



The Hamaspik Gazette

News of Hamaspik
Agencies and
General Health

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GAZETTE SURVEY

The GAZETTE asks YOU:

**HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN?**

A: VERY SATISFIED; B: SATISFIED; C: NOT SATISFIED



HEALTH STAT

LONG LIVE NEW YORK!

The five states in the U.S. with the lowest death rates in 2017 were: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Minnesota, and New York.

Source: National Vital Statistics System, 2017



HEALTH TIP

FALL UP! PLAN NOW TO STAY HEALTHY ALL SEASON LONG

Fall means colder (and shorter) days—so beat that looming gloom now: take more Vitamin D, go to bed earlier, and boost your mood with positive thoughts. And get that flu shot!

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HEALTH

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City research confirms anecdote

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NYSHA NEWS

OPENING DOORS OF COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

GRAND RABBI AARON TEITELBAUM, THE SATMAR REBBE AND A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF HAMASPIK'S TRAILBLAZING COMMUNITY EFFORTS, IS HONORED WITH THE FRONT-DOOR MEZUZAH-POSTING AT THE GRAND OPENING OF THE CATHERINE BRIDERHEIM RESIDENCE, HAMASPIK'S NEWEST GROUP HOME



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HAMASPIK NEWS

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HAMASPIK NEWS

Florida May Become 1st State to Import Prescription Drugs from Canada

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Services Provided by NYSHA AGENCIES

OPWDD SERVICES

INDIVIDUALIZED RESIDENTIAL ALTERNATIVE (IRA)

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

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES (ISS)

Paid housing expenses and support for individuals who can live independently.

HOME FAMILY CARE (HFC)

Places individuals with developmental disabilities into private homes to care and support the individual.

DAY HABILITATION (DH)

A day program for adults with disabilities designed to develop skills, greater independence, community inclusion etc.

Site Based: Day Habilitation Service delivered in an OPWDD certified facility.

Without Walls: Day Habilitation Service delivered in a community-based setting.

Stars Day Program: Day Habilitation Service delivered in an OPWDD certified facility for higher-functioning individuals.

COMMUNITY HABILITATION (CH)

Working one-on-one with individuals in their home or in the community to achieve valued outcomes by helping them develop daily living skills and achieve long-term goals.

COMMUNITY PRE VOCATIONAL

Working with individual to prepare them for paid community employment- Teaching individuals job skills and other related social skills to enhance their ability to obtain employment in the future.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SEMP)

Working with individual to support and provide them with necessary coaching so they can successfully engage in paid competitive employment.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES (FSS)

Support for the individual's family by reimbursing them for certain qualifying items or services, otherwise not available to them.

INTENSIVE BEHAVIORAL SERVICES (IBS)

Short-term interventional services for people with behavioral issues and their family members.

RESPITE:

Home and Community-based respite services to provide a relief for the individual's caregiver and family.

At-Home: Respite services delivered in the home of the individual.

After School: Respite program provided every day after school hours.

Sundays: Respite program provided every Sunday.

Legal Holidays: Respite program provided on all legal holidays when school is not in session.

Summer Break/Camp Neshomah: Full day respite program during the summer break weeks.

Stars Night Program: Respite services delivered in the evening hours to high-functioning individuals by taking them out in the community and doing recreational and stimulating activities with them.

Weekend Getaway: A weekend retreat for individuals receiving respite services.

Hamasmid: After-School program for mainstreamed individuals engaging in recreational activities.

SELF-DIRECTION

The Individual or their advocate takes direct responsibility to manage their services and self-direct their budget.

Fiscal Intermediary (FI): Assists individual or their advocate in implementing their Individual Support Agreement and to manage financial accountability and employer responsibilities.

Brokerage: Assisting individuals or their advocate in creating and managing their budget.

PARENTAL RETREATS

Providing: Getaways and retreats for parents of individuals with disabilities

DOH

EARLY INTERVENTION (EI)

Providing a range of services to help young children (ages birth-3) who have a specific delay in their development.

Group Development Model (GDM): Providing Early Intervention services in a group-setting.

Therapy: Providing OT, PT, SLP, Vision, Nutrition, Play, Special Education, Family Training etc. to help the child develop appropriately.

Evaluations: Providing full evaluations to assess child's skills and development.

NURSING HOME TRANSITION AND DIVERSION (NHTD)

Waiver services to help individuals who need nursing-home level of care safely remain home and avoid nursing home placement.

Service Coordination (SC): Provides coordination to the individual in gaining access to needed waiver and Medicaid State Plan services, as well as other local, state, and federally funded educational, vocational, social, and medical services.

Community Transitional Services (CTS) / Moving Assistance (MA): Provides moving assistance with packing and transporting individual's possessions and furnishings when he/she must be moved from an inadequate or unsafe housing situation to a viable environment.

Environmental Modifications (EMODS): Provides Internal and external physical adaptations to the individual's home, that are necessary to assure the health, welfare and safety of the individual and avoid institutionalization.

Vehicle Modification (VMODS): Modifications to a vehicle that is used to improve the individual's independence and access to services and supports in the community.

Assistive Technology : Provides durable medical equipment and supplies for the individual to increase their level of independence, safety, and functional limitations.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Waiver services to help individuals who had a traumatic brain injury.

Service Coordination (SC): Provides coordination to the individual in gaining access to needed waiver and Medicaid State Plan services, as well as other local, state, and federally funded educational, vocational, social, and medical services.

Community Transitional Services (CTS) / Moving Assistance (MA): Provides moving assistance with packing and transporting individual's possessions and furnishings when he/she must be moved from an inadequate or unsafe housing situation to a viable environment.

Environmental Modifications (EMODS): Provides Internal and external physical adaptations to the individual's home, that are necessary to assure the health, welfare and safety of the individual and avoid institutionalization

Vehicle Modification (VMODS): Modifications to a vehicle that is used to improve the individual's independence and access to services and supports in the community.

Assistive Technology : Provides durable medical equipment and supplies for the individual to increase their level of independence, safety, and functional limitations.

SENIOR DINING/SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM (SHNOIS CHAIM)

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

HAMASPIK CHOICE

MLTCP:

Providing: A managed long-term care plan (MLTCP) approved by New York State.

HMO/INSURANCE

ABA

Behavior modification services for children with autism.

Social Group: ABA service delivered in a group setting.

One on One: ABA service delivered on a one-on-one basis in the child's home or community.

LHCSA - HAMASPIK HOMECARE

PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

Our PCA/HHA assist individuals with personal care needs, activities of daily living, and light housekeeping. They are extensively trained, and screened, and are supervised by RN.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Our HCSS Certified Aides assist those enrolled in the NHTD or TBI Medicaid Waiver Programs with oversight and supervision, in addition to personal care services.

CDPAS/CDPAP

As an alternative to traditional homcare, this program empowers the client to hire, train, and set the schedule of their personal assistants (PA). The PA's may be family members and can even live in the same home.

NURSING SERVICES

Providing: skilled observation and assessment - care planning - paraprofessional supervision - clinical monitoring and coordination - medication management - physician - ordered nursing interventions and skilled treatments.

TRAINING

Providing: free PCA training and competency testing for those interested in a home care career.

NYC HCR

ACCESS TO HOME

Providing home modifications for people with physical disability.

NYSED SERVICES

ACCESS VR

Assist individuals to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation, and career development.

PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT

Employment planning and support services that provide assistance for individuals to obtain, maintain or advance in competitive employment or self-employment.

NYSHA

ARTICLE 16 CLINIC

Providing: Physical therapy · occupational therapy · speech therapy · psychology · social work · psychiatry · nutrition

TRAINING SESSIONS

Providing: SCIP · CPR and first aid · orientation · MSC CORE · AMAP · annual updates · Com Hab/ Respite · Family Care · Supported employment

CENTRAL INTAKE

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

THE HAMASPIK GAZETTE

Providing: A bilingual monthly newspaper keeping the community up-to-date on all major news in medicine, public health, disability, hospitals, senior care, and general Hamaspik news.

OMH

ADULT HEALTH HOME CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Intensive, comprehensive care management for Adults with chronic condition(s) and/or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care.

CHILDREN HEALTH HOME CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Intensive, comprehensive care management for children with chronic condition(s) and/or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care.

ADULT HCBS SERVICES

Behavioral Health Home and Community-Based Services for eligible adults over the age of twenty one.

Community Psychiatric Support and Treatment: Support and treatment to achieve functional improvement and stability, while working to attain the personal goals in a community setting.

Family Support and Training: Family training and support to engage the family in the treatment planning process and provide them with emotional and informational support to enhance their skills to assist in the recovery.

Psychosocial Rehabilitation: Assists with rehabilitating functional deficits and interpersonal or environmental hardships associated with the behavioral health condition.

Empowerment Services-Peer Support: Peer-delivered services designed to promote skills for coping with and managing behavioral health symptoms, while utilizing recovery-oriented principles.

Habilitation: Assist to acquire and improve skills such as: communication, self-care, socialization, mobility, etc. to successfully reside in home and community-based setting.

Intensive Supported Employment: Assists to obtain and keep competitive employment.

Prevocational Services: Prepares for employment, developing strengths and soft skills that contribute to employability.

Transitional Employment: Strengthens the work record and skills toward the goal of achieving assisted or unassisted competitive employment.

Ongoing Supported Employment: Ongoing follow-along support when holding down a job.

CHILDREN HCBS SERVICES

Behavioral Health Home and Community-Based Services for eligible children from birth to twenty one.

Prevocational Services: Designed to prepare a youth (age 14 or older) to engage in paid work, volunteer work, or career exploration. Prevocational Services are not job-specific, but rather are geared toward facilitating success in any work environment.

Caregiver Family Support and Services : Teaches skills to caregiver/family's that will enhance their ability to care for the child/youth in the home and/ or community.

Community Self Advocacy Training and Support: Provides family and caregivers with techniques and information not generally available so that they can better respond to the needs of the Individual related to their disabilities.

Community Habilitation: Provides assistance with learning social skills, daily living and health related duties by working with the individual on goal-oriented tasks.

Supported Employment: Designed to prepare youth with disabilities (age 14 or older) to engage in paid work.

Planned Respite: Provides short-term relief for the individual's family/caregiver while supporting the individual's mental health, substance use and/or health care goals.

Day Habilitation: Provides assistance with learning social and daily living skills in a certified agency setting.

● ► NYSHA NEWS

Leaving No Eligible Child Behind

The Vital Behind-the-Scenes Work of Tri-County Care's Medicaid Entitlements Team

To get the comprehensive care coordination benefits of Tri-County Care (TCC), you need to be on Medicaid.

To get on Medicaid, you have to apply.

And to apply for Medicaid, you have to know how—and where, and when, and for what kind of Medicaid, and a whole lot of other details you probably didn't even know existed.

That's why Tri-County Care has a fully-staffed and highly-experienced Medicaid Entitlements team.

Based out of Tri-County's offices across the state, Semion Mintz, Antonio Rivero and Deyanira Vasquez work full-time on one thing: getting people on Medicaid.

They are rounded out by Valerie Hurley-DelSignore, who leads their department with over 25 years of Medicaid application experience of her own in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Together, the foursome boasts well over a century of authority in all things Medicaid.

Granted, most people applying for TCC services already have Medicaid. It's for those who don't that Tri-County has its Entitlements team.

But why would someone not have Medicaid?

For starters, too-high income or too many financial assets, explains Ms. Hurley-DelSignore. But there are actually several forms of Medicaid, she continues—



with different maximum-income or resource levels allowed for each. "Most people are unsure which program to apply for," she says—information overload that sometimes prompts people to not bother at all.

What's more, she elaborates, existing information is sometimes scattershot, furthering confusion on which Medicaid program to apply for, and for which financial situation.

But once an applicant's Medicaid process gets started, Tri County's Entitlements staff will professionally answer common questions. These include: "If New York State doesn't need to check my income, why must counties still check my income?"; "Which kind of bank accounts can my child have and still get Medicaid?"; and, "Why do I have to get on

Medicaid if my child already qualifies for services from the OPWDD?"

But the biggest obstacle to getting someone on Medicaid is simply time, Hurley-DelSignore notes. Getting a child deemed as having a disability can take over 90 days—and getting parental income exempt from consideration can take up to a year, she says.

Still, timing is everything—and the TCC team walks applicants through exactly which documentation to send in when, and where, so as to minimize bureaucracy and expedite the process to the greatest extent.

At the same time, TCC's offices use cutting-edge software that allow its Entitlement and Intake teams to document and track all Medicaid applications in detail, each step of the way—letting TCC employees keep families, and each other, updated on the current status of anyone's Medicaid application.

"The Medicaid applications and documents can be very overwhelming when you have never before been down this path," Ms. Hurley-DelSignore empathizes—which is why, when you're dealing with a CCO that also has its own full-time Entitlements team, it's "a huge benefit."

And hugely benefit its beneficiaries is what Tri-County Care does. ★

● ► AUTISM NEWS

Electronic Tracking Technology Lets New York State Trooper Find Missing Boy with Autism in Minutes

Hastings, New York — For New York State Police Trooper Christopher Gibbs, it may have been the shortest five minutes of his life. For the mother of the child involved, it's likely to have been the longest hour of her life.

But for both, those harrowing moments ended with what was probably one of the happiest moments in either of their lives.

After her son with autism went missing from the Roxberry Estates Mobile Home Park in Hastings, the mother called 9-1-1. Oswego County 9-1-1 services in turn contacted the nearest State Police troop, which dispatched Trooper Gibbs to assist in the search.

Trooper Gibbs had previously taken training by Project Lifesaver.

That non-profit organization provides wearable electronic tracking technology to families of children and adults with autism or other disabilities who are prone to wander.

The technology allows trained



THE RIGHT TRACK: MORE N.Y. STATE TROOPER CARS ARE NOW CARRYING LOCATOR DEVICES

police officer and other first responders to use the locator devices at such scenes, allowing them to quickly home in on missing individuals.

In the case of the boy at hand, who had been missing for an hour, he was located in five minutes after Trooper Gibbs arrived and turned on his device.

The boy was found about a half-mile away—inside a vehicle at a nearby car dealership.

The boy, who was found in good health, was shortly reunited with his family.

"Trooper Gibbs' training with Project Lifesaver and quick response to the incident led to the quick recovery of the child," the New York State Police said in a news release.

Project Lifesaver, which also offers drones made in partnership with aerospace giant Lockheed Martin, is credited with over 3,500 rescues since its 1999 founding.

Hastings is in Oswego County, about 160 miles west of Albany. ★

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Happening in Health Today

HIGHER INDOOR CO2 LEVELS MAY LOWER DECISION-MAKING ABILITIES

New York, New York — At least eight studies had been conducted over the last seven years on whether stuffy, stale indoor workplace air can actually make workers produce and problem-solve less.

Two such studies—one at Harvard and the other co-authored by SUNY's Upstate Medical University in Syracuse—found a correlation between levels of carbon dioxide (CO2) in indoor air and ability of study participants to make decisions. But others, including one conducted on sailors on a U.S. Navy submarine, did not.

Unrelated research has found that breathing high levels of workplace CO2 dilates brain blood vessels and reduces electrical activity within the brain.

In the meantime, one simple solution is to place a few potted plants around your office—they slurp up the CO2 you breathe out, exhale the oxygen you breathe in, and freshen up your office in more ways than one.

NEW STUDY: EVEN 25 COFFEES A DAY NOT BAD FOR HEART

London, England — Researchers at London's Queen Mary University now say that drinking coffee every day—even a lot of it—is safe for your heart.

According to the researchers, their findings debunk previous studies claiming that coffee, regardless of daily amount, could cause the stiffening of arteries.

The new study split over 8,000 participating volunteers into three groups based on amount of daily coffee consumption. At the highest end, some participants drank up to 25 cups a day—although participants' average was five a day.

“Despite the huge popularity of coffee worldwide, different reports could put people off from enjoying it,” Dr. Kenneth Fung, who led the data analysis behind the research, told reporters. “Whilst we can't prove a causal link in this study, our research indicates coffee isn't as bad for the

arteries as previous studies would suggest.”

NYC-WIDE HEALTH REPORT SAYS BOROUGH PARKERS LIVE LONGEST

New York, New York — Wide-ranging research into the lifestyles and health habits of different communities across New York City finds that New Yorkers live the longest in Borough Park.

The research, conducted by the New York City Dept. of Health, studied the health of city residents in 59 different districts—looking at criteria including physical activity, economic stress, violence and access to health care.

It found that people in Borough Park, a bustling Brooklyn neighborhood, have an average lifespan of 84.2 years—three years above the citywide average of 81.2 years.

Borough Park was also found to have the lowest rate of avoidable child hospitalizations. Similarly, the district was found to have rates of unemployment, obesity, diabetes, and people who smoke all under citywide averages.

However, the report also found that the leading causes of death among Borough Park residents under the age of 65 are cancer and heart disease.

PROGRESS REPORTED IN CANCER-DETECTING BLOOD TESTS

Chicago, Illinois — At the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)'s 2019 Annual Meeting, California-based Grail Inc. was among several biotech firms reporting progress on blood tests that provide early detection of cancer.

The tests revolve around “liquid biopsy” tests—scanning blood samples for tiny bits of DNA that are shed into the bloodstream by cancer cells.

According to Grail, its experimental blood test—conducted on people with and without cancer—was able to detect many types of cancer at early stages, with very few false alarms.

At the same time, Johns Hopkins University scientists have launched a company called Thrive Earlier Detection Corp. to develop its CancerSEEK test, whose results are similar to Grail's.

Grail Inc. has drawn over \$1 billion in investments from game-changers Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates, the respective founders of Amazon and Microsoft.



SUNSCREEN CHEMICAL AVOBENZONE ENTERS BLOODSTREAM: FDA RESEARCH

Silver Spring, Maryland — Researchers at the Division of Nonprescription Drugs (DNPD), a sub-subdivision within the FDA, have now found that avobenzene, a sunlight-blocking chemical that is a primary ingredient in many sunscreens, doesn't just stay on the skin but gets into the bloodstream, too.

In the FDA study, 24 volunteers were randomly given one of four retail sunscreen products to apply over the course of three days. Blood samples were taken every few hours during those three days, and then over the

following four days.

According to the FDA's own industry guidelines, any blood-absorption level of 0.5 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL) or more requires product safety testing. The study found bloodstream levels of avobenzene ranging from 1.8 to 4.3 ng/mL. However, science currently doesn't know what if any health risk avobenzene may cause; it is currently considered safe and has been approved by the FDA for use in over-the-counter sunscreen products since 1992.



● ► HAMASPIK NEWS

Hamaspik of Orange County Celebrates Grand Opening of Catherine Briderheim IRA

Newest Agency Group Home Brings Housing and Happiness to Individuals—and Families

Since Hamaspik's inception, one of Hamaspik's pillars has been the group home—the tastefully-furnished, lovingly-staffed and professionally-run residences that have operated across several counties for decades now.

And now, Hamaspik of Orange County's Catherine Briderheim Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) has become the agency's 21st group home.

At a mid-September grand opening, leadership, staff and family from across the region and agency joined Grand Rabbi Aharon Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, for the kevias mezuzah, or mezuzah posting, that formally marks the inauguration of any home or community establishment.

As the Rebbe walked through the front door, an older guest stepped forward to greet him. Visibly moved, the man personally and emotionally expressed deep gratitude to Hamaspik and the Rebbe's community—revealing that among the soon-to-be residents is his own beloved grandson, and how the new home brings immeasurable relief to his entire family.

Hamaspik founder and current NYSHA Executive Director Meyer Wertheimer then formally welcomed the Rebbe to the new home—also expressing gratitude to Moses Wertheimer, Hamaspik of Orange County's Executive Director for his hard work and talent at making the residence a reality.

The honor of posting the first mezuzah went to Rabbi Teitelbaum—and with the sacred scroll in a slender container affixed to the new IRA's front door, the Catherine Briderheim officially opened its doors.

Hamaspik leadership, beginning with founder and current NYSHA Executive Director Meyer Wertheimer, was honored with placing remaining mezuzos throughout the house. With several dozen parents of residents and staff members on hand, various guests affixed mezuzos themselves, including Rabbi Shlomo Weinberger of the nearby Bogod synagogue, where Catherine's residents will be warmly welcomed.

The new group home, named for the street on which it's located, is located in the picturesque town of Blooming



COMMUNITY SUPPORT FROM THE TOP DOWN: FLANKED BY HAMASPIK LEADERS MEYER WERTHEIMER (C-RIGHT), MOSES WERTHEIMER (C-LEFT) AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, RABBI TEITELBAUM SHARES WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND INSPIRATION FOR THE NEW HOME



OPENING DOORS: HAMASPIK OF ORANGE COUNTY PRESIDENT WOLF WURTZBERGER

Grove, New York—an unassuming, elegant house on a four-acre tract that looks every bit the mainstream, average suburban residence that it is, and both outside and in.

Taking a look through its well-decorated interior, the visitor will find a well-stocked modern kitchen, a spacious high-ceilinged living room, cozy bedrooms, an inviting dining room and, of course, a sprawling expanse of green aside the house forming that indispensable yard. For full disability accessibility, there's also a state-of-the-art elevator on the premises.

All of that routine suburban average-ness is exactly the idea, of course—the IRA, born of game-changing disability reform in the 1970s, is meant to put people with disabilities right in the mainstream, as they indeed are with Hamaspik today.

Hailing that fact were the Hamaspik staffers on hand for Catherine's grand opening.

They were joined by family members of the young men who now



RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MAINSTREAM: WITH ITS WRAPAROUND VICTORIAN FRONT PORCH AND SUBURBAN-PERFECT DESIGN, THE CATHERINE BRIDERHEIM FITS RIGHT IN



CHARGING STATIONS: DAYS FILLED WITH HEALTHY PROGRAMMING START HERE

call Catherine “home.” And should you ask any of them, they'll tell you that this is nothing less than a black-and-white game-changer of their own.

Caring for an individual with disability at home when you've got family of your own to juggle, along with jobs, careers and more, makes quite the case for urgency often bordering on desperation. Enter Hamaspik.

Reaching out to the community address for all things human service-



THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES OF LIFE: A SPACIOUS INFORMAL DINING AREA

related as they did, and some years ago, those fathers and mothers long waited for this day—a moment of relief like no other.

But with Catherine imprinted with the Hamaspik standard of family-centric caring that is the live-in couple (backed by the home's trained part-time Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), their sons will now be getting the loving attention upon which they'll surely thrive.



● ► NYSHA NEWS

THE NEXT BIG THING:

A Revolution of Help and Hope for Mainstream Community Kids and Youth

Comfort Health to bring long-awaited supports to ages 0-21; Downstate, Upstate offices to serve greater community; many may qualify for life-skills services

Hamaspik has long been known as the agency you call for anything related to special needs—a trusted community pillar and reliable source of answers and relief. And a few months ago, Hamaspik opened a new front in its ever-expanding efforts to meet as many community needs as possible.

A growing number of community kids—schoolchildren of all ages, mainstream in every way but for multiple hardships—were being neglected. Existing community programming wasn't cutting it.

Hamaspik got right to work. Enter Comfort Health.

The revolutionary, wide-ranging new initiative will bring a world of professional supports to children throughout the community—kids in school or otherwise mainstream but grappling with challenges.

More importantly, Comfort Health will help parents cope.

Comfort Health addresses mental, emotional or physical issues that impact school performance, home behavior or any other community environment by providing targeted supports to each child in need.

The reaction from parents and educators has been “spectacular,” says Hamaspik of Kings County Executive Director Hershel Wertheimer.

The new program is poised to help hundreds of children throughout the community. It was created by months of hard work by Mordechai “Mutt” Solomon, LMHC, Hamaspik of Kings County's Director of Mental Health, Comfort Health Intake Director Mrs. Dini Freund, and rounded out by assistance from Hamaspik of Rockland County staffers Mrs. Rivki Koth and Mrs. Idy Paskes.

WHAT IS COMFORT HEALTH? WHAT DOES IT DO?

Comfort Health is an unprecedented and unrivaled community-services effort that combines several comprehensive services into one seamless new organization.

Built on the foundation of a Health Home, the New York State Dept. of Health (DOH) program

for Medicaid members that uses a team-based approach to healthcare, Comfort Health offers what no other community agency does: the Community Habilitation (Com Hab) program, the Planned Respite and Crisis Respite programs, and even a program that helps young adults with various disabilities become their own self-advocates—and all under the expert guidance and support of a dedicated Care Manager.

SO, WHO IS COMFORT HEALTH FOR?

Examples of what Comfort Health will help with are such conditions as eating disorders, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), services for which are in particularly high demand. Professional intervention in these areas is indispensable for putting struggling children on the right path.

Comfort Health can also help children with chronic medical conditions like asthma, chronic pain, diabetes, eczema, epilepsy, migraines, or anything that requires regular ongoing medical care.

Children from birth through adolescence, and youth from adolescence through 21, who have two chronic medical conditions or one serious emotional condition are eligible for

Comfort Health.

Upon signing up with Comfort Health, the child or young adult is first enrolled in a Health Home and then assigned a Care Manager: the dedicated and involved personal advocate who is totally involved in the child's case—and with Hamaspik's trademark standards of excellence.

Under Comfort Health's Com Hab program, beneficiaries get one-on-one assistance in reaching their life goals: managing their challenges—behavioral, emotional or medical—and attaining the fullest possible measure of independence for their life ahead.

Comfort Health's Planned Respite program provides one-on-one supervision at home or in the community—and Comfort Health's Crisis Respite program provides support for homes and families enduring acute temporary situations.

For youths 14 and up, there is also the Pre-Voc program, which helps lay the ground for future workplace integration. Pre-Voc essentially steers beneficiaries toward professional lessons or internships in their desired careers, explains Intake Director Freund—for example, lessons for an aspiring musician, or hands-on experience at a shop for the future professional auto mechanic.

Mr. Solomon addresses one crucial point: fear of a child being associated with “Hamaspik” due to disability-related stigmas still lingering in the community.

That's why it's been branded “Comfort Health,” he explains—and besides, he points out, it's essentially no different than any kid getting speech therapy or other such services in school.

Comfort Health's team of staffers—Intake, Outreach and Referral specialists, as well as several Com Hab Coordinators—is standing by to serve the community.

Families of children with more than one diagnosis now have a powerful resource—backed by the authoritative Hamaspik brand.

As for long-term goals, “Comfort Health's operating model is to get the child up to the level where he or she will be able to leave the program as soon as possible,” Hershel Wertheimer says.

“But,” he adds, “to be there to stay with the child as long as needed in case there's still a need.” ★

Contact Comfort Health more information or to apply for services. For downstate, please call 718-408-5400; for Rockland County, please call 845-503-0400; for Orange and Sullivan Counties, please call 845-774-0309.



Start the year healthy with ComfortHealth!



A new Medicaid-sponsored care management and services agency dedicated to the health of individuals who require medical care physically, emotionally, or mentally.

- ◆ Finding the right doctors
- ◆ Assembling a connected care team
- ◆ Arranging doctor appointments
- ◆ Reducing future hospitalizations
- ◆ Helping eliminate medical error
- ◆ Providing additional parent resources

Services

- ◆ Skills development
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● ► HAMASPIK NEWS | HAPPENINGS AROUND HAMASPIK



A Sense of Completion



NOW YOU “SIYUM”: FLANKED BY EXCITED PARTICIPANTS, ELAZAR MERMELSTEIN, DSP HELMS AN EVENT CELEBRATING A MAINSTREAM INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT OF NOTE



SIGNS OF ACHIEVEMENT: BACKED BY CELEBRATORY BANNERS, LAZER EXULTS



WE HEAR YOU: LAZER AND DSP MERMELSTEIN LISTEN INTENTLY AS ELI SHARES

Going Green at Hamaspik Theragen

Special-needs Clinic Now Paperless, Digitally Streamlined

If you think about it, three-ring binders are actually quite old-fashioned in today's high-tech world. And taking a bold new leap into the future of late is Hamaspik Theragen, where every single patient document has now been scanned into a computer system, on which each is readily accessible.

The new system allows every therapist and office staffer to see all pertinent patient information on screen.

With an eye towards the increased efficiency and lower cost of modern-day office technology, Hamaspik Theragen staff digitized everything.

Hamaspik Theragen's offices, never mind the environment, are now a better place for it—the drastic reduction in use of paper not only reduces paperwork and saves time, but saves cost (and trees), too.

With a single network server as a central electronic archive, staff in Hamaspik Theragen's main Brooklyn office and two satellite locations in the upstate Hudson Valley can access folders

filled with documents on each clinic beneficiary, labeled and organized by name.

The system eliminates the clerical work that defined contemporary white-collar workplaces for decades—the old-fashioned rifling through shelves laden with huge binders bearing individuals' names, pulling the selected binder(s) down, then rifling through endless pages in each to find the document(s) in question.

The new paperless system not only saves tons of shelf space and employee time, but also drastically increases productivity—allowing workers to locate more files in less time, hence get more work done.

And at the end of the day, providing more services at Hamaspik Theragen is what it's all about. ★

For more information or to obtain services from Hamaspik Theragen, please call 845-655-0600.

Hamaspik of Orange County Men's Program Celebrates Study Completion

On a boisterously balmy summer day this season, a group of young men marked their mastery of a section of the Mishnah, the compendium of Jewish law, the traditional way: with a siyum.

Meaning “ending” or “completion,” a siyum refers specifically to completing the study of any section of Jewish religious texts—a community phenomenon common in schools and synagogues alike.

And because of the intellectual and spiritual accomplishment that it represents, a siyum in the Jewish community is cause for significant celebration.

Joined by their fellow Day Hab members and staff, a group of young men with Hamaspik of Orange County's Day Habilitation (Day Hab) program took their rightful place of honor at the head table set up in the building's cavernous and elegant social hall and multipurpose room.

With guests now seated, Day Hab member Lazer served as emcee. He

introduced the event's opening event, the recitation of the final section of the Mishnah that the group had studied.

That honor was given to staffer Elazar Mermelstein, an experienced Hamaspik Direct Support Professional (DSP). Reciting the last few lines out loud, Mr. Mermelstein also explained what they meant.

Eli, another individual, next took the floor, sharing a few words of congratulations to his peers and staff alike. In like manner, Eli conveyed his best wishes to the group for their achievement.

Elazar Mermelstein, DSP returned to the podium to wrap up the event.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Mermelstein framed the considerable intellectual achievement of the young men as a mere springboard for yet another achievement. Put otherwise, it wasn't an end in itself but the beginning of something even bigger—specifically, the commencement of the study of yet another tractate of Mishnah. ★

● ► HAMASPIK NEWS | HAPPENINGS AROUND HAMASPIK

Another Soulful Summer Season at Camp Neshomah!

Hamaspiik's Camp-themed ASR Programs Delight, Inspire

How did it go?
"Awesome!"

So said Velvel Zieg, Director of Hamaspiik of Rockland County's After-school Respite (ASR) program—which during the summer season takes on the iteration of Camp Neshomah.

The *Gazette* asked him how Camp Neshomah was this season. But with "Neshomah" translating to "Soul," it's no surprise that once again, Camp Neshomah's counselors gave it their very heart and soul—with their campers with special needs responding in kind.

"It's the most appropriate name," commented Mr. Zieg.

Camp Neshomah of Rockland County ran for ten weeks this summer, with close to one dozen staff leading over two dozen boys through a season brimming with day camp-style daily activities.

Those activities included a host of outdoor sports and activities, including fishing, boating, swimming, climbing and exercise—all rounded out by

stimulating indoor arts and crafts and major regional day trips.

Under the exemplary leadership of Head Counselor Rabbi Yermiya Halberstam, himself a veteran of Monsey's outstanding Or V'Daas special-needs school, campers' parents were "very happy," Mr. Zieg reported. "Hashem blessed us with wonderful staff this year, and we hope to have them back next year!"

For the latter part of the summer, noted Mr. Zieg, several of his campers went on to sleepaway camps—but, thanks to that loving heart and soul put into them by staff, they keep calling practically every day.

What for? "I have news for you!" he opined. "Camp Neshomah is the only camp that campers still call their counselors after camp is over."

So it was really like camp, then, wasn't it?

"Like camp?!" playfully retorted Mr. Zieg. "It is camp!" ★

At Fosse Shvesterheim, the Party's in the House

Resident Celebrates Birthday at Women's IRA

If it weren't a Hamaspiik Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA), you'd think it was an ordinary residence—magical birthday party, family fun and all.

But that's exactly what transpired at Hamaspiik of Rockland County's Fosse Shvesterheim IRA of late.

An exciting birthday celebration for Malkie, a resident at Fosse since its inception, featured all the standard ingredients comprising any family birthday party: cone-shaped hats, balloons, party favors, and the ubiquitous birthday cake, naturally.

In attendance were members of Fosse's Direct Support Professional (DSP) team—Malkie's veritable family in every way but genetically.

With Malkie at the head of the table, surrounded by beloved fellow residents and doting DSPs (and at Fosse, as at every Hamaspiik home, residents are doted on by every DSP), the Fosse family clapped as they

sang songs, munched on snacks and enjoyed the birthday cake—which Malkie first sliced to everyone's delight.

The individual party for Malkie was just one of several fun-filled "in-house" events and developments at Fosse over the spring and summer. Those have included a sizable tent set up in the backyard for relaxing in the shade, water-splashing games, outdoor dinners and barbecues and even a bubble-blowing machine on the grass.

"I like anything fun and different than the usual," says Mrs. Naama Hizami, the Fosse DSP and one of several driving forces behind Fosse's family-oriented activities, including Malkie's birthday party.

"I like to get them involved with new things," she adds.

Judging from recent Fosse party photos, you'd think a professional planner was involved. ★

The Soul of Summer



OUT STANDING IN THE FIELD: YERMIYA HALBERSTAM (R) WITH CAMPERS AND STAFF



TAKE YOUR PICK: VISITING AN ORCHARD



ANOTHER SUMMER, ANOTHER PARTY...



TAKE IT TO THE TOP: FUN AT THE PARK



(NOT) FEELING SHEEP(ISH): AT THE ZOO

Party Platform



PUTTING IT ALL ON THE TABLE: A FULLY-FESTOONED DINING ROOM AWAITS THE CELEBRANTS OF ANOTHER LIFE MILESTONE AROUND FOSSE'S MAIN FAMILY TABLE

The Autism Update

News and developments from the world of research and advocacy

RESEARCHERS: GUT BUG TRANSPLANT HELPS IMPROVE KIDS' BEHAVIOR

Tempe, Arizona — In what is being called the first published example of how the gut may play a role in autism, scientists have found that by transplanting samples of bacteria from the guts of donors to those of children with severe autism, behavior, and the health of the gastrointestinal tract, were shown to have sub-stantially improved.

The research was carried out at the Tempe-based Biodesign Institute, a part of Arizona State University (ASU). It recruited 18 children with autism as well as severe gastrointestinal problems.

The theory being tested by researchers was that if the children's microbiome, or natural population of healthy bacteria, could be "rebooted," autism symptoms could be improved.

To their surprise, for most of the participants, rebalancing the microbiome had an effect lasting up to two years after initial treatment.

Gut bacterial transplants re-diversify the microbiome by providing recipients with new types of beneficial bacteria derived from the gut contents of a healthy donor.

OBAMAS MAKING DOCUMENTARY ON 1970'S DISABILITY SUMMER CAMP

Washington, D.C. — A feature-length documentary film telling the story of an early-1970s summer camp for teenagers with disabilities will be produced by Barack and Michelle Obama.

The former U.S. President and First Lady announced the project as part of seven documentaries they will be producing. Their production company's mission is to create storytelling content that amplifies the voices of often underrepresented communities—including people with disabilities.

Many in the disability community strongly feel that disability has been often erased or ignored in mainstream presentations of American history—and are hanging high hopes on the upcoming production, and its high-profile producers—to bring the history of the modern disability-rights movement to the forefront of the American conscience.

"Touching on issues of race and class, democracy and civil rights and



GENETICS PRIMARY CAUSE OF AUTISM: MAJOR STUDY

Stockholm, Sweden — A major study of data on over two million young people says that the likelihood of developing autism is overwhelmingly rooted in a person's genetic makeup.

According to the research, nearly 81 percent of autism risk is hereditary.

Researchers looked at national health data on over two million people born between 1998 and 2011 in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Western Australia. These individuals were followed up to age 16, at which point over 22,000

of them had been diagnosed with autism.

Researchers then checked to see if any of those individuals' parents, siblings and cousins also had diagnoses of autism.

The study found that the vast majority of autism risk was associated with genetics. Environmental factors "contributed minimally," wrote lead researcher Sven Sandin. "The current study results provide the strongest evidence to our knowledge to date that the majority of risk for ASD is from genetic factors." ★

much more, we believe each of these productions won't just entertain, but will educate, connect and inspire us all," the former president said in a press release.

The disability-related documentary is entitled "Crip Camp," and is being directed by former camper and disability rights advocate Jim LeBrecht. The documentary traces his own journey, as well as those of other campers, up to the present day.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR AUTISM RESEARCH HOSTS 18TH ANNUAL MEETING

Montreal, Quebec — The 18th annual meeting of the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR)

was held in this Canadian city recently. Several thousand scientists, researchers, caregivers and advocates participated in the four-day INSAR 2019 event.

Several themes emerged from its myriad sessions, posters and panels, reports autism news outlet *Spectrum News*.

One leading theme was the genetic basis of autism. Evidence presented at the conference suggests that a person's genetic background can moderate or enhance the impact of autism-related genetic mutations. Researchers also reported early inklings of the genetics of sleep problems in people with autism, according to *Spectrum*.

A panel of scientists and advocates commissioned by respected medical journal *The Lancet* met for the first time at the conference to discuss how to improve healthcare for people with autism. It provided a timely example of autism researchers' efforts to put their findings to clinical use.

Also, a new review of an existing survey on U.S. autism prevalence found that the survey did not adequately represent African-American families affected by autism. According to the new research as presented at INSAR 2019, the National Survey of Children's Health includes too few black families to yield accurate data.

OVER 12,000 PETITIONS SIGNED AGAINST BRITISH PLAY ABOUT CHILD WITH SEVERE AUTISM

London, England — Over 12,000 people have signed a petition to shut down a play because they feel that it stereotypes and misrepresents severe non-verbal autism.

The controversy, revolving around a London stage production about a boy with non-verbal autism and associated behaviors, has triggered months of often-sharp debate in the autism community over how to approach autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

One side is the *medical model*. In plain English, that means that people with autism have "something wrong with them" the same way people with, say, diabetes have "something wrong with them"—and need regular intervention to enjoy lives as "normal" as possible.

On the other side is the *neurodiversity* camp, which basically says that ASD is just another feature of human life, like height or eye color, and needs simply to be accepted, not repaired.

Family members of people with severe autism and resulting care challenges, like harm to self or others, tend to gravitate to the medical model. Neurodiversity is favored by people on the higher end of the autism spectrum who are capable of at least minimal mainstreaming.

Noted autism researcher Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen of the University of Cambridge says that the controversy revolves around five "D-words": difference, diagnosis, disorder, disease or disability—with what autism is being ultimately dependent on whom you ask. ★

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● ► HAMASPIK NEWS

Hamaspik of Kings County Hosts Staff Appreciation Event

Employee Body Celebrates Year Past, Recharges for Full Year Ahead



SETTING THE TONE: EXECUTIVE DIR. HERSCHEL WERTHEIMER SPEAKS FROM THE HEART

An upbeat spirit was in the air as Hamaspik of Kings County employees converged on an upscale Long Island venue this past July for the agency's annual staff appreciation event.

The buoyant atmosphere could be felt from the moment staff boarded the buses in Brooklyn that carried them to the Swan Club on the Harbor, an elegant facility in Roslyn, New York.

That atmosphere was only buoyed higher when they entered the Club's main hall, where a catered dinner and exciting evening planned by event

organizer Gershy Moskovits (brother of Hamaspik's very own 61st St. Briderheim manager Yossi Moskovits) awaited them.

But first, guests enjoyed a reception against the background of the high-end décor, which included a picturesque bridge and fountain outside and primly-set round tables in a hall lit in blue inside.

The reception also featured a virtual-reality (VR) headset game for guests to play, in which the donning of goggles had them virtually flying over and among city skyscrapers, to delightfully dizzying effect.



HILL OF THE KING: EMCEE HILL REIGNS

The event formally began at 8:00 p.m., with popular community entertainer Hilly Hill serving as Master of Ceremonies.

Mr. Hill had the crowd laughing in short order, setting a jovial tone that carried through from beginning to end.

Next up was a rollicking and round of FunClick, a traveling interactive game show—customized, of course, for the Hamaspik audience.

With remotes in every guest's hand, FunFlick host Boruch Perlowitz had them all attempt to correctly answer a series of delightful trivia questions on all things Hamaspik-related (like, "What does AMAP stand for?")—with the contest involving the entire crowd, to the merriment of all.

Popular singer Yumi Lowy then took the stage to regale the crowd with several heartwarming favorites, further enhancing the atmosphere.

He was followed by another round of humor by Hilly Hill.

Hamaspik of Kings County Executive Director Hershel Wertheimer shortly delivered a powerful and heartfelt "keynote address."

In it, he reviewed the successes of the year gone by, revealed details on major plans for the year to come, and shared what Hamaspik's mission personally means to him—repeatedly emphasizing how all of Hamaspik's employees are one big family.

Mr. Wertheimer especially thanked staff for the hard work that makes Hamaspik the ongoing success story that it is, mentioning each by name and highlighting their departments and contributions.

With its theme of clockwork symbolizing Hamaspik's efficient dedication to those it serves, clock-based motifs were prominently featured throughout the event.

That theme most prominently came to the fore with an inspiring yet amusing

video about the work Hamaspik does—driving home the point that Hamaspik does indeed work with Swiss watch-like precision and exactitude.

Yumi Lowy returned to the stage to entertain and uplift the crowd—backed by popular men's chorale the Mezmrim (and their leader, vocalist Chilu Posen) and keyboardist Asher Ringel (husband of Hamaspik's very own Fiscal Intermediary Coordinator, Mrs. Chaya Ringel).

Making a special guest appearance was none other than Yossi Green, the lifelong composer behind a long string of community classics.

The gifted Mr. Green put his musical mind on display, sitting behind a grand piano to compose and sing a brand-new melody on the spot that was dedicated to Hamaspik, lyrics and all.

With Mr. Lowy and Mr. Posen sitting nearby and surrounded by Hamaspik staff, Mr. Green tickled the ivories to work his magic live in person, creating a most memorable moment.

Later in the evening, the crowd played interactive group games on the Swan Club's outdoor terraces. Utilizing high-tech lighting effects that put maze-like images on the ground, guests had to navigate virtual obstacle courses and wend their way through mazes made of light.

As the event neared its end, Mr. Wertheimer was most pleasantly surprised by an unannounced award prepared for him by staff.

The gift, a token of appreciation for his leadership, was presented to the Executive Director by Mr. Hill on behalf of the entire staff body.

Staff then posed for several group photos.

With the late hour nearing midnight, guests repaired to a gourmet doughnut station, where the eternally popular pastry was being baked, iced and otherwise freshly prepared for guests to enjoy hot desserts right out of the oven.

But before they headed out the door for the buses back home, guests also collected one last token of appreciation.

Each received a wall clock marked by images of Hamaspik of Kings County's landmark buildings.

Those gifts underscored and symbolized the message that Hamaspik does indeed work like a Swiss watch.

With that positive message close at hand, the Hamaspik employees went home having celebrated the 365 twenty-four-hour periods now behind them—and thoroughly enthused over the 365 days to come.



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● ► PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY NEWS

Florida May Become 1st State to Import Prescription Drugs from Canada

The Villages, Florida—Surrounded by several lawmakers, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis recently signed state legislation at his state’s largest retirement community—positioning Florida to eventually become the first U.S. state to import prescription drugs from Canada.

“This [bill] will have the potential to save the state a lot of money,” DeSantis said before signing it. “I’m just glad that we’re here today and able to say we’re listening to the people who have concerns about these costs and we’re taking action to help get people relief.”

With the ratification of HB 19, the Sunshine State now has three pathways for bringing in medication from Canada and other foreign countries.

The first would allow Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration to import foreign prescription drugs

for state Medicaid patients or prison inmates. The second would have a program under the state’s Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) import drugs for commercial usage. The third would have the DBPR and Florida’s Department of Health (DOH) run a pilot program that does not require federal approval.

The federal Medicare Modernization Act, enacted in 2003, allows states in turn to allow residents to essentially fill their drug prescriptions in Canada or elsewhere. So far, Colorado, Florida, Maine and Vermont have passed laws (pending federal approval) that would authorize drug imports from Canada.

Florida submitted its plan to the federal government this August. In fact, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex Azar—who previously supported HHS’ traditional



ROAD TO RX SAVINGS: WITH A NEW IMPORT LAW, FLORIDIANS MAY SOON PAY LESS

opposition to the Act—has been instructed by the President to assist Florida in implementing the newly-passed law. ★

HEALTHY EATING

LEEK

EASY

YIELDS: 4 SERVINGS

PREP TIME: 0:05

Leek Salad

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 bunch leeks
- 1 box grape tomatoes
- 1 red pepper
- 1 cup honey-glazed almonds
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

- Slice leeks thinly, using only light green parts
- Slice all other vegetables
- Toss all ingredients together

CHEF'S TIP:

To clean leeks, cut in half lengthwise and rinse thoroughly, then soak in a solution of water and a bit of distilled vinegar. The vinegar will draw any dirt out of the leeks.

BENEFITS:

Leeks have a sweet flavor and can be eaten raw or cooked. A cup of leeks is low in sodium and has almost no saturated fat or cholesterol. Leeks are also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6, iron and magnesium, and a very good source of folate and vitamins A, C, and K.

MEDIUM

YIELDS: 4 SERVINGS

READY IN: 0:30

Leek Patties

INGREDIENTS:

- 2lbs leeks
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup bread crumbs
- Salt
- Oil for frying

DIRECTIONS:

- Clean and trim leeks, place in pot of water, cover and cook until soft
- Drain and cool; when cool, squeeze out liquid
- Blend until smooth in food processor; add rest of ingredients
- Pour oil on frying pan on medium-low flame; form leek mixture into small patties and place carefully on oiled pan. Fry until evenly browned and crispy on both sides

EASY

YIELDS: 8-10 SERVINGS

READY IN: 1:30

Leek and Potato Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 onion, diced
- 2 tablespoon olive oil for sautéing
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 5 leeks, chopped
- 5 potatoes, cubed
- Salt to taste
- Pepper
- Parsley flakes for garnish
- Water to cover

DIRECTIONS:

- Sauté onions; add garlic and chopped leeks. Sauté for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally
- Stir in potatoes and seasonings
- Fill with water, just to cover vegetables
- Bring to boil; simmer for an hour
- Blend in an immersion blender
- Garnish with parsley flakes

Public Health and Policy News

WHY INFANTS' TYLENOL IS FOUR TIMES CHILDREN'S TYLENOL'S PRICE

Washington, D.C. — A small investigative piece by National Public Radio (NPR) reveals why a single bottle of Tylenol for Infants contains the same amount of medicine as a single bottle of Tylenol for Children—yet costs four times the price of Tylenol for Children.

According to NPR, a single bottle of Infants' Tylenol contains 1 ounce of medicine for \$5.99—and a single bottle of Children's Tylenol contains 4 ounces of medicine for \$5.99. By simple math, then, Infants' Tylenol should cost \$1.50 an ounce—not nearly \$6.

So why the extra cost? According to a company statement to NPR, it's the extra manufacturing cost of the dosing syringe that comes with each Infants' Tylenol bottle—plus the extra cost of a sturdier bottle itself.

But NPR found that Tylenol for Infants used to be more concentrated than Tylenol for Children, with more active-ingredient *acetaminophen* in each ounce than Tylenol for Children.

That changed in 2011—but the lowered concentration did not come with lowered price.

MILITARY HEALTHCARE REFORM BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

Washington, D.C. — The Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act was signed recently into law.

The bill ushers in a slew of wide-ranging and much-needed overhauls all across the Veterans Administration (VA) healthcare system for active and former members of the U.S. military.

According to the VA, the Mission Act addresses in-network and non-VA healthcare issues, veterans' homes, access to

walk-in VA care, and prescription drug procedures, for starters.

The bill rolls out short-term and long-term improvements. Short-term fixes include stop-gap funding for the critical VA Choice program, which helps vets get non-VA healthcare if distance or wait list issues are a problem. Long-term fixes include merging seven different community care programs into one entity, as well as funding for a review of VA medical facilities.

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE MOVING SUB-AGENCIES TO KANSAS

Washington, D.C. — Two scientific agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be relocating to the greater Kansas City region, the USDA announced.

Some 5,000 other USDA employees already work in Kansas City and environs.

Close to 550 positions at the USDA's



GETTING OUT OF TOWN: THE U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE (HEADQUARTERS SHOWN HERE) WILL NOW MOVE TWO OF ITS SCIENCE PROGRAMS TO KANSAS, OSTENSIBLY SAVING MONEY



A HEALTHY MILITARY: THE 'MISSION' ACT AIMS TO IMPROVE THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA) WITH A SLEW OF WIDE-RANGING CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), are expected to be moved by the end of September. The former produces statistics; the latter funds new agricultural science.

Scientists across the country rely on NIFA grants to study topics ranging from climate change and crop genetics to farmland drones. Statistical reports from the ERS influence decisions in corporate boardrooms and in state and federal capitals.

The move will save the USDA an estimated \$300 million over 15 years.

Kansas public servants and elected officials have generally warmly received the news. Employees of the two agencies though, are said to be largely against the move.

ICAHN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE DEVELOPING BIOWEAPON-DETECTING TECH

New York, New York — Researchers at New York's very own Icahn School of Medicine have been awarded a \$27.8 million contract by the legendary Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), the federal experimental-technology arm.

The project will fund development of technology that identifies and measures a person's exposure to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

It will do so with blood tests indicating any recent exposures (and exposure times) to infectious agents, chemicals and radiation.

The contract will also fund the development of a field-deployable tool that performs those tests.

The contract, spanning four years, is part of DARPA's new Epigenetic Characterization and Observation (ECHO) program, which seeks to develop new approaches to analyze epigenetic markers. The *epigenome* is the human body's genetic record keeper.

"The ECHO technology we and our partners are developing through the DARPA program will enable us to quickly read someone's epigenome," said Stuart Sealfon, M.D., director of Icahn's Center for Translational Systems Biology.

OUTBREAKS OF SALMONELLA INFECTIONS LINKED TO BACKYARD POULTRY

Atlanta, Georgia — Officials with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are currently working with public health officials in several states to investigate multiple outbreaks of Salmonella infections linked to contact with backyard poultry.

As of August, a total of 1003 people across 49 states have been infected with various strains of Salmonella, with at last 175 of them hospitalized.

According to the CDC, contact backyard poultry from multiple hatcheries, primarily chicks and ducklings, is the likely source of the outbreaks.

Despite appearing healthy and clean, with no signs of illness, backyard poultry can carry Salmonella bacteria. Most Salmonella infections can be prevented with rigorous regular washing of hands with soap immediately after touching backyard poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam.

Also, set aside a pair of shoes to wear while taking care of poultry and keep those shoes outside of the house. ★

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In the Know

ALL ABOUT... CARDIAC ARREST

Sources: Mayo Clinic, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Heart Association (AHA)

“Isn’t that the same thing as a heart attack?”

Not that it makes it any better, but no, cardiac arrest is not the same thing as a heart attack. The only thing cardiac arrest has in common with heart attack is that it is an immediate life-threatening medical emergency that affects the heart.

As the American Heart Association defines it, cardiac arrest is an *electrical* problem in the heart—while heart attack is a *circulation* problem in the heart.

Not only is cardiac arrest (medically known as *atrial fibrillation*) a medical emergency, it’s one that’s all too common. It seems that everyone knows someone who survived cardiac arrest—or, sadly, someone who did not.

While cardiac arrest can strike just about anyone, it typically strikes people who have coronary artery disease or are otherwise in less-than-ideal physical health. But with regular checkups, screenings for heart disease, and living a heart-healthy lifestyle, you can greatly reduce your risk of sudden cardiac arrest.

DEFINITION

Cardiac arrest is medically defined as the sudden loss of heart function, breathing and consciousness. Cardiac arrest usually results from an electrical disturbance in the heart that disrupts its pumping action, stopping blood flow to the body.

Because it involves the heart’s electrical system, not “plumbing,” cardiac arrest differs from a heart attack. However, a heart attack can sometimes trigger an electrical disturbance that leads to sudden cardiac arrest.

If not treated immediately, sudden cardiac arrest can lead to death. But if cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is provided and a defibrillator is used, survival is possible and chances of survival are increased.

SYMPTOMS

You’ll know a case of sudden cardiac arrest when you see it—it’s immediate, drastic and typically strikes with no warning whatsoever.

Cardiac arrest typically consists of the person suddenly collapsing and passing out for no good reason—it doesn’t matter what the person was in the middle of doing or where he or she was.

Besides the sudden collapse and loss of consciousness, cardiac arrest is also marked by no pulse and no breathing—without proper electrical



signals, the heart cannot properly beat (and usually just stops), and without a heartbeat, there’s no breathing, either.

But other signs and symptoms can also occur before sudden cardiac arrest. These can include chest discomfort, shortness of breath, weakness or palpitations.

Visit a doctor immediately if you’ve recently experienced several episodes of:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Heart palpitations
- Rapid or irregular heartbeats
- Unexplained wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting or near fainting
- Lightheadedness or dizziness

Call an ambulance or go to an emergency room immediately if you’re having any of these symptoms.

CAUSE AND PREVENTION

“So, what causes sudden cardiac arrest? And what can I do to prevent it?”

Unfortunately, there’s not much you can do to directly eliminate scientifically-proven direct causes of cardiac arrest. Modern medicine is not quite there yet.

But what you *can* do is diligently watch your weight, physical fitness and overall health.

Doing so will not directly prevent sudden cardiac arrest—but will significantly reduce risk of it.

Meanwhile, let’s start at the beginning.

Sudden cardiac arrest is usually caused by a problem in the heart rhythm called *arrhythmia*.

The heart’s intricate electrical system controls the speed and strength of the heartbeat. If something goes wrong, the heart can beat too fast, too slow or out-of-pattern—like drums not playing in time with the music.

When the heart beats erratically or wildly, it’s called arrhythmia.

Sometimes, an arrhythmia can actually last just a few seconds (at most) and be harmless. You may not even feel it. But sometimes, especially if it lasts too long, it can lead to sudden cardiac arrest.

According to the Mayo Clinic, the most common heart rhythm at the time of cardiac arrest is an arrhythmia in a lower chamber of the heart (ventricle). Rapid, erratic electrical impulses cause the ventricles to quiver uselessly instead of pumping blood. This is called *ventricular fibrillation*.

But what causes arrhythmia?

Unfortunately, sudden cardiac arrest has been known to strike people who have no heart health issues (or any significant health issues, for that matter). However, says the Mayo Clinic, a life-threatening arrhythmia usually develops in a person with a preexisting, possibly undiagnosed heart condition. Such conditions may include:

- Coronary artery disease. Most cases of sudden cardiac arrest occur in people who have coronary artery disease, in which the arteries become clogged with cholesterol and other deposits, reducing blood flow to the heart.
- Heart attack. If a heart attack occurs, often as a result of severe coronary artery disease, it can trigger ventricular fibrillation and sudden cardiac arrest. A heart attack can also leave scar tissue in the heart, and electrical short circuits around the scar tissue can lead to abnormalities in the heart rhythm.
- Enlarged heart, or *cardiomyopathy*, occurs primarily when the heart’s muscular walls stretch and enlarge or thicken. The heart’s muscle is then abnormal, a condition that often leads to arrhythmias.
- Valvular heart disease. Leaking or

narrowing of the heart valves can lead to stretching or thickening of the heart muscle. When the chambers become enlarged or weakened because of stress caused by a tight or leaking valve, there's an increased risk of developing arrhythmia.

- Congenital heart disease. When sudden cardiac arrest occurs in children or adolescents, it can be due to congenital heart disease, or a heart defect that was present at birth. Adults who've had corrective surgery for a congenital heart defect still have a higher risk of sudden cardiac arrest.
- Electrical problems in the heart. In some people, the problem is in the heart's electrical system itself instead of a problem with the heart muscle or valves. These are called *primary heart rhythm abnormalities* and include conditions such as Brugada's syndrome and long QT syndrome.

Risk factors

Because sudden cardiac arrest is so often linked with coronary artery disease, sudden cardiac arrest risk factors are largely the same as coronary artery disease risk factors. These include:

- A family history of coronary artery disease
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- A sedentary lifestyle

Other factors that might increase risk of sudden cardiac arrest include:

- A previous episode of cardiac arrest or a family history of cardiac arrest
- A previous heart attack
- A personal or family history of other forms of heart disease, such as heart rhythm disorders, congenital heart defects, heart failure and cardiomyopathy
- Age — the incidence of sudden cardiac arrest increases with age
- Being male
- Nutritional imbalance, such as low potassium or magnesium levels
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Chronic kidney disease

EMERGENCY TREATMENT

When sudden cardiac arrest occurs and the heart stops, the lack of oxygenated blood can cause death or permanent brain damage in minutes. That's why, when someone is unconscious and not breathing, time is critical!

Reduced (or stopped) blood flow

to the brain causes unconsciousness. If the heart rhythm isn't rapidly returned to normal via emergency CPR and defibrillation, brain damage can occur and death can result. Tragically, survivors of cardiac arrest might show signs of brain damage not unlike those caused by stroke.

If you see someone who's unconscious and not breathing, do the following:

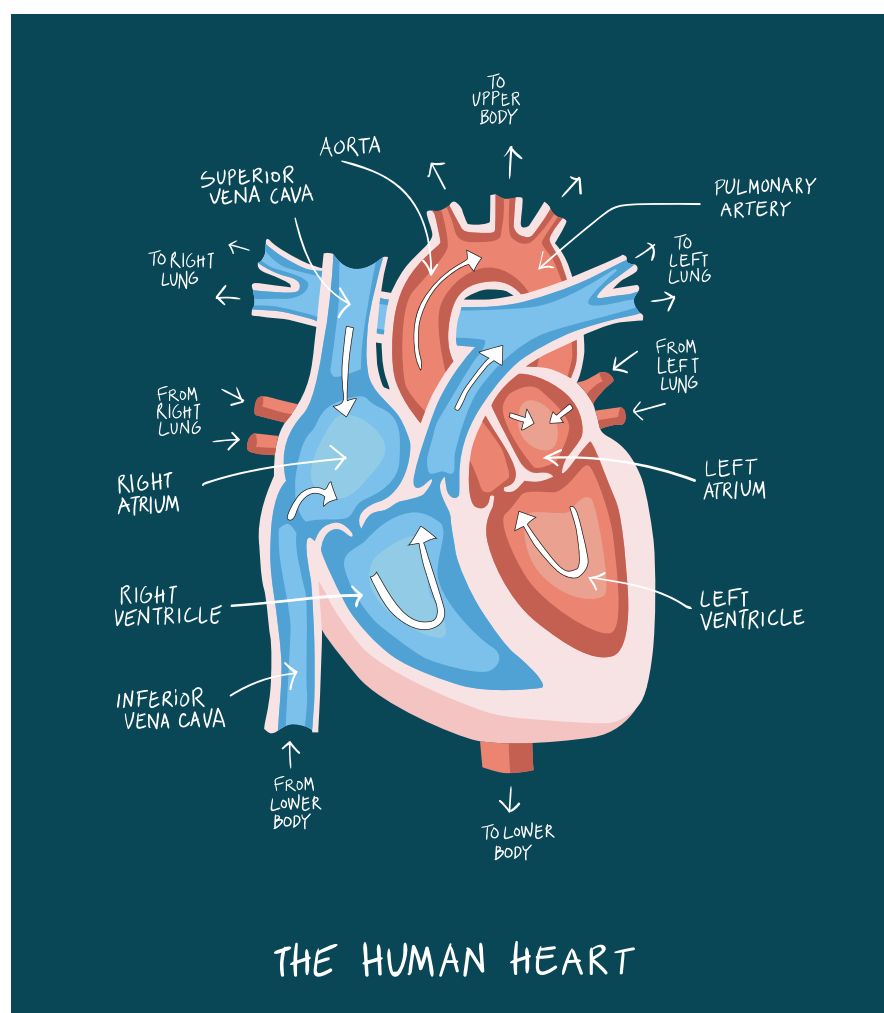
- Call 9-1-1 or the emergency number in your area. If you have immediate access to a phone, call before beginning CPR.
- Perform CPR. Quickly check

or give chest compressions only, for about two minutes.

Using the defibrillator, check the person's heart rhythm. If necessary, the defibrillator will give another shock. Repeat this cycle until the person recovers consciousness or emergency workers take over.

Portable automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are available in many places. You can also purchase one for your home.

These devices come with built-in instructions for their use. They're programmed to allow a shock only when appropriate.



the breathing. If the person isn't breathing normally, begin CPR. Push hard and fast on the person's chest—at the rate of 100 to 120 compressions a minute. If you've been trained in CPR, check the person's airway and deliver rescue breaths after every 30 compressions. If you haven't been trained, just continue chest compressions. Allow the chest to rise completely between compressions. Keep doing this until a portable defibrillator is available or emergency workers arrive.

- Use a portable defibrillator, if one is available. It will give you step-by-step voice instructions. Continue chest compressions while the defibrillator is charging. Deliver one shock if advised by the device and then immediately resume CPR, starting with chest compressions,

to check the levels of potassium, magnesium, hormones and other chemicals that can affect the heart's ability to function. Other blood tests can detect recent heart injury and heart attacks.

Imaging tests

Imaging tests may be ordered to see the size and shape of the patient's heart, and to identify in great detail which (if any) parts of the heart sustained any damage, and to see if there are any problems with the heart valves. Imaging tests include nuclear scans, MRIs, CTs and cardiac catheterizations (angiograms).

PREVENTION

The doctor will also discuss preventive treatment options to reduce your risk of another cardiac arrest. Treatments might include:

- Anti-arrhythmic drugs for emergency or long-term treatment of arrhythmias or potential arrhythmia complications
- Implantable cardioverter-defibrillators (ICDs), battery-powered units that are surgically installed inside the body near the left collarbone. One or more electrode-tipped wires from the ICD run through veins to the heart to constantly monitor the heart rhythm. If the ICD detects a rhythm that's too slow, it paces the heart as a pacemaker would. If it detects a dangerous heart rhythm change, it sends out low- or high-energy shocks to reset the heart to a normal rhythm.
- Coronary angioplasty is a procedure that opens blocked coronary arteries, letting blood flow more freely to your heart, which might reduce your risk of serious arrhythmia.
- Coronary bypass surgery, also called *coronary artery bypass grafting*, involves sewing veins or arteries in place at a site beyond a blocked or narrowed coronary artery (bypassing the narrowed section), restoring blood flow to your heart. This can improve the blood supply to the heart and reduce the frequency of racing heartbeats.

PROGNOSIS

Bottom line? There are a good few things you can do to reduce your risk of sudden cardiac arrest: Get regular checkups, get screened for heart disease, and live a heart-healthy lifestyle—don't smoke, achieve and maintain a healthy weight, eat a heart-healthy diet, stay physically active, and manage stress. ★

LONG-TERM TREATMENT

A person who survives sudden cardiac arrest will be tested by his or her doctor to try and learn what caused it, so as to help prevent future episodes.

Tests the doctor may recommend include:

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

During an ECG, sensors (electrodes) that can detect the electrical activity of the heart are attached to the chest and sometimes to the limbs.

An ECG can reveal disturbances in heart rhythm or detect abnormal electrical patterns, such as a prolonged QT interval, that increase risk of sudden death.

Blood tests

A blood sample might be tested

Status Report

Happening In Hospitals Today

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOC.: DOCTORS NEED (THE SUPPORT OF) DOCTORS, TOO

Chicago, Illinois — A growing number of hospitals offer *physician wellness* programs, in which hospital doctors (and nurses and other staff) benefit from on-site gyms, mental-health counseling and other resources that help them cope with the emotional and mental effects of caregiving.

But under a new policy passed at the American Medical Association (AMA)'s recent House of Delegates annual meeting, physician wellness programs should develop peer support groups, too.

The policy would entail hospital staff meeting on a regular basis to simply share traumatic personal experiences so as to relieve distress resulting from witnessing patient severe injuries or deaths.

Such groups would be voluntary, confidential, and legally non-discoverable, according to the AMA.

According to AMA member Dr. Albert Hsu, who wrote the policy resolution, hospital peer support groups would be an important part of preventing caregiver burnout—itself a chronic problem plaguing modern medicine, particularly in high-stress hospitals.

STUDY: 1 IN 6 ER VISITS/ HOSPITAL STAYS RESULTS IN SURPRISE BILLING

San Francisco, California — According to a new study by the Calif.-based Kaiser Family Foundation, about one of every six emergency room (ER) visits and hospital stays for patients on large employer plans resulted in at least one out-of-network medical bill.

To arrive at their conclusion, Kaiser researchers examined large employer claims data from IBM's MarketScan Research Database, representing claims and encounters for nearly 19 million people.

They were also able to see when a



TREATING THOSE WHO TREAT OTHERS: DOCTOR-HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE ON THE RISE member was admitted to an in-network hospital or other facility and received out-of-network charges for services.

Overall, the study estimated that 18 percent of emergency room visits in 2017 by people with large employer plans resulted in one or more out-of-network charge from a facility, provider, or both.

Out-of-network billing in emergency settings for people on large employer plans were most common in Texas, New Mexico, New York, California and Kansas.

STUDY LINKS PATIENT COMPLICATIONS TO UNPROFESSIONAL SURGEONS

Nashville, Tennessee — According to a new study, the more unprofessional a surgeon is towards coworkers, the likelier it is that patients will suffer complications, too.

Researchers at the Nashville-based Vanderbilt Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy looked at reports of unprofessional behavior by coworkers for 202 surgeons. They then examined reports of surgical and medical complications within 30 days of operation for 13,653 of their patients.

Their research, published recently in *JAMA Surgery*, finds several brow-raising stats:

1. Patients whose surgeons had up to three behavior reports had 18-percent higher risk of complications;

2. Patients whose surgeons had four or more behavior reports had nearly 32-percent higher risk of complications;
3. Extrapolated nationally, unprofessional surgeons affect the roughly 500,000 patients experiencing complications from the roughly seven million surgical procedures performed each year; and
4. Male surgeons were likelier to generate co-worker concerns than female surgeons.

INSURANCE LINKED TO KIDS' MENTAL-HEALTH EMERGENCY HOSPITAL TRANSFER DECISIONS

Davis, California — Research by the University of California, Davis finds that hospitals' decisions to transfer children with mental-health emergencies to other hospitals are significantly affected by

the health-insurance status of those children.

Kids without health insurance were far likelier to be transferred to other hospitals than those with health insurance, the research found.

The study reviewed over 9,000 emergency-room visits nationwide involving youths suffering mental-health emergencies. Researchers found that kids without insurance were 3.3 times likelier to be transferred than those with private insurance.

That rate was even higher for young patients with bipolar disorder, conduct disorders, or schizophrenia.

While existing regulations ostensibly prevent hospitals from making treatment decisions based on the patients' insurance, financial incentives to do just that are sometimes hard for hospitals to ignore, according to UC Davis researchers.

SPECIALIST-IN-TRAINING SALARIES INFLUENCE FINAL CHOICE OF SPECIALTY: REPORT

New York, New York — What kind of doctor you'll be by the time your training ends depends on what your salary is while you're training to become that kind of doctor—according to a new report by industry analyst Medscape.

According to the report, residents (doctors-in-training working long hospital hours) are mostly influenced on what specialty they'll take up in the future by how much they earn while training to become those specialists now.

In plain English, that means that most residents will not opt to become family doctors because residents in family medicine have the lowest average annual salary for residents: \$57,400.

Conversely, while the report says that the average annual salary for family doctors is \$231,000, that's still far lower than the average annual salary for orthopedists—which, according to an earlier Medscape report, is \$428,000.

The current report says that future salary potential influences what specialty 90 percent of all U.S. medical residents choose—a fact that isn't encouraging for family medicine. ★



MORE TOMORROW, AND TODAY: MED STUDENTS TRAIN IN HIGHEST-PAYING SPECIALTIES



The Senior Care Gazette

News from
the World of
Hamaspik
HomeCare and
Senior Health

Veteran NYSHA Employee Rises to Another Rank as Hamaspik HomeCare Regional Director

Her first job at Hamaspik, in 2002, was that of receptionist and secretary—“straight out of high school,” she fondly recalls. She served at that position for three years—demonstrating the initiative that Hamaspik has always rewarded.

In 2005, she became a Hamaspik Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC). Like MSCs across Hamaspik, she excelled at it.

That natural knack for caring and listening was only honed as the months turned into years, and then over a decade. By 2011, Mrs. Raizy Mermelstein had garnered plenty of experience supporting those in need.

Then, with a near-decade of

Medicaid familiarity, she was promoted to the vital position of Intake Coordinator, as position she deftly held for the next three years.

In 2014, Mrs. Mermelstein was promoted yet again, this time to Director of Intake and Enrollment. She held that position until this past August.

So it was only natural that when Hamaspik HomeCare turned to the NYSHA family for a new Regional Director for its Hudson Valley office, Mrs. Mermelstein answered the call.

While Mrs. Mermelstein professes no family affected by disability, “I always had a passion about disabilities,” she tells the *Gazette*.

That red thread of caring runs

through her entire NYSHA career—first for people with disabilities, then for seniors at Hamaspik Choice and Hamaspik HomeCare.

For Hamaspik HomeCare, Mrs. Mermelstein brings a wealth of knowledge to daily operations. Working with the supervisors she directs, she plans to expand Hamaspik HomeCare’s recruiting throughout the greater Hudson Valley.

“What sets us apart is the warmth and passion,” she says, asked for how Hamaspik HomeCare is different than other home-care agencies. “Everyone cares. Hamaspik is Hamaspik!” ★

For Hamaspik HomeCare services, call 855-HAMASPIK (426-2774).

Doctors newly define another type of dementia, sometimes mistaken for Alzheimer’s

Lexington, Kentucky — According to a new report in the journal *Brain*, researchers have now outlined a type of dementia that may be more common than Alzheimer’s among the oldest adults.

The disease, called LATE, may often mirror the symptoms of Alzheimer’s, though it affects the brain differently and develops more slowly than Alzheimer’s, researchers explain.

The acronym LATE stands for *limbic-predominant age-related TDP-43 encephalopathy*. The full name refers to the area in the brain most likely to be affected, as well as the protein at the center of it all.

The newly-identified disease is actually 100 times more common than Alzheimer’s or Lewy body, another form of dementia, according to lead author Dr. Peter Nelson, director of neuropathology at the University of Kentucky Medical Center.

The new paper estimates that between 20 and 50 percent of people over 80 will have brain changes associated with LATE.

Doctors say the two are frequently found together, and in those cases may lead to a steeper cognitive decline than either by itself. “We’re really overhauling the concept of what dementia is,” said Dr. Nelson. ★

Only One in Seven Seniors Self-testing for Memory Issues

Chicago, Illinois — According to a new survey conducted by the

Alzheimer’s Association, only one in seven U.S. seniors reported getting

a regular assessment for healthy memory and thinking.

That finding is in sharp contrast to those who receive assessments for other common health issues, according to the Association. Ninety-one percent of surveyed seniors reported that they were regularly checked for blood pressure, while 83 percent said their cholesterol levels were routinely tested.

The survey found that most seniors thought that the doctor would recommend such screening when it was necessary. Meanwhile, doctors were waiting for patients or family members to report that someone might be having memory issues.

Both doctors and patients have a strong belief that cognitive assessment is important, according to Alzheimer’s Association chief program officer Joanne Pike—but there’s a disconnect about who should bring it up.

Half of all seniors were aware of some change in memory, but less than half reported that change to their doctor, according to Pike. The survey found that only 15 percent of seniors said they brought up memory or thinking issues on their own. ★



TRAIN THAT BRAIN: ACCORDING TO A NEW REPORT BY THE ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION, TOO FEW SENIORS ARE REGULARLY TESTING THEIR MEMORY HEALTH



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