled to 20.6 percent from 2014 to 2016. And a recent U.S. Surgeon General’s report says that high school e-cig usage nationwide rose a staggering 900 percent from 2011 to 2015.

New York’s new law outlawing electronic nicotine and vapor delivery systems on school grounds covers e-cigarettes, vaping pens and e-hookahs. While some are nicotine-free, most aren’t. Exposure to nicotine in adolescence

damaging,” read the Gov.’s statement. “This measure will close a dangerous loophole that allows e-cigarettes to be used in New York schools.”

The bill had been sponsored by Assembly-woman Linda Rosenthal (D-Manhattan) and Sen. Patti Ritchie (D-St. Lawrence County). It had passed the Assembly 134 to 10 and the Senate 59 to 1.

A separate bill to ban e-cigs in public indoor spaces like restaurants, bars and offices under the state’s existing indoor clean air act also overwhelmingly passed the Legislature earlier this year. The Gov. is expected to sign that legislation as well. ★

Expansion Project Continue at Hamaspiik’s Borough Park Complex

◀◀ CONTINUED FROM COVER

ciate Executive Director Tzvi (Hershy) Wertheimer—and all subcontractors working on the expansion was held in the complex’s boardroom. The meeting ensured that all involved parties were coordinated and that all work continues efficiently as scheduled.

But the construction isn’t just boosting Hamaspiik’s neighborhood profile.

It’s also literally raising the roof on the programs and services provided by Hamaspiik to that greater neighborhood—creating the office space for much-needed new programming, and the resulting new staff power to drive that new programming.

And with every hammer blow, the December 2017 grand opening gets one step closer.

The new office spaces will allow

Hamaspiik to take community services to the next level. The massive construction project adds 5840 square feet to the building across an entire new floor being added above the current rooftop.

The project also extends the footprint of the current top floor, bringing its perimeter flush with the floors below by building atop a second-floor roof with the addition of new office space.

The completed project will bring the total number of floors to four.

At the same time, Hamaspiik’s daily operations at the site continue undisturbed—with Mr. Tessler working closely with contractors to ensure that construction is carried out as unobtrusively as possible.

As a result, both new inquirers and ex-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

► HAMASPIK NEWS

Expansion Project Continues at Hamaspiik's Borough Park Complex

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE E2

isting clients visiting interior offices hardly notice that construction is going on. (Conversely, the exterior scaffolding wrapping the building's outsides are all but unnoticeable!) Daily work continues undisturbed, with intake staffers, service coordinators and other hardworking staff all tending to their caseloads "with the usual Hamaspiik standards," Mr. Tessler said.

But while all that regular work goes on, so does the contracting work above it.

The new steel exterior frame, cross-beams and roof have long since been put in place. Wooden floorboards have been laid. Walls of standard 2x4 beams have been assembled and erected. Drywall panels have been placed. Windows are being installed. Electric lines are being run.

And all without a single interruption in Hamaspiik's ongoing workflow.

Tessler even saw to it that temporary air conditioners were installed and operational while the building's huge existing central

A/C unit was moved by crane from the old roof to the new.

Further hewing to Hamaspiik's standards of excellence are the biweekly meetings between the agency's Brooklyn leadership and contractor New York Major Construction.

The meetings, also occasionally attended by Hamaspiik of Kings County pioneer and Executive Director Joel Freund, review all recent additions and upcoming scheduled developments, seeing to it that construction continues as scheduled and ad-

ressing any needed changes in real time. Subcontracting specialty work, like interior tiling or painting, is also addressed.

And throughout it all, from Day One of construction onward, Mr. Tessler has been dispatching regular updates, filled with exciting photos, across the Hamaspiik universe statewide.

But now, with the warm summer weather allowing maximal construction, the project's "heavy lifting" is completed and has moved into the finishing-touch phase, with focus shifting to extensive interior work.

And once completion of work on what used to be Hamaspiik's roof is done, the sky's the limit on what Hamaspiik of Kings County's new office spaces, and dedicated new staff, will accomplish. ★



TEAMWORK INSIDE AND OUT: CONTRACTORS ON SITE (L) AND AT THE DRAWING BOARD (R) LOOK FORWARD TO REALIZING THE ARTIST'S RENDITION (C)

► PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY NEWS

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Hosts Global Convention on Antibiotic-resistant Infections

Drug Company Hawks Vaccines as Antidote to Growing World Public Health Crisis

Ask any doctor or hospital employee and they'll tell you: antibiotic-resistant infections are a major and growing public health problem, and not just in hospitals.

The problem, in plain English, is that bacteria and microbes are getting more and more resistant to almost all commonly used antibiotics. That has led to a growing number of life-threatening bacterial infections that doctors cannot treat because the antibiotics just don't work anymore.

Even with infections by bugs that are immune to "Round One" antibiotics, an alarming number of infections are immune to "Round Two" antibiotics.

One such example is Enterobacter, of which some strains are resistant to both "Round One" and powerful last-resort antibiotics called carbapenems. Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacter (CRE) infections all too often do not end well.

Bugs resistant to most or even all known antibiotics are now known as superbugs.

To help modern medicine fight the rising threat of superbugs, pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) hosted an industry convention this past July 6-7 in Belgium.

The primary thrust of the global meeting was the idea of developing new vaccines—not new antibiotics—to combat superbugs.

Much of the battle against superbugs involves creating new antibiotics—a time-



AN ERA BYGONE Antibiotics, and bugs, have come a long way since Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928

ly and costly process that many experts say is not quite enough. The GSK conference

pushed the idea of opening an entire new front—although actually an old idea, historically—in fighting the bugs.

The two-day convention was attended by microbiologists, infectious disease experts and researchers from non-profits, governments, academia and drug companies around the world.

Proponents argue that vaccines against various bacteria simply reduce infections—and hence the bugs' ability to "learn" resistance against antibiotics—in the first place.

That was the case with the introduction of vaccines for the most prevalent strains of pneumococcus bacteria (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*) in the 2000s—which studies in the United States have shown cut instances of pneumonia while simultaneously slashing the number of infections resistant

to "Round One" antibiotics like penicillin.

South Africa likewise benefited after introducing a pneumococcal vaccine in 2009.

What's more, vaccines have an advantage over antibiotics in that they rarely generate resistance.

At the GSK meeting, drug firms pledged to draw together and publish all their data on the subject.

They also committed to generate new data on the monitoring of the circulation of resistant bacterial strains.

By demonstrating how effective vaccines can be at fighting antibiotic-resistant infections—and, far more importantly, protecting against infections—convention participants now hope to encourage governments and health organizations to provide better incentives for new vaccines. ★

Hamaspik Gazette

Published and Copyrighted September '17 by:
NYSHA, Inc. 58 Rt. 59, Suite 1, Monsey, NY 10952
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Mail Postmaster: Return service requested
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Happening In health Today

EXPERIMENTAL SURGICAL GLUE INSPIRED BY SLUGS

Boston, MA — Groundbreaking medical research published July 27 in *Science* is definitely of the sticky variety—researchers have created a surgical glue patch inspired by surface-clinging slugs.

Biomedical scientists at Harvard's Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering first studied the European slug, which secretes a very sticky but very stretchy natural fluid.

That “glue” works in three microscopic ways. Its tiny surface proteins get tangled in other surfaces’ proteins to physically connect both. Its positive electric charge attracts cells’ and tissues’ negative charge. It also chemically bonds with organic tissue.

Using algae, which secretes a compound similar to slug fluid, the Harvard team then created a tough gelatin-like patch that is as sticky as super glue, stretchier than a rubber band, works on wet surfaces and isn't toxic to human cells.

The new glue patch worked well in

live animal experiments, researchers also found—sticking to and filling open wounds and withstanding repeated stretching.

Modern medicine's hunt for a new surgical glue is driven by a fundamental problem with current surgical glue: If it's strong, it's not stretchy, and if it's stretchy, it's not strong.

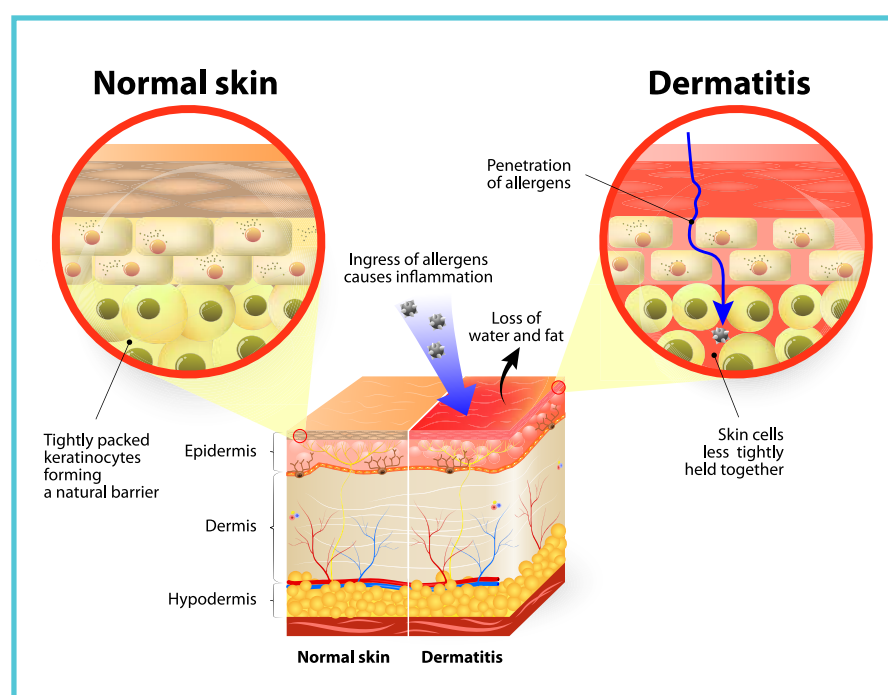
“That's a very challenging problem in the material and also in the biomedical world,” says Jianyu Li, a materials scientist at the Wyss Institute. “Those represent the biggest challenge in terms of adhesive development.”

The ideal surgical glue would be both—as is the natural “glue” produced by the European slug.

But while the experimental patch is working, researchers say it's years away from mainstream usage on human patients.

GENETIC TOURETTE'S CLUE

Washington, D.C. — An international university research team partially funded by the NIH discovered that about one in 100 people with Tourette's syndrome carry one



LENDING A HAND: WITH NEW GENETIC FINDINGS, RESEARCHERS STUDYING ECZEMA (EXPLAINED HERE) HOPE THAT EXISTING SUPPLEMENTS LIKE LEUCINE PROVE HELPFUL

of two genetic mutations. Their study was published June 21 in *Neuron*.

The study compared over 2,400 people with Tourette's with over 4,000 people who did not have Tourette's. In about one percent of the Tourette's group, researchers found deletions in the NRXN1 gene, or duplications in the CNTN6 gene.

The finding is significant because the NRXN1 and CNTN6 genes produce molecules that help brain cells connect to each other. They are also part of the brain that controls emotions and movement.

Tourette syndrome is a neurological disorder that causes repetitive, involuntary movements or noises called tics. Many with Tourette syndrome experience other problems including inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

NEW GENETIC MUTATIONS BEHIND ECZEMA FOUND

Denver, CO — Genetic research into eczema, a sometimes-severe skin disorder, discovered previously unknown mutations

in the CARD11 gene in four patients with severe eczema.

The genetic discovery was jointly made by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the National Jewish Health hospital in Denver, Colorado, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

Relentlessly flaky, itchy, bumpy, dry skin is a daily issue for people with eczema. Also known as atopic dermatitis, eczema is an inflammatory skin condition. It affects an estimated 30 percent of the U.S. population, mostly children and adolescents.

Severe atopic dermatitis is a less common form of eczema that can be severely debilitating and may also be accompanied by frequent infections and severe immune system defects.

The findings suggest that supplements of the amino acids glutamine and leucine might help reverse the defects caused by these mutations. Trials are now being planned to test the approach.

The findings were published June 19 in *Nature Genetics*. ★



LENDING NEW MEANING TO "FEELING SLUGGISH": HARVARD'S EXPERIMENTAL NEW SURGICAL GLUE IS BASED ON THE NATURAL GOO MADE BY SLUGS AND SNAILS

► HAMASPIK NEWS

Letters of Admiration, Words From the Heart

Over the Years, Tender Notes to Hamaspik Express Parental and Family Gratitude

It's a side of Hamaspik not widely reported. But those on the front lines and behind the scenes at the agency widely testify to it.

It begins where the job description ends. It hardly ends there.

It's the letters and messages of thanks for their caring and compassion, devotion and dedication, long overtime hours and love, that Hamaspik staff has received over the years.

Sometimes they come in the form of flowery notes (and not-infrequently, complete with flower-bordered stationery). Sometimes they're simpler, more reserved printed letters.

Sometimes they're anonymous.

Other times, they come in the form of voice mails (with callers sometimes not identifying themselves), with charged voices pouring out hearts' gratitude for a Hamaspik program.

Sometimes that program will be the annual Shabbaton weekend retreat, both those for parents and, more recently, those for children. Sometimes it's Hamaspik's Camp Neshoma program. Other times, it's a concert and outing for individual supported by Hamaspik and their families.

And other times, and not-uncommonly, either, it'll be a mother, sister, aunt or other relative sharing their deepest feelings of appreciation for a developmental breakthrough engendered by a Hamaspik support—a game-changing first for a child with autism, a desperately-needed service for a beloved little girl in dire straits.

One longtime Hamaspik of Kings County employee is one of the many reasons for those letters.

Spend time on the phone with her, and you're sure to hear the rollercoaster of emotionally-charged effort that every Hamaspik support staffer invests in her charges as par for the course—efforts that could easily be recorded as books, with chapters of advocacy spanning months.

The staffer conveys an ongoing tale of hope

against heartache and forcing doors open where all seemed locked.

The lengths that she and her fellow Hamaspik front-liners will go for their “kids” are downright

who tactfully insisted that the subject of the letter attend a Hamaspik family carnival—with the initial reticence of the little princess's family transformed into appreciation after the event.

And they're written to those who've been there.

One such person who's been there is agency original Mrs. Brenda Katina, the veritable face of Hamaspik to so many and hands-down the driving

force behind its flagship Family Care program—today the largest non-profit Family Care provider in New York State.

As one of Hamaspik's first four employees, Mrs. Katina (and husband Mr. Chaim Mendel Katina) shepherded Family Care from an unknown resource into a community powerhouse—not just putting beautiful children with special needs into loving homes or putting Hamaspik on the map, but finding a place for children with special needs in an entire community's collective heart.

It's no wonder that that heart has responded over the decades in kind, with the Katinas receiving endless letters of love and messages from the heart, thanking them for what the Hamaspik dynamic duo did and does for them, be they Family Care providers or biological parents. “I have stacks of letters from parents,” Mrs. Katina confesses.

But every Hamaspik MSC will tell you that what's true for Mr. and Mrs. Katina (themselves the proud parents of several beautiful children with special needs), and a loving devotion reciprocated in writing, is true for them, too.

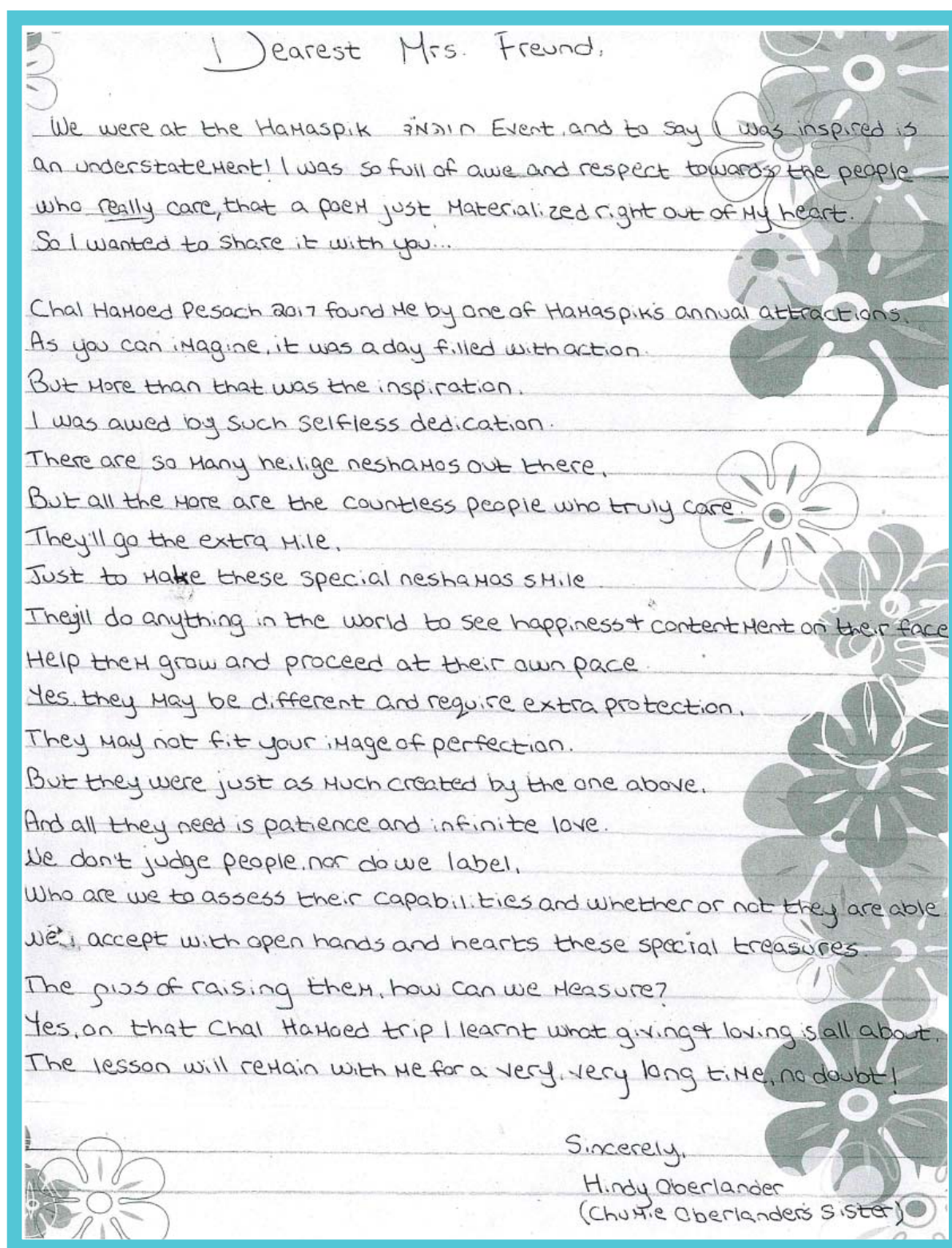
The late-night phone calls. The wrenching tears. The untamed laughter. The despair. The magic. The relationships that are far more friend-to-friend and sister-to-sister than staff to client.

Hence the voice mails, the letters, the notes, and the

pretty little missives and poems capturing something that even words don't quite do justice.

Mrs. Freund and the others will tell you that this is just what they do.

But with the Hamaspik staff family having won an indelible place in their hearts, the parents and family members behind those messages will tell you that conveying them is the least they can do. ★



inspiring—not just fighting through nine yards of paperwork to secure proper Medicaid and Social Security designations for children with special needs, but even recruiting communal charities to help.

It's no wonder that Mrs. Chedva Freund, MSC, another agency mainstay with a marked aversion to sleep, was the recent recipient of the letter shown here. It was Mrs. Freund, after all,

In and in between its lines, Hamaspik's most genuine love and caring—one that strikes at the heart of the agency, and that of its every employee—is anything but lost on the writer.

But such letters are frequently addressed to a number of Hamaspik employees both old and new, many of whom have immediate family members affected by disability.

Those letters come from people who know.

► HAMASPIK NEWS

Via Mainstreaming Force that is the Workforce, Making Disability as Ordinary as Possible

Hamaspik's Ever-growing Employment Programs Continue to Integrate Individuals

Nothing says “mainstream” like joining the workforce.

Nothing makes you the same as anyone else—doing the nine-to-five, dragging yourself to and from work every day (along with everyone else), and even laughing at jokes bemoaning the drudgery of the nine-to-five like everyone else.

Having a job means you've arrived. Having a job means you're mainstream. And having a job means that having a disability does not have to define your ability.

Through several employment-related programs, New York State has been striving to bring that mainstream experience to New Yorkers with special needs for several years now.

And one of its primary vehicles towards realizing that goal remains the New York State Education Dept. (NYSED)'s Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) Program.

Working for life

Just as it's been said, and only half in jest, that retirement is bad for your health, neither is inactivity and stagnation at prime workforce-entry age good for your health.

But that's just one of the beneficial “side effects” of ACCES-VR, which NYSED partner Hamaspik has been providing to a growing number of individuals for well over a decade.

At Hamaspik of Rockland County, which has boasted a robust and responsive ACCES-VR program for years now, Employment Director Yaakov (“Yanki”) Grunwald presides over a program that pairs people with special needs with local and regional businesses that need a good worker or two.

And good workers they are.

People on the autism spectrum, for example, are widely known for their powers of concentration—able to remain focused on repetitive tasks that would mentally exhaust others.



Via ACCES-VR, Mr. Grunwald and his team of Employment Coordinators regularly coach both employees and employers on working with each other.

And thanks to Hamaspik's ongoing success and increasing number of employable people supported, the agency recently welcomed its newest Employment Coordinator, the disability-services-experienced Mrs. Esther Walter.

On any given day, then, those dedicated Coordinators can usually be found out in the field across the expanses of Orange and Rockland Counties—from a commercial pharmacy in Nyack to a Chinese fast-food joint in Wesley Hills—helping individuals acclimate to and maintain mainstream employment.

The ongoing initial coaching experience can take weeks until the individual is fully comfortable with his or her new surroundings. Then there's the fact that they now have co-workers, and a healthy measure of workplace banter, to contend with.

And, of course, there's one “minor” detail—they have to be trained how to do the job.

But once the individuals are up to speed, which they frequently attain at surprising speed, ACCES-VR coaching consists primarily of maintenance—with Hamaspik's employment staff checking in as necessary to make sure that everything's flowing smoothly in the mainstream.

What's more, for many ACCES-VR participants, getting to and from work—that infamous feature of modern American life known as the commute—is a mainstreaming goal in its own right.

That's why a major part of ACCES-VR includes what one might call “commuter independence training”—in plain English, learning how to comfortably take a bus or other public transportation, fares and all.

Hamaspik also bolsters the state's

disability employment efforts in the greater Hudson Valley by also providing the OPWDD's Pathway to Employment initiative.

That relatively new program, which marks its third anniversary this July, provides vocational assessment, job readiness training, travel training, benefits management and employment education, and career planning.

Positive changes all, but life-changing nonetheless.

And once those changes are internalized and, well, mainstreamed, the individual has been successfully mainstreamed.

And once mainstreamed, chances are better than ever that the individual will remain mainstreamed for life.

Making disability mainstream

But New York State's disability employment programs—including the OPWDD's Supported Employment (SEMP) program, which Hamaspik also provides, targeting a more involved demographic—are part of a bigger national picture.

That picture is to bring as many individuals as possible, including all but those with the most limited abilities, into the mainstream.

Towards that end, the federal Medicaid program has been spearheading a nationwide shift away from the sheltered workshops of old, steering an increasing number of people into mainstream jobs.

New York State, like other states, has been moving to close sheltered workshops, and an OPWDD plan has been underway for some time now to transition individuals employed by the workshops into more-integrated jobs—and mainstream ones, too.

And as more individuals with special needs transition into the mainstream, programs like Hamaspik's ACCES-VR and SEMP programs will be there to help them every step of the way. ★

► HEALTH NEWS

To Be Sure You're In Good Shape, Be Positive!

Stanford Study Puts Positive Health Attitude Hand in Hand With Longer, Healthier Life

Stanford, CA — Ten years ago, Stanford University psychologists took the common “I'm not getting enough exercise” notion, and scientifically turned it on its head.

Researchers first established that a group of volunteers—hotel room attendants—perceived themselves as getting inadequate daily exercise for people their age and social/health status.

Researchers then told them that the walking, pushing and lifting required by their hotel jobs was in fact giving them adequate daily exercise for their age and social/health status.

That study, first published in 2007, then documented how the attendants' health self-perceptions markedly improved—along with their weight, body fat and blood pressure.

And in a new study in *Health Psychology*, Stanford's Dr. Alia Crum and colleagues took that concept—and their earlier research on positivity and health—to the national level.

What they found all but broadcasts that when it comes to healthy long life, attitude is king.

“So much effort, notably in public health

campaigns, is geared toward motivating people to change their behavior: eat healthier, exercise more and stress less,” says Dr. Crum.

“But an important variable is being left out,” she added—“people's mindsets about those healthy behaviors.”

The researchers cross-referenced 1990 results from the federal National Health Interview Survey (and data from the annual NHANES federal health survey) with numbers from the National Death Index up through 2011.

By comparing respondents' perceived physical activity levels to mortality levels, the study found that Americans who saw themselves as less active than peers—even if they actually weren't—had up to a 71-percent higher mortality risk than those seeing themselves equally active as peers.

“In the pursuit of health and longevity,” adds Dr. Crum, “it is important to adopt not only healthy behaviors, but also healthy thoughts.”

Or, as the Yiddish saying goes, “*Tracht gut, vet zein gut!*”—think good, and it will be good! ★

The Autism Update

News and developments from the world of research and advocacy

Newest ASD Blood Test Furthers Shift to Medical Tests for Earlier Diagnosis

Dallas, TX — Measuring levels of two specific proteins in the blood may enable earlier diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a new study by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Those proteins were identified in previous research as potential markers for ASD. In the new research, simultaneously measuring levels of both proteins was able to accurately diagnose ASD in 82 percent of children participating in the study.

The study is among several recent and ongoing efforts to shift ASD diagnosis to various medical tests. Most current ASD tests are based on measuring behavioral symptoms.

In turn, according to researchers, earlier diagnosis based on those tests could lead to

earlier intervention and help limit the effects of the disorder.

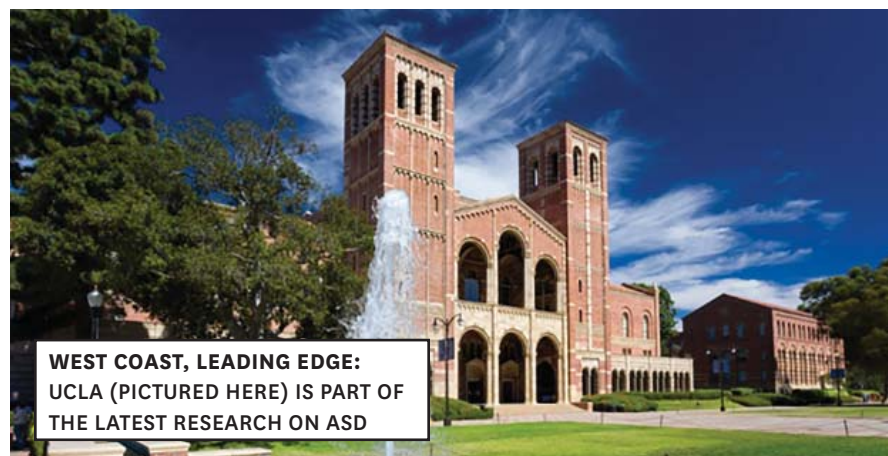
One such test comes from the Troy, New York-based Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), which in March 2017 reported a 98-percent accuracy rate for its autism blood test.

A study in the Feb. 2017 edition of *Nature* reported that scans of infants' brains to measure their growth were promising at predicting whether kids under 12 months old might develop autism between 12 and 24 months.

And University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) research published this July found that children with autism have a tell-tale difference on brain activity tests compared with other children. The lower their frequen-

cy of brain waves called *peak alpha frequency* waves, the lower their non-verbal IQ, UCLA researchers found.

Most ASD cases are not diagnosed until about age four, when communication and social disabilities become apparent. ★



► HAMASPIK NEWS

On Cusp of Several New Hires, Hamaspik's ABA Program Shifting to High Gear

Autism Therapy Program Delivering More

Anything Hamaspik does, it does well—and does right.

That value was in full effect when Hamaspik of Rockland County launched its applied behavior analysis (ABA) services to children with autism last fall. And that hasn't changed.

What has changed, though, is the growing number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) now being supported by Hamaspik throughout the greater Hudson Valley region—and the number of professional Hamaspik staff on hand to treat them.

Under the diligent directorship of Mrs. Reiny Steif, an agency mainstay for several years, Hamaspik's Autism Services Dept. has been working with parents of kids with ASD—and working hard for parents of kids with ASD—ever since.

Since her Department's inception, Director Steif has personally presided over the Initial Assessment of each program beneficiary.

Mrs. Steif has seen to it that each child under Hamaspik's care is progressing, working over the past several months with Hamaspik's Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Alan Blau, Ph.D. (who, of course, is also Hamaspik's longtime resident psychologist). A BCBA is the New York State licensed professional who

draws up and directs the extensive treatment plans for patients receiving ABA services.

And given the detail, and ancillary time, required to finalize an Initial Assessment for



THE BCBA IS IN: HAMASPIK'S VERY OWN ALAN BLAU, PH.D. IS A KEY TEAM MEMBER

ABA services, a number of additional cases are in the pipeline at Hamaspik's ABA department.

However, as they wait for final approval from insurance companies to begin receiving

the rigorous and repetitive ABA services, Mrs. Steif reports that parents are "excited" by their children's near-future treatment plans as prepared by Hamaspik's expert BCBAs—"and are looking forward to seeing real progress and real behavioral change."

All along, Mrs. Steif has also been delivering superlative service, Hamaspik-style.

Because of the higher costs of applied behavior analysis, especially since a course of near-daily treatment typically runs for months (if not years), ABA involves quite a bit of paperwork and other logistics involving coverage by health insurance.

Despite New York State having one of the most ample ABA coverage policies in the country, largely due to a Nov. 2011 bill signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, qualifying for ABA—or getting reinstated if bumped from coverage due to various snafus—can be a study in tediousness.

But not at Hamaspik.

The Autism Services Director boasts well-researched resources that help her iron out insurance coverage issues related to ABA services, both in the public and private sectors.

As a result, parents of kids with ASD who are also getting ABA from Hamaspik have found not just a superlative program that de-

livers results for their precious children—but also a Director who functions as an insurance advocate and navigator of notable know-how.

As a result, Hamaspik's ABA patients are being well-cared for—both those getting "paras" (specially-trained one-on-one behavioral coaches) at home and those slated to shortly be getting paras at home.

The ABA approach has been the newest trend in treating children with ASD for several years now. It's said to ameliorate adverse behaviors in kids with autism by repeating and reinforcing positive and otherwise desirable behaviors.

"As Director, I look forward to providing the best ABA services to your precious child," wrote Mrs. Steif in an introductory letter to parents of existing Hamaspik beneficiaries.

Hamaspik's Autism Services Department has been around for some time now. And throughout it all, its ever-expanding excellence—not to mention growth in numbers of beneficiaries—has remained the same. ★

To apply for Hamaspik ABA services or for more information, please call Mrs. Steif, Hamaspik of Rockland County Director of ABA Services, at 845-503-0239.

● ► HAMASPIK NEWS | HAPPENINGS AROUND HAMASPIK



Happenings Around Hamaspik

From A to Z, Leadership Practice is “Spark”-ling at STARS

Hamaspik’s STARS program for young women is not just enjoying its summer, but, enjoying a “spark”-ling curriculum of alphabet-based leadership practice, too!

That’s because the program’s summer-time theme, newsletter and all, is entitled “Sparks,” invoking the sparking of inner flames of creativity and originality—read, leadership—that are being cheered on by the seasonal curriculum.

But words are just where it starts. Students must independently come up with a word for an activity that starts with that letter—and then execute on it.

For STARS’ first summer-program week, for example, students found themselves lending each other helping hands as they baked “Heimishe” challah, hugged bears (teddy

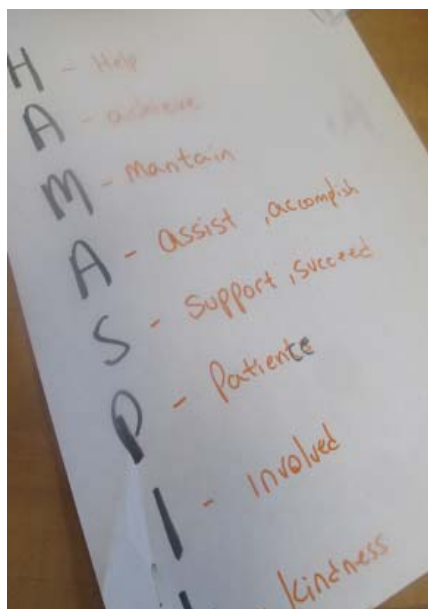
bears, that is—hugging real bears is generally not advised), played Hide-and-seek and otherwise were happy.

STARS’ second week, themed by the letter A as such, featured awesome activities executed by STARS’ artists, including arts and crafts and even the unleashing of an ambrose army of (paper) airplanes. They also produced an album and baked apple pie.

Week Three, themed by M, revolved around a “Menu” of items and activities—all of which had to be shopped for, purchased, or otherwise arranged.

The rest of the eight-week curriculum has been proceeding according to plan—giving the stars of STARS a self-directed summer from A all the way through to Z.

Or at least H to K. ★



CREATIVITY IS THE WORD: WHAT “HAMASPIK” REALLY STANDS FOR, HANDMADE TRINKETS, AND A MAGNIFICENT MELON MURAL, ALL PRODUCED BY STARS

Finding the Natural State in Upstate

“When the weather was beautiful, it was something special.”

So says Hamaspik of Orange County Direct Support Professional (DSP) Mendel Klein, a stalwart of that agency’s Men’s Day Hab Program.

He’s referring to his program’s regular visits over the last year to that Orange County oasis of tranquility known as the Orange County Arboretum—a lovely botanical garden that the young men most

recently visited again in early July.

The gentlemen find themselves at home among the garden’s lush foliage and lovely colors—taking in the rich roses and geraniums and relaxing aside the well-maintained fountain.

And with cotton skies come spring and summer topping the Arboretum’s flourishing grounds, the Hamaspik visitors once again become spectators to nature’s symphony of the senses. ★



THE GREAT OUTDOORS: HAMASPIK’S MEN’S DAY HABS IN ROCKLAND (R) AND KINGS (L) ENJOY GETTING OUT AND ABOUT, LIKE THEIR ORANGE COUNTERPARTS (BELOW)



New Comm Hab Coordinator in Kings

On July 18, longtime Hamaspik of Kings County Director of Community Services Shaya Ross formally welcomed Mrs. Riky Tauber as the agency’s newest Com Hab Coordinator. Mrs. Tauber joins veteran Com Hab Coordinator Mrs. Raizy Piller at Hamaspik of Kings’ Borough Park nerve center at the corner of 14th Ave. and 41st St. Welcome!

Community Habilitation (Com Hab) is

a Hamaspik mainstay by which youths with disabilities receive one-on-one support staffers who help them reach their community-oriented goals.

Said goals include such daily-life staples as personal finance, shopping or even house-keeping for young adults, and familiarity with institutions like doctors’ offices for children on the program. ★

● ► HAMASPIK NEWS

At Home on the Road, Concord “Boys” Enjoy Two-day Jersey Vacation

Personal Choices, Communal Preferences Underscored over Outing

It was 10:00 a.m. the morning of Monday, July 3rd when a Hamaspik of Rockland County SUV departed 68 E. Concord Dr. in the heart of residential Monsey, New York.

In the car were Pinchas, Nachmen, Shmuel and Mendy, accompanied by Hamaspik Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Binyomin Eidlisz and Zvi “Meilich” Weinberger.

Destination? New Jersey—and two days of person-centered R&R, Hamaspik-style.

They had planned their vacation weeks in advance, with help from Mrs. Shaindel Goldberger, Manager of Hamaspik’s Concord Briderheim residence for men at the aforementioned address.

For the past eight summers, says Mr. Weinberger, the gentlemen had opted to spend their vacations in Massachusetts’ Jiminy Peak region. But now, a bit tired of the same thing, they wanted something else. Manager Goldberger promptly provided.

With planning executed by Mrs. Goldberger and packing of suitcases and personal effects pulled off by residents, the Hummer-like MV-1 accessibility vehicle was shortly on the Garden State Parkway en route to Lakewood, New Jersey.

That Garden State suburb, home to one of America’s largest Orthodox Jewish population centers, is also home to local synagogues catering to every stripe, denomination and custom within that greater community.

Lakewood is therefore not just home to a growing Satmar Chasidic community but also to a Satmarer Chasidic shteeble (a Yiddish colloquialism for a small synagogue).

It was that shteeble that was the Hamaspik contingent’s first stop in Lakewood—and a destination to which they’d return several times over the next two days for maximum personal comfort and acclimation, all being of Chasidic background themselves. And shortly after arriving, then, Hamaspik residents and staff joined locals for the afternoon Minchah prayers.

By 4:00 that sunny afternoon, the gentlemen found themselves checking into the newly-renovated Days Inn Hotel in nearby Toms River.

After unpacking and settling in, a fresh lunch was served, dispensed from large coolers brought along for the trip.

The gentlemen then took in the first of the vacation’s string of recreational activities to follow: a reinvigorating stroll along the shores a nearby lake, where they enjoyed the natural sights, sounds and scents of the waterfront.

followed by breakfast back at the hotel at 10:30.

At 12 noon, the Hamaspik contingent was on the road to Forked River, New Jersey—home to Popcorn Park Zoo! (Yes, you read that right!)

Having brought plenty of food and snacks with them, the gentlemen not only enjoyed a picnic-table lunch intermission during their stay, but also had plenty of healthy munchies to munch on throughout as well.

After a rest-up return to the hotel, where they lounged leisurely in the comfortable lobby for a time, the gentlemen repaired to Lakewood for their shteeble’s 6:00 p.m. Minchah time.

That was followed by an equally leisurely stroll around Lakewood’s streets for a time, basking in the balmy summer-evening weather and the Jewish atmosphere to which the gentlemen are accustomed from Monsey.

But besides the day being their first full summer vacation day, it was also the Fourth of July.

Following their 8:00 p.m. supper, then, the “boys” were driven down to the local lake by staff to take in that night’s patriotic display of fireworks. A 10:30 bedtime back at Days capped an exciting day—a day to be followed by another even more exciting.

Bright and early at 7:00 a.m., the two Hamaspik DSPs supported the four gentlemen through their morning personal-care routines, followed by snacks and Shachris over in Lakewood.

Breakfast back at the hotel wrapped up their two days at Days. With suitcases packed, the gentlemen checked out at 10:30 a.m. and got en route right away for... Diggerland USA!

The popular playground for kids at heart of all ages, located in New Berlin, New Jersey, features a large assortment of real construction machinery and vehicles modified for safe usage by all.

From 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., the “boys” lived every boy’s dream—working actual steam shovels, large and small diggers, backhoes and loaders, driving construction carts around tire-marked tracks and getting behind the wheels of real dumper trucks, steam rollers and, of course, tractors.

There wasn’t a single attraction at Diggerland that the gentlemen didn’t try and enjoy, according to Mr. Weinberger. “They didn’t want to leave!” he reports.

But leave they regretfully had to at 5:00 p.m., pulling back up to Concord Drive at 7:45.

Everything back home was the same.

But because they had just come back from vacation, the gentlemen were different—and in the most rejuvenatedly and otherwise positive ways. ★



FOOD FOR ADVENTURE: CONCORD RESIDENTS AND STAFF FEED THEIR APPETITES FOR FUN

It was time for the nighttime Maariv prayer services by the time that was over, so into the MV-1 they went for a short hop over to the Lakewood shteeble where they felt at home. Dinner back at the Days Hotel followed, then a well-earned bedtime at 9:00 p.m. A big day lay ahead.

Eight o’clock the next morning was marked by wakeup followed by a round of fresh coffee, yogurt and/or cereal per personal preference. The “boys” were then off to Shachris morning prayers in Lakewood,

The quizzically-named animal sanctuary is so dubbed for its oodles of free popcorn provided to visitors with which to feed the animals (turns out that popcorn is not the junk food one would think it is, as least for our four-legged friends of the non-human kingdom).

In the course of their three-hour visit at Popcorn Park, the gentlemen got to pet horses, llamas and several other domesticated beasts—and feed them lots of popcorn.

Public Health And Policy News

FDA to launch a formal investigation into the fast food products that wrap our burgers.”

Studies cited by Schumer in his letter have linked phthalates to thyroid and insulin issues in youth.

Others have also shown that Americans who frequently consume fast food have higher levels of phthalates in their bodies than those who rarely eat fast food. And a 2013 study by New York University found a link between “high levels of phthalates and increased insulin resistance in young adolescents,” Schumer also said.

FEDS TO BIG TOBACCO: CUT IT OUT!

Washington, D.C. — Federal officials with the FDA announced July 28 that they want tobacco companies to eventually manufacture all cigarettes with new and non-addictively low levels of nicotine.

In announcing its call for Big Tobacco to cut cigarettes’ nicotine content down to levels where they’d no longer be addictive, the FDA also said it would encourage smokers to switch to less-dangerous e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.

DIGITAL HEALTH INNOVATORS WELCOME AT FDA PILOT PROGRAM

Washington, D.C. — In late July, the FDA announced a pilot program that could lead to a “pre-certification” for digital health start-ups.

The new “Pre-Cert for Software Pilot Program” is designed to help medical software start-ups fast-track approvals for new products that might help patients in innovative new ways.

Up to nine companies will be allowed to sign up.

SEN. SCHUMER WANTS HEALTHIER FAST FOOD

New York, NY — Fast-food wrappers and other disposables made with phthalates, a chemical banned in other products, should now be investigated for negative public health effects, according to New York’s very own U.S. Senator Charles “Chuck” Schumer.

In a July 30th letter to new commissioner Scott Gottlieb, Sen. Schumer called on the FDA to study the consequences of using phthalates in food packaging.

“The studies are clear: the link between these chemicals does have an impact on the body, and not a very good one,” Schumer said in a statement. “That is why I am asking the



TAKING A STAND AGAINST PHTHALATES: AT AN NYC OUTDOOR CONFERENCE, SEN. SCHUMER DISPLAYS THE TYPICAL FAST-FOOD PACKAGING THAT HE WANTS THE FDA TO FURTHER STUDY FOR DETRIMENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS DUE TO THE CHEMICALS THEY CONTAIN. THE FDA ALREADY BANS PHTHALATES FROM USAGE IN OTHER PRODUCTS

HEART DOCTOR EDITORIALIZES AGAINST STATIN DRUG “DENIAL”

Cleveland, OH — A July 24 editorial in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* lambasted skeptics of statins, the common cholesterol-lowering drugs, calling them “an Internet-driven cult with deadly consequences.”

The editorial was penned by Cleveland Clinic chairman of cardiovascular medicine Dr. Steven Nissen. It was published along a new study finding that people on statins are less likely to die from or suffer heart attacks

or strokes than those not (or formerly) on statins.

Much of the concern over statins revolves around their most common side effect, with some 20 percent of statin-takers reporting muscles aches.

Other “fringe views” popularized by the Internet, according to Dr. Nissen, are associations between statins and diabetes or dementia.

Most side effects associated with statins are minor and can be addressed by adjusting the dose or switching to another type of statin, Dr. Nissen said. ★



SOLIDIFYING THE STATIN STATUS QUO: THE CLEVELAND CLINIC'S DR. STEVEN NISSEN WRITES THAT THERE'S NO REASON TO AVOID THESE IF YOUR DOCTOR ADVISES THEM. DESPITE MISGIVINGS AND FEARS SPREAD BY THE INTERNET, STATINS REMAIN SAFE, WITH MINIMAL SIDE EFFECTS LARGELY ADDRESSED BY ADJUSTING DOSAGES

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Status Report

Happening In Hospitals Today

Mega-merger to Make Jersey's Biggest Academic Healthcare System

West Orange, NJ — The late-July partnership announcement between RWJBarnabas Health and Rutgers University will eventually create New Jersey's largest academic health-care system.

Rutgers Health Group has about 1,000 University-employed physicians, dentists,

psychologists, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals, and RWJBarnabas Health is the state's largest healthcare system.

The new partnership will span 17 of New Jersey's 21 counties and create a multi-specialty group of over 2,500 practitioners. ★

NewYork-Presbyterian Launches Pediatric Telehealth Option

New York, NY — With new telehealth services for pediatrics, Manhattan's very own NewYork-Presbyterian is expanding its suite of OnDemand digital health services.

Via the NYP.org website and the NYP mobile application, concerned parents will be able to access the new Pediatric Urgent Care from 6:00 pm to midnight seven days a week.

Using high-definition video conferencing, parents can talk with pediatric emergency physicians about common conditions affecting kids like fever, cough, vomiting, pink eye and rashes.

While the service will initially be limited to patients residing in New York State, the

hospital says it plans to expand to New Jersey, Connecticut and Florida in coming months.

Demand for virtual health services is growing strongly across the industry. For example, virtual visits account for more than half of all member visits with doctors, Kaiser Permanente CEO Bernard Tyson said this past April.

As a result, health systems nationwide have been lining up to offer telehealth services.

Telehealth systems provider American Well currently services over 70 health system partnerships from coast to coast, including upstate New York's very own Bon Secours and

the Cleveland Clinic.

Telehealth is also increasingly becoming part of public health policy, with Medicare recently expanding its list of telehealth-eligible services under its Physician Prospective Payment System. ★

New York 2nd-costliest City for New Hospital Construction

New York, NY — If you want to build a new hospital for less, don't go to Honolulu.

According to a new report by industry analysis firm Rider Levett Bucknall, the Hawaiian capital currently tops the list of America's 12 most expensive cities for hospital building.

Unfortunately, though, East isn't far at all from West here, with New York coming in 2nd.

While building a new hospital in Honolulu will cost you up to \$760 per square foot, NYC will cost you up to \$700, Rider research reports.

Other big cities making the list are Los Angeles (up to \$700) and Chicago (up to \$630). Denver and Las Vegas tied for 11th place at up to \$455 per square foot each. ★



GETTING UP THERE: NEW MEDICAL FACILITIES IN NEW YORK, LIKE NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN'S NEW DAVID H. KOCH CENTER (SHOWN HERE), CAN COST UP TO \$700 A SQUARE FOOT, ACCORDING TO A RECENT INDUSTRY REPORT

Primary Care Job Growth Slower than Specialists

Washington, D.C. — The medical industry as a whole may be booming. But according to a new report in Health Affairs, jobs for primary care physicians (PCPs) grew far slower than did those for specialists.

Between 2005 and 2015, PCP jobs increased by eight percent, while specialist jobs

during that same period grew by 48 percent. During that time, the percentage of doctors in primary care dropped from 44 to 37 percent.

However, if physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) are included, the total primary care workforce grew during that period by 17 percent. ★

GETTING ONLINE: AT NYP'S PATIENT PORTAL PAGE, PARENTS CAN NOW ALSO GET THEIR KIDS SEEN

In the Know

ALL ABOUT... VESTIBULAR DISORDER

The Gazette thanks Fred H. Barreto, M.D. for critically reviewing this article.

Vestibular disorder does not mean a cluttered lobby, contrary to comedic commentary. Indeed, for those affected by this category of medical condition, it's anything but funny. Vestibular disorder refers to dizziness, imbalance, ringing in the ears, vision problems and many other symptoms—all caused by problems in the vestibular system: those parts of the inner ear, eye and brain that process sensory information that controls balance and eye movements.

Do read on for a balanced review of this balance-related subject.

DEFINITION AND SYMPTOMS

Vestibular disorder is a category of disorder that includes over ten specific diagnoses.

Among the most commonly diagnosed vestibular disorders are: benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), labyrinthitis, vestibular neuritis, Meniere's disease and perilymph fistula.

Vestibular disorder is primarily marked by a mild to severe inability to maintain the body's normal physical balance, place, poise and position in any number of daily life

activities, including driving, walking, turning or even standing and sitting.

The vestibular system includes the parts of the inner ear and brain that help control balance and eye movements. If any part is damaged by disease, aging, or injury, vestibular disorders can result.

The three most common symptoms of vestibular disorder are: *dizziness*, *vertigo* and *imbalance*.

Dizziness is a sensation of lightheadedness, faintness, or unsteadiness. Dizziness doesn't mean that "the room is turning"—it means that you're "floating" or "rocking."

Vertigo is the sensation that you or surrounding objects are turning, spinning or rotating when they are not. The sensation can appear while sitting, moving or assuming certain positions.

Imbalance simply means unsteadiness or loss of equilibrium, often accompanied by spatial disorientation. Common symptoms of imbalance include:

- Stumbling or difficulty standing still, walking straight or turning
- Sensitivity to changes in walking surfaces or footwear
- Feeling heavily weighted or pulled in one direction

Other vestibular disorder symptoms include vision disturbance, hearing changes, and

even cognitive and/or psychological changes.

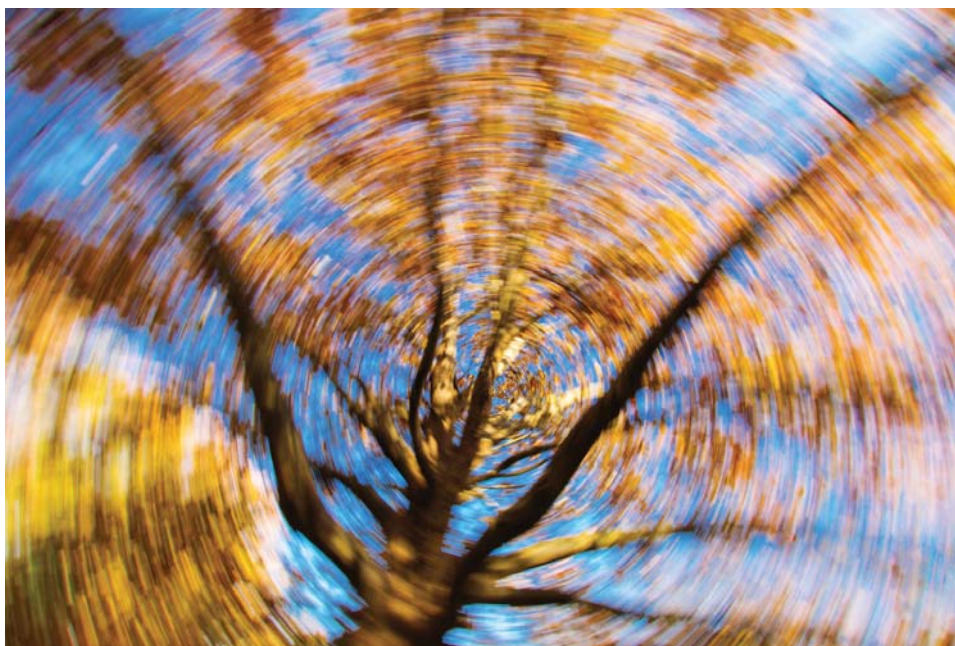
Vision disturbance

Because the vestibular system includes the eyes, symptoms of vestibular disorder can also include these vision problems:

- Trouble focusing on or tracking objects
- Discomfort from busy visual environments like traffic, crowds, stores, and patterns
- Sensitivity to light, glare, certain computer monitors and digital screens, and moving or flickering lights, especially fluorescents and especially at night

Hearing changes

- Hearing loss; distorted or fluctuating hearing
- Tinnitus (ringing, roaring, buzzing,



A HEALTHY SPIN: VESTIBULAR DISORDER CAN BE MANAGEABLE WITH THE RIGHT CARE

whooshing, or other noises in the ear)

- Increased vertigo, dizziness, or imbalance due to sudden loud noises or environments

Cognitive/psychological changes

- Difficulty understanding conversations, especially with background noise/movement
- Difficulty concentrating and paying attention; easily distracted; forgetfulness
- Confusion, disorientation, difficulty comprehending directions or instructions
- Mental and/or physical fatigue out of proportion to activity

Other symptoms

- Nausea or vomiting
- "Hangover" or "seasick" feeling
- Motion sickness
- Sensation of fullness in the ears
- Ear pain

CAUSES

Overview

In a healthy vestibular system, sensory information from vision, proprioception (touch sensors in the feet, trunk, and spine), and the inner ear keeps a person balanced.

Information from these three systems are processed and then "forwarded" from the

brain to the eyes and the muscles—helping maintain steady vision and physical balance.

A healthy vestibular system can usually tolerate mixed signals. But in people with vestibular disorder, the vestibular system does not adequately compensate for those mixed signals.

Like a courtroom judge ruling between two sides of conflicting evidence, the vestibular system is the tie-breaker between conflicting sensory signals. When the vestibular system malfunctions, it can no longer help resolve such conflicts, resulting in symptoms of vestibular disorder.

General causes

Vestibular disorder is most commonly caused by head injury, aging, or viral infection.

Other illnesses, and genetic and environmental factors, may also be direct or contributing causes.

SPECIFIC CAUSES

Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) is caused by loose debris (otoliths) collecting in a part of the inner ear. Displaced otoliths cause BPPV by sending disruptive noise and balance signals to the brain. In turn, the most common

cause of BPPV is head injuries.

Another fairly common cause is *Ménière's disease*, a progressive condition involving changes in the inner ear's endolymph (a type of fluid).

Autoimmune inner ear diseases occur when the immune system attacks cells that affect the ear. These include Cogan's syndrome, Wegener's granulomatosis or even rheumatoid arthritis.

Other causes are inflammations caused by viral infections—resulting in labyrinthitis (damage to hearing and vestibular function), or vestibular neuritis (damage to vestibular function only).

“LIKE A COURTROOM JUDGE... THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM IS THE TIE-BREAKER BETWEEN CONFLICTING SENSORY SIGNALS.”

DIAGNOSIS

Vestibular disorder is diagnosed with vestibular testing.

Vestibular testing tests the parts of the vestibular system for proper function—isolating precise causes and ruling out non-related causes.

Vestibular testing can be a multi-visit, prolonged, detailed and tiring process that spans weeks. Testing can even temporarily make symptoms worse. But careful, thorough and painstaking testing—including a complete medical history to find all possible causes—is essential for correct diagnosis and treatment.

To diagnose vestibular disorder, your primary care doctor, neurologist or ear-nose-throat (ENT) doctor will refer you to any of the following:

- An audiologist for hearing or balance related testing;
- A radiologist for imaging testing;
- A neurotologist (a.k.a. otoneurologist), or ear nerve specialist, for specific hearing and balance tests;
- A neuro-ophthalmologist (eye nerve specialist), for specific vision and eye

CAREFUL, THOROUGH AND PAINSTAKING TESTING—including A COMPLETE MEDICAL HISTORY TO FIND ALL POSSIBLE CAUSES—is ESSENTIAL FOR CORRECT DIAGNOSIS



function tests; and/or

- A physical therapist for gait or balance related testing.

TESTS

Tests for vestibular disorder include but are not limited to:

ENG/VNG tests: These are the most common vestibular disorder tests. Electronystagmography (ENG) refers to small electrodes placed on the skin around the eyes to test their function. Videonystagmography (VNG) is the same as ENG but uses goggles with built-in video cameras to monitor the eyes while tests are conducted.

Computerized axial tomography (CAT): In vestibular disorder, CAT scans are often used to look for abnormalities in the skull's temporal bone around the inner ear, like fractures or thinning.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI): The common MRI scan can reveal tumors, stroke damage, and other soft-tissue brain abnormalities that might be causing

vestibular disorder symptoms.

Audiometry (hearing tests): Hearing tests are central to diagnosing vestibular disorder because the inner ear is central to the vestibular system. More than one hearing test may be needed, especially with ear symptoms like hearing loss, tinnitus (ringing/noise in the ears) or others.

Tympanometry: This test helps detect problems between the ear drum and the inner ear. It uses a small earpiece that creates pressure and plays sound in the ear canal to gather information. The same device can also be used for acoustic-reflex testing to measure middle ear muscle reflexes.

Rotation tests: These tests use video goggles

dizziness, gaze instability, and/or imbalance and falls. Vestibular rehabilitation can be effective in improving several symptoms—and not just the primary ones of dizziness, vertigo and imbalance, but also nausea, reduced concentration, and fatigue.

Vestibular rehabilitation helps because, after vestibular system damage, the brain learns to use other senses to substitute for vestibular deficiencies. This process is known as compensation. Compensation can occur naturally over time, but vestibular rehabilitation can accelerate it.

Depending on specific symptoms, vestibular rehabilitation uses three types of ex-

Medication

In the early/acute stage of vestibular disorder, medications may be prescribed to reduce motion sickness or nausea. Other medications that may be prescribed at this stage are steroids, antiviral drugs, or antibiotics if a middle ear infection is present. During the chronic stage of vestibular disorder, any drug making the brain sleepy can slow down or stop compensation. That's why they are often not advised for long-term use.

Surgery

Surgery may be considered when medical treatment isn't effective in controlling vertigo or other symptoms. Type of surgery depends upon each individual case and condition. Surgical procedures are generally corrective or destructive. Corrective surgery repairs or stabilizes inner ear function. Destructive surgery stops production of sensory information or prevents its transmission from inner ear to brain.

PROGNOSIS

Vestibular disorder can affect daily life in many ways. Here are some tips on dealing with common challenges.

Events

Use a cane for additional touch information about where you exist in space. Bring a fold-up chair to outdoor events—and sit where you can watch and move your head the least.

Traveling

Don't fly if sinuses or ears are infected or blocked. Avoid reading or working on a computer while riding in any moving vehicle. Wear sunglasses and hat to calm light and movement.

Diet

Many people with certain vestibular disorders find that certain dietary modifications help. Depending on your particular diagnosis, you may want to:

- Distribute food and fluid intake evenly throughout the day and from day to day
- Avoid foods and beverages that have a high salt or sugar content

Staying active

Many people with vestibular disorder find that staying active, to the extent comfortable, can help control or even reduce symptoms. Many people with vestibular disorder report significant improvements with Tai Chi, the Oriental martial arts discipline that emphasizes balance.

Bottom line? Always consult with your doctor before beginning a new activity, introduce new activities slowly so your body has time to adjust to them.

Most importantly, and get all the support you can from family, friends and other patients as you do everything possible to treat symptoms of vestibular disorder—and incorporate the “new normal” of whatever can't be treated into your fully active life. ★

FEELING DIZZY? More than **1/3** of adults in the U.S. 40 and older have experienced some sort of vestibular dysfunction.*

BALANCE
Balance is controlled by:
• the inner ear (vestibular system)
• the eyes (vision)
• sense of touch (proprioception)

DIAGNOSIS
Vestibular disorders are not easy to diagnose. On average, patients consult 4 or 5 doctors before receiving a diagnosis.**
Your doctor will take a medical history and may order several types of testing, including:
HEARING, BALANCE, VISION
Getting a diagnosis may mean ruling out other conditions. Your condition may be short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic).

SYMPTOMS
You may experience one or several symptoms.
BALANCE PROBLEMS
• VERTIGO (sensation of movement)
• DIZZINESS
• IMBALANCE
PROBLEMS CONCENTRATING (or cognitive challenges)
VISION DISTURBANCE
HEARING CHANGES

TREATMENT
Your treatment will depend on your diagnosis.
• PHYSICAL THERAPY
• POSITIONING MANEUVERS
• DIET & LIFESTYLE CHANGES
• MEDICATION
• SURGERY
• COUNSELING

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
To learn more and find a specialist:
vestibular.org

VESTIBULAR DISORDERS ASSOCIATION

* Adapted from: Cooper, D. Data Sources: CDC, National Health and Human Services Survey 2001-2004. Arch Intern Med. 2009;169(10):938-944.
**Vestibular Disorders Association, 2011.

or electrodes to measure how well the eyes and inner ear work together while the head (or entire body) is rotated side to side at moderate or slow speeds. Rotation tests include auto head rotation, computerized rotary chair, or screening test.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends upon the individual patient's big picture: symptoms, medical history, general health and all—and, of course, results of all vestibular tests.

But while treatment for vestibular disorder can consist of a number of options, including medication and even surgery, treatment will almost always include vestibular rehabilitation.

Vestibular rehabilitation

Vestibular rehabilitation is an exercise-based program primarily designed to reduce vertigo,

ercises:

- **Habituation** treats dizziness resulting from self-motion or visual stimuli
- **Gaze stabilization** improves control of eye movements so vision is clearer during head movements.
- **Balance training** improves steadiness so that daily activities for self-care, work, and leisure can be performed successfully

Canalith repositioning

In people with BPPV, a series of precise head movements called canalith repositioning may move displaced crystals inside the inner ear back to their correct place.

In BPPV, these crystals collect in the ear's semicircular canals. There, they touch sensitive nerve hairs—sending false signals to the brain that cause dizziness and other symptoms. Canalith repositioning has a fairly high cure rate for BPPV.

► **DISABILITY NEWS**

Precise Genetic Tests Pinpoint Epilepsy Causes—Allowing Earlier Diagnosis and Treatment

Chicago, IL — Standard initial evaluations of children having seizures before age three should include the latest and most precise genetic testing for epilepsy, a new study now says.

The study calls for such children to get genetic sequencing—likened by researchers to finding spelling mistakes in words—instead of the chromosome microarray genetic test comparable to finding printing errors, like missing paragraphs or entire chapters.

According to the study, 40 percent of children who developed seizures before age three had specific genetic factors that caused epilepsy.

The study also found that genetic testing

provided a diagnosis in 25 percent of patients who had epilepsy with an otherwise unknown cause.

“Identifying the precise [genetic mutation] cause of a child’s epilepsy as soon as possible would help us choose the most effective treatment to control seizures early on, which is important for healthier brain development,” said Anne Berg, lead researcher at the Stanley Manne Children’s Research Institute at Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago.

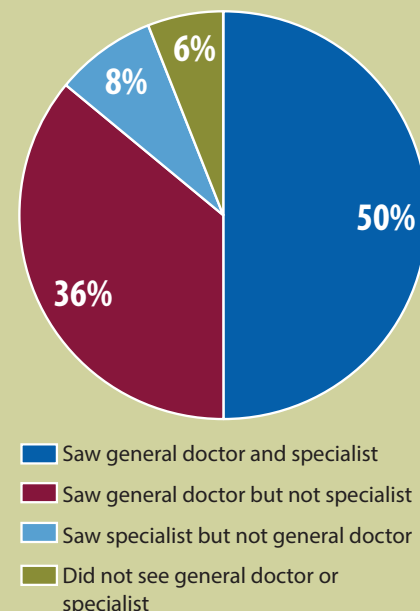
“The sooner a precision diagnosis can be made,” she added, “the sooner a child can start treatment.”

The study was published July 31 in *JAMA Pediatrics*. ★

Fast Facts

- ◆ About 1% of US adults aged 18 years or older and 0.6% of children aged 17 or younger have active epilepsy.
- ◆ Epilepsy can shorten a person’s life and severely reduce overall well-being and full participation in daily activities.
- ◆ In 2013, 12% of US adults said they would avoid a person with epilepsy who has frequent seizures.
- ◆ CDC works with the Epilepsy Foundation to develop and share public education programs and campaigns and to provide services for people with epilepsy and their families.

Percentage of Adults with Active Epilepsy Who Saw a Doctor in the Past 12 Months



Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010 and 2013 data.

Drug Improves Brain Performance in Rett Syndrome Mice

Birmingham, AL — An experimental drug was shown in tests at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) to improve the brain function of mice with Rett syndrome.

The drug named LM22A-4 was found to burrow deep into the brains of mice affected by Rett syndrome, improving their ability to remember the location of objects.

Earlier research elsewhere found that LM22A-4 improves Rett mouse breathing. The drug has also been shown to promote motor recovery in mice that had strokes or spinal cord injuries.

Researchers now believe that neurode-

velopmental disorders affecting early brain development like Rett syndrome may one day be amenable to treatment, even after the onset of symptoms, with LM22A-4 and similar brain-function-improving drugs.

Rett syndrome affects about one of every 10,000 females worldwide. Infants develop typically until six to 18 months of age, when a number of serious symptoms including intellectual disability, autistic features, motor control deficits, breathing and sensory problems, and epilepsy start to appear. Most people with Rett syndrome have a mutation in the gene MeCP2. ★



LEADING RESEARCH:
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM, RETT SYNDROME EXPERT DR. ALAN PERCY IN THE LAB

Robotic Device Improves Gait in Kids with Cerebral Palsy

New York, NY — A robotic physical-therapy device developed by New York’s very own Columbia University shows early promise in helping kids with cerebral palsy walk better.

The Tethered Pelvic Assist Device (TPAD) robotic system is designed by Columbia researchers to help reduce crouch gait—a cerebral palsy-related condition in children with mild to moderate cerebral palsy that is marked by excessive bending of the hips, knees or ankles.

The device, worn like a belt of sorts, applies downward force to the lower limbs to retrain certain leg muscles. After participating in a six-week series of 15-minute training sessions with the TPAD, six participating children showed significant improvements in their walking abilities.

Those improvements included posture and muscle coordination, step length, toe clearance, range of motion, and heel-to-toe pattern. The research was written up recently in *Science Robotics*.

Columbia researchers

plan further clinical trials on TPAD, including a larger group of kids with crouch gait, as well as with kids with more severe forms of cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is a birth physical disability caused by damage to those parts of the brain that control physical movement. Cerebral palsy hinders fine-motor ability mildly to severely, and is commonly marked by uneven tendons in the arms or legs resulting in hands turned in or bowed legs due to uneven growth. ★

FOUNDATION OF PROGRESS: COLUMBIA'S ENGINEERING SCHOOL DEVELOPED THE TPAD





The Senior Care Gazette

Nursing Home Residents on High-dose Flu Shot Avoid Hospitals More: Study

Providence, RI — Research in the *Lancet Respiratory Medicine* suggests that nursing-home residents getting the high-dose Fluzone shot are at far less risk of hospitalization due to the flu virus than those getting the standard dose.

Brown University researchers reviewed Medicare claims data on over 38,000 nursing

home residents nationwide from the 2013-2014 flu season. They found that risk of hospitalization for respiratory illness was nearly 13 percent lower in the high-dose group.

The study indicates that the higher cost of the high-dose vaccine is outweighed by its apparent benefit of keeping more seniors out of hospitals. ★

Study: Generic Eye Drops Could Save Medicare Millions

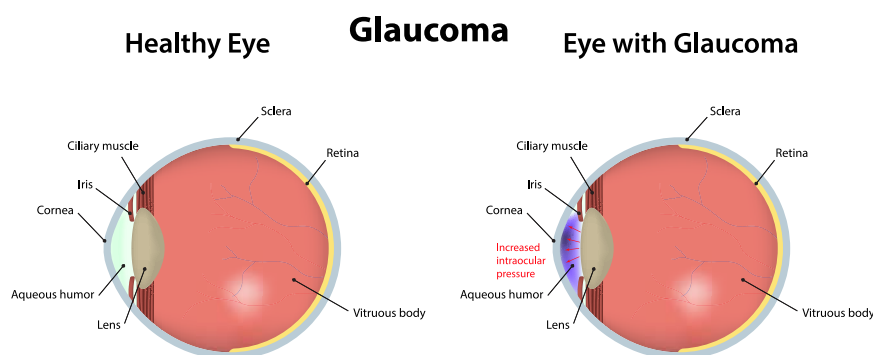
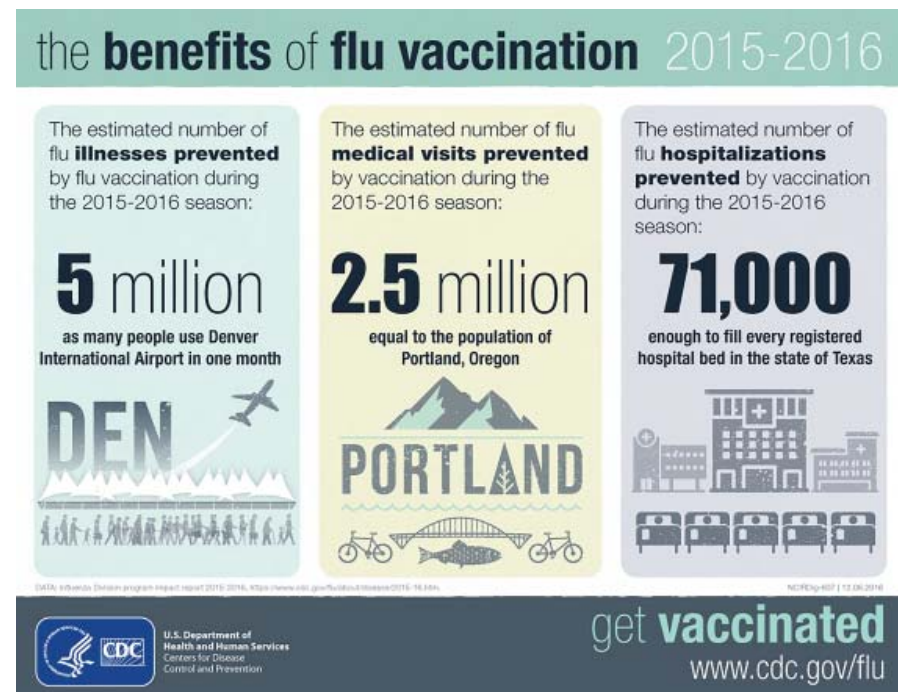
Ann Arbor, MI — A study by the University of Michigan's Kellogg Eye Center suggests that prescribing generic drugs for seniors' eye problems could save Medicare hundreds of millions year.

With conditions like glaucoma and dry eye common in old age, prescriptions for daily eye drops are common. And with seniors' eye doctors prescribing brand-name drugs in over three-quarters of cases, researchers say the costs quickly add up for Medicare, or fed-

eral healthcare for seniors.

"Lawmakers are currently looking for ways to reduce federal spending for health care, and policies that favor generics over brand medications... may lead to cost savings," said study senior author Lindsey De Lott.

What's more, according to De Lott, there is no evidence that brand medications are superior to generics, which can cost three or four times less. ★



Group Gives Docs Dementia-detecting Toolkit

Washington, D.C. — Doctors caring for seniors in today's online age now have yet another Internet-based tool.

To help geriatricians and other doctors diagnose dementia in seniors earlier and better, the Gerontological Society of America is now offering them the four-step KAER tool for free. Its four steps are: Kickstart the cognition conversation, Assess for cognitive impairment, Evaluate for dementia, and Refer for community resources. Most older adults have a primary-care physician and visit them several times per year, according to Dr. Rich-

ard Fortinsky, chair of the Gerontological Society's KAER workgroup. The KAER tool intends to raise those doctors' awareness of the need to discuss brain health with older patients, even those with no symptoms or concerns involving memory or cognition.

The toolkit brings together an extensive amount of existing evidence-based, practical, and easy-to-use guidance to busy primary-care provider about how to work with older adults and their families who are concerned about brain health and cognitive decline, according to Dr. Fortinsky. ★

Immune Response Linked to Parkinson's Disease

New York, NY — Researchers found that immune cells recognize and react to alpha-synuclein, the protein that builds up in the brains of people with Parkinson's disease.

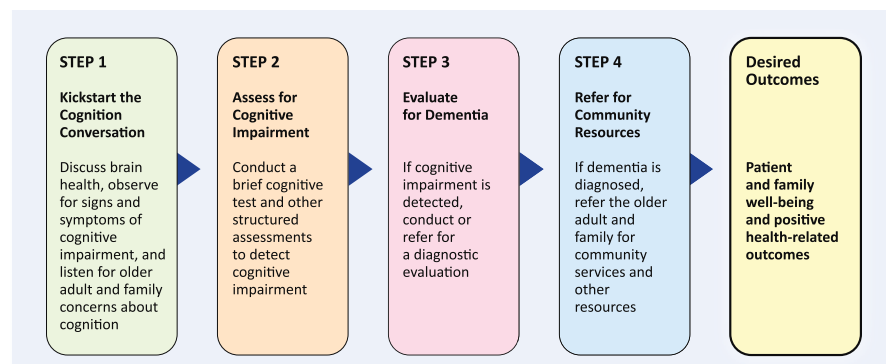
The findings suggest that the immune system may play a role in the start or progression of Parkinson's disease in sufferers.

Researchers compared immune cell responses to alpha-synuclein in both people with and without Parkinson's—finding that

the immune system's T cells strongly reacted to alpha-synuclein.

"Our findings show that two fragments of alpha-synuclein... can activate the T cells involved in autoimmune attacks," said Dr. David Sulzer of Columbia University Medical Center.

It remains to be seen whether the T cell response to alpha-synuclein is a cause of Parkinson's, or merely contributes to brain-cell death and worsening symptoms after the onset of Parkinson's. ★



STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: THE KAER TOOL'S FOUR-STEP PROCESS AS EXCERPTED FROM ITS DETAILED FULL LITERATURE FOR PARTICIPATING PROFESSIONALS



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