

Wellmark To Give Back To Communities

DES MOINES, Iowa — Wellmark recently announced it will be awarding \$75,000 to celebrate 75 years in business and to thank Iowans and South Dakotans for supporting a locally-based health insurer. For the next 75 days, Wellmark will also be giving back to communities in Iowa and South Dakota by inspiring and encouraging healthy behaviors.

Wellmark is awarding \$7,500 to 10 projects that are able to demonstrate a long-lasting impact on making the healthy choice the easy choice and improving overall community health and wellness. Examples of projects include improving parks or trails in the community, establishing or improving recreational activities or improving access to healthy foods.

In order to be eligible to receive the funds, applicants must be classified as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), or governmental entity in Iowa or South Dakota. Qualified organizations can submit applications at Wellmark.com/75 — http://www.wellmark.com/75 — until Aug. 5. On Aug. 20, all qualified entries will be available for the public to vote for their favorite project. Public votes are one of four final factors Wellmark will use to determine winners.

“The environmental factors of the community in which a person lives, works and plays can greatly impact his or her healthy behaviors,” said John Forsyth, CEO of Wellmark. “And we know from research that up to 70 percent of an individual’s health is influenced by behavior. By providing these awards as part of our 75th anniversary, we are helping communities move toward a future of better health.”

Every day for the next 75 days, Wellmark will be thanking our members and stakeholders by creating opportunities to be well and rewarding healthy choices.

Wellmark will be sponsoring outdoor movie nights, distributing popcorn and other fun items in Vermillion on Aug. 1.

To learn more about the award, enter a project or see what Wellmark is doing each day during the 75 days to encourage healthier and better lives for Iowans and South Dakotans, visit www.Wellmark.com/75/.

Avera Named Among Most Wired in '14

SIOUX FALLS — Once again, Avera has been named to the list of Health Care’s Most Wired. As a health care system, the 2014 designation is Avera’s 15th Most Wired award. The list is based on the 16th annual Health Care’s Most Wired Survey, conducted by *Hospitals & Health Networks* magazine (H&HN).

“This designation demonstrates Avera’s continued commitment to enhance our information technology systems in ways that support improving care and delivery and reaching patient engagement goals,” said Jim Veline, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Avera Health.

To achieve the Most Wired designation, organizations must meet all requirements in four areas: infrastructure, business and administrative management, clinical quality and safety and clinical integration.

As health care transitions to more integrated and patient-centered care, hospitals are utilizing information technology to better connect care providers. For example, 67 percent of Most Wired hospitals share critical patient information electronically with specialists and other care providers. Most Wired hospitals, including Avera facilities, also have made gains by using IT to reduce the likelihood of medical errors. Among Most Wired hospitals, 81 percent of medications are matched to the patient and the medication order via bar code technology at the bedside.

“The Most Wired data show that shared health information allows clinicians and patients to have the information they need to promote health and make the most informed decisions about treatments,” says Rich Umbdenstock, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association. “Hospitals, their clinicians and their communities are doing tremendous work to enhance their IT systems in ways that support care and delivery improvement, and patient engagement goals.”

To comply with federal requirements, health care organizations such as Avera are working to adopt and meaningfully use electronic medical records. Avera began implementing its EMR in 2007, and most recently launched AveraChart, a new Internet portal through which patients can access their health history, message their care provider, view test results, request prescription renewals and more.

Health Care’s Most Wired Survey, conducted between Jan. 15 and March 15, asked hospitals and health systems nationwide to answer questions regarding their IT initiatives. Respondents completed 680 surveys, representing 1,900 hospitals or more than 30 percent of all U.S. hospitals.

The July H&HN cover story detailing results is available at www.hhnmag.com/.

Sanford Vermillion Among ‘Most Wired’

CHICAGO — Twenty-five Sanford Health medical centers have received “Most Wired” designations from *Hospitals & Health Networks* for excellence in information technology utilization.

Hospitals & Health Networks sponsors the annual “Most Wired” survey, which is an industry-standard benchmark study. Now in its 16th year, the survey is designed to measure the level of information technology adoption in U.S. hospitals and health systems. Health Forum, an American Hospital Association information company, distributes, collects and analyzes the “Most Wired” data and develops benchmarks that are becoming the industry standard for measuring IT adoption for operational, financial and clinical performance in health care delivery systems.

Among the Sanford Health facilities receiving Most Wired designations is Sanford Vermillion Medical Center, Vermillion.

“Creating efficient and easy-to-use IT processes for our staff and patients to use translates into better care,” said Arlyn Broekhuis, Sanford’s enterprise chief information officer. “To have such a large number of Sanford facilities recognized means our emphasis on integration is paying off.”

Implementing Bar-Code Medication Administration (BCMA) and My Sanford Chart were among Sanford’s IT initiatives in the past year. The BCMA system has provided further validations across the system for medication administration, while My Sanford Chart allows patients to communicate with their providers, schedule appointments and even conduct e-Visits exclusively online.

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Oz And Roizen

Got A Fib? Get Aggressive About Losing Weight

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D., AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.
King Features Syndicate, Inc.



OZ AND ROIZEN
Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen

In “I Really Love You,” when George Harrison declared “my heart skips a beat,” he was describing a sudden heart flutter that signals a surge of romantic passion. But if your doctor says your heart is skipping a beat, it may mean you have (or are headed for) atrial fibrillation or A fib.

A fib is a disturbed heart rhythm that happens when rapid, erratic electrical signals make the heart’s two upper chambers (called atria) contract quickly and irregularly. Sometimes you can feel it — but not always — and the problem may come and go or be persistent. For most folks, it ups the risk of stroke and heart failure.

Drugs to control your heart rate and rhythm, blood thinners to reduce the risk of blood clots and procedures that deliver low-energy shocks to the heart may treat the condition. But now a new study reveals that lifestyle changes can slash symptoms without using drugs.

Overweight people with A fib went on an eight-week, physician-led program to reduce underlying triggers of A fib: elevated levels of blood pressure, LDL cholesterol and blood sugar; sleep apnea; and tobacco and excess alcohol use. The participants saw a “substantial reduction” in A fib severity and symptoms.

So, if you’re diagnosed with A fib, talk to your doctor about starting a well-monitored program to lose weight if you need to and to reduce those A fib triggers. And start today (A fib gets harder to reverse the longer you have it!) Then you and your true love can enjoy the flutter of your heartbeats for years to come.

MAKING CONTACT WITH DECORATIVE CONTACTS

When Lady Gaga pops in a pair of oversized, Anime-inspired contact lenses or Jennifer Lopez subtly turns her hazel eyes a deep brown, you can bet it’s all part of The Show. But if you use decorative contacts without getting a prescription from your eye doctor, you’re opting for a look that might mean you won’t be able to see at all!

A 2012 American Optometric Association survey found that up to 14 million Americans have tried these products without using a prescription from an eye doctor! Instead they purchase one-size-fits-all lenses, made with who-knows-what kinds of dyes and paints, from the Internet, street vendors, beauty-supply houses and Halloween or novelty stores. A poorly fitted pair of contacts can scratch your cornea, and if they’re not properly cleaned and sanitized, they can trigger infections, corneal ulcers and even blindness.

If you want to change your eye color, transform your iris into a kaleidoscopic pattern, or put the crowning touch on a scary costume, you can use decorative lenses safely, if you:

- Get an exam from a licensed eye doctor, so you have a prescription that specifies the brand name of the contacts, lens measurements and an expiration date;
- Purchase the lenses only from someone who requires a prescription to

sell you contacts; and

- Follow all instructions on caring for and cleaning lenses.

You won’t be able to go completely Gaga, though. Her oversized lenses aren’t Food and Drug Administration approved — and we sure hope she has them made by someone who knows how to do that safely.

HEALTH GOING UP IN SMOKE?

When Cheech and Chong lit up the movie screens with their marijuana-fogged dialogue — “Hey man, how’s my driving?” “I think we’re parked, man” — they probably never imagined cannabis would become legal. But today more than 20 states have authorized medical marijuana, while Colorado and Washington have legalized it for personal use. So we say it’s time to back up (carefully) and take a look at the health risks associated with recreational use (addressing medical use is for another column).

The active ingredient in marijuana (THC or 9 delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) has been engineered to be much more concentrated in today’s crops than it was in the 1970s. That, combined with the highly individual way the drug affects the brain (20-somethings, listen up, you’re still developing neural wiring), makes it hard to predict who might be at risk for long-term marijuana-related problems. What is known, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, is that regular or heavy use is linked to traffic accidents and reduced lung function (the smoke contains carcinogens) and can encourage addictions. In addition, for some folks, THC’s effect on neurotransmitters may increase the risk for depression and the development of psychosis. It also can cause memory and attention deficits. And particular to eating THC, there may be an increased risk of panic or anxiety.

Our advice? Go for a free twofer: An exercise high from aerobic routines, like interval walking (see doctoroz.com for how-to), boosts both serotonin and endorphin levels. You’ll get smokin’ hot without craving a peanut butter and jelly pizza.

THE LATEST DUAL-SOURCE CT SCANNERS

There are many instances in science (Masters and Johnson) and the arts (Gilbert and Sullivan, Lennon and McCartney) where two heads are better than one. Another example of the added value of two heads? The latest CT (computed tomography) scanners.

By delivering two low-dose X-rays at the same time, this second generation of

dual-source CT scans, also called high-pitch spiral scans, dramatically reduces your total radiation exposure by more than 60 percent, compared with earlier CT machines — and they deliver equal or better images than the older scanners. This matters because the use of CT scans has more than tripled since 1996, and every CT scan zaps you with 10 times the ionizing radiation found in a conventional X-ray. Exposure to ionizing radiation is a known cancer risk, but no one knows exactly how much is too much over the course of a lifetime.

This lower-radiation, dual-source scanner vastly increases the already significant usefulness of CT imaging; the scans generate a 3-D image of the inside of your body, providing amazing detail of everything from a pulsing heart to the plaque levels inside your arteries. And they’re the current gold standard for identifying respiratory and cardiovascular problems, as well as many cancers.

Dr. Roizen’s Cleveland Clinic has a new dual-source CT scanner, but if you need a CT scan and a second-generation dual-source model isn’t available where you are, you and your doctor (two heads are better than one) should figure out where you can access this latest imaging technology.

TV TO DIE FOR

With TV shows like “Under the Dome,” “The Blacklist,” “Criminal Minds” and countless others relentlessly spewing out tales of child molestation, mutilation, torture, cannibalism and endless killing and destruction, it seems reasonable to suggest that watching such televised horrors kills off something in you, too (sensitivity, optimism, faith in humanity?). But TV viewing can be even more destructive than that! A recent study followed 13,000 adults for an average of eight years, and found that watching TV for three or more hours a day DOUBLES your risk of premature death, compared to folks who watch 60 minutes or less. Are you at risk?

Keep track of your daily viewing for one week, and write down what you eat while you’re watching TV (some folks find that 40 percent of daily calories come from snacks — even healthy ones can add excess calories and extra weight). And observe (your notepad is right there) your reaction to shows you watch. Feel stressed or anxious afterward? That could increase snacking during commercials, putting more strain on body and soul.

Here’s how you can re-allocate your TV-viewing time. Change your lifestyle channel to: a body-loving, mind-freeing walking routine (aiming for 10,000 steps a day); a clean-sweep, kitchen-relief plan that banishes the Five Food Felons from the house (no added sugars or syrups, eliminate all trans and almost all saturated fats, and any grain that isn’t 100 percent whole); and a soul-reviving meditation or deep-breathing habit for 10-20 minutes daily. You’ll have a younger ReAge and a better view of your future!

Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of “The Dr. Oz Show,” and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into “The Dr. Oz Show” or visit www.sharecare.com.

Some Food Rules On The Rodeo Circuit

BY BARBARA QUINN
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Cowboys and cowgirls in town for the Salinas Rodeo in Salinas, Calif., recently had me thinking of my college rodeo days. My collegiate team members and I took competition very seriously back then. We were highly motivated by the axiom (which is still inscribed on one piece of my gear), “Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.”

Believe me, we had plenty of opportunities for which to prepare as we took off every weekend hauling horses across New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma. Success in competition came from practice. Every day. We wanted to be ready for what came our way, be it a 150-pound man-eating billy goat or a horse that suddenly came unglued.

When we were not prepared, we missed key opportunities to perform at our best. And sometimes — even when we were ready for our events — opportunities eluded us.

Cowboys call it the luck of the draw.

We cowgirls also had to maintain our strength and stamina for competition. And that meant being alert to every nutrition opportunity (and detour) that came our way.

Take truck stops, for example. There’s a story of a young woman who looks at the menu in such an establishment and sees two salads listed. One is a “tossed salad.” The other is a “tossed salad deluxe.”

“What is the tossed salad deluxe?” she asks her server. Without hesitation, the waitress replies, “Tomato.”

Score. Another night as my traveling companions and I journeyed across west Texas, we stopped at a restaurant outside of Amarillo. It was the famous “Big Texan — home of the 72-ounce steak.” (It also had a horse motel for our tired steeds.)

In addition to its regular menu, this restaurant offered (and still does, according to

their website) a “free” 4 plus-pound steak dinner to anyone who can eat the entire meal — including shrimp cocktail, baked potato, salad and a buttered roll — in one hour. (Ambulance ride to the hospital probably not included.)

No contest, we decided as we ordered smaller fare. It was not an opportunity we were prepared to accept.

I’m no longer chasing animals from a galloping horse or flying out of a saddle to tie a goat. But life continues to provide opportunities for which I need to be prepared, healthy and otherwise.

For example, a recent article by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) seeks to define “powerhouse” vegetables: those most strongly associated with a reduced risk

for chronic disease. In the top standings are cruciferous vegetables such as watercress, cabbage, kale and arugula. Green leafy vegetables such as chard, beet greens and spinach are also top contenders.

We can improve our chances for lifelong health when we prepare and eat more of these types of foods each day, experts suggest. Maybe I will look for more of those opportunities.

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