

# Healthy Transitions™

SPRING 2006 A HEALTHCARE RESOURCE FOR OUR FRIENDS WHO ARE 55-PLUS



## Hearing Loss: A Treatable Problem

Despite years of progressive hearing loss, Marlin Abramson was reluctant to undergo surgery for a promising treatment called a cochlear implant. The procedure, which involves surgically implanting a device in the inner ear, has revolutionized how hearing loss is treated.

"I have been amazed with the progress this technology has made in the past 10 years," says Alan G. Micco, MD, an otolaryngologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and assistant professor of Otolaryngology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

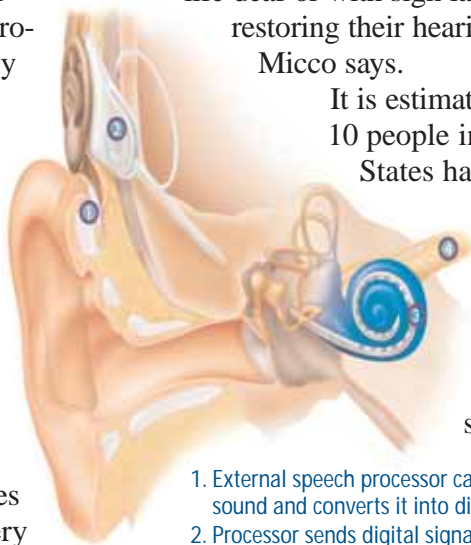
In November 2001, Mr. Abramson, a 76-year-old Highland Park resident, changed his mind and decided to undergo the cochlear implant surgery. "My audiologist kept me informed of the advances in technology and surgery and when she measured my hearing and said it was time, I trusted her judgment," he says. Mr. Abramson was referred to Dr. Micco for his surgery.

A cochlear implant, roughly the size of a silver dollar, bypasses damaged hearing cells to turn sound waves into electrical impulses that go directly to the auditory nerve.

Surgically implanted during an outpatient procedure, the sophisticated device includes a speech processor that selectively encodes sound so patients can understand speech and hear sounds in their environment.

"The implant is taking patients, who, up until the early- to mid-80s would have been resigned to living life deaf or with sign language, and restoring their hearing," Dr. Micco says.

It is estimated that one in 10 people in the United States has hearing loss that affects their ability to understand ranges of sound and normal speech.



1. External speech processor captures sound and converts it into digital signals
2. Processor sends digital signals to internal implant
3. Implant converts signals to electrical energy received by electrodes in the cochlea
4. Electrodes stimulate hearing nerve and patient hears sound

Excessive exposure to noise is the most common cause, but the aging process often plays a significant role. By age 65, one in four people is affected by hearing loss.

"Also we're seeing more of the technologically savvy baby boomers starting to come in seeking help at earlier ages, like 50 to 55," says

Mr. Abramson's long-time audiologist, Pamela Fiebig, MA, CCC-A, director of clinical services for the Clinical Hearing Science program at Northwestern University. Fiebig notes that audiologists, who specialize in hearing loss, are seeing more noise-induced hearing loss than ever. Modern devices like cell phones and portable music players only increase the amount of noise exposure ears receive by a certain age.

Unfortunately, only about 25 percent of people who could use amplification actually seek it.

Anyone who has ear pain, ear drainage, dizziness or ringing in the ears should see a physician, Fiebig



With a cochlear implant, Marlin Abramson says now he can watch television without captioning.

says. Those who notice that everyone seems to be "mumbling" more often should see an audiologist.

The first line of treatment for general hearing loss is still hearing aids, which amplify sound going into the outer ear. Over the past decade, bulky, static-filled devices have given way to smaller, dig-

ital aids that provide better sound and do a better job of filtering background noise. When even the most powerful hearing aids provide little help, cochlear implants may be a suitable option.

Now that Mr. Abramson has his implant, he is amazed by how full his life is. "I'm really a part of social gatherings," he says. "I can use the telephone too, which is very important to me because I want to have conversations with my grandchildren."

For more information, call Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at 312-926-8400. **M**

## Lifeline™ Offers Safety, Independence and Reassurance

After Donna Muscarello, a 50-year-old Park Ridge resident, suffered a stroke last year, she subscribed to Lifeline™ for added security. Lifeline is a personal response service that provides early intervention and reassurance to seniors and those with special needs in the Chicago area who want to live independently.

"I'm home alone all day until my son returns from school," Ms. Muscarello says. "Lifeline makes me feel more secure knowing that with the push of a button someone can be here right away if I need them." That was the case when Ms. Muscarello fell recently. She pushed the Lifeline pendant around her neck and the service immediately called a friend, who came to help.

Each Lifeline subscriber receives a small waterproof personal help button that can be worn as a pendant or as a wristwatch. When the button is pressed it alerts a Lifeline monitor who responds and initiates a conversation through a Lifeline speakerphone. The monitor assesses the problem and

summons appropriate help, which might be an ambulance, a relative or neighbor if there is no medical emergency. The Lifeline monitor then will call designated caregivers to let them know what happened.

More than 15 years ago, Northwestern Memorial Hospital developed a partnership with Lifeline.

"One of the most important aspects of Lifeline is that it gives caregivers peace of mind when they cannot be present," says Dolly Johnson, director of Volunteer Services at Northwestern Memorial.

Each year about a quarter of those 75 and older suffer a disabling fall in their homes. Knowing that they can call Lifeline for help if they fall allows many to live in their own homes longer and be discharged from hospitals sooner. The service also relieves anxiety for caregivers, assuring them their loved ones will be cared for in an emergency.

Constance Rude subscribed to Lifeline for her 86-year-old mother who suffers from a muscular disorder and lives alone. During a power outage Ms. Rude's mother, who has poor eyesight and depth perception, was able to call for help without having to risk

walking around her house in the dark. The Lifeline representative who answered her call kept her on the line while she contacted Ms. Rude, who went right over to help.

Lifeline also provides other services, such as reminding subscribers to take medications, faxing pertinent medical records or healthcare directives to emergency room staff, communicating the subscriber's health status to family members or alerting family or emergency services if the subscriber does not check in every day. Some subscribers contact Lifeline just before an activity that could precipitate a fall, such as stepping into the shower. The Lifeline monitor then will know to check up on the subscriber again within a few minutes.

"Lifeline has made me feel much safer," says Ms. Rude. "I'm pleased that my mother can continue to live the way she wants."

For more information, call Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at 312-926-8400. For a limited time, new subscribers who call this number will receive free service activation. **M**

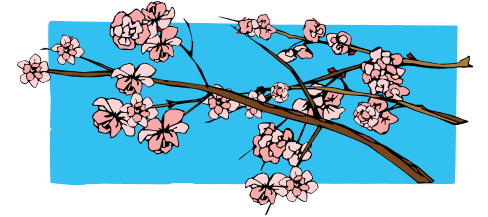


Lifeline users wear a small personal help button that they push when they need assistance.

See the Calendar of Events on the back of this page.

# Healthy Transitions Spring 2006 Calendar of Events

Learn about a variety of topics from renowned caregivers at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. To register or obtain information for any of these events, call the Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at **312-926-8400**, Monday through Thursday between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. or Saturday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.



## Health Education

### The Power of Diet and Exercise for Good Health

Presented by: Debbie Ognar, MS, RD, LDN  
Thursday, March 2; 11 a.m. to Noon

Six of the 10 leading causes of death can be attributed to nutrition and physical inactivity. Debbie Ognar, MS, RD, LDN, at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute, will discuss key nutritional and exercise strategies that can help prevent and treat chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

### Hearing Loss: Facts and Treatments

Presented by: Pamela Fiebig, MA, CCC-A and Alan Micco, MD  
Wednesday, March 8; 11 a.m. to Noon

Many people mistakenly assume that hearing loss is a normal part of the aging process. Pamela Fiebig, MA, CCC-A, director of clinical services for the Clinical Hearing Science program at Northwestern University and Alan Micco, MD, an otolaryngologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Otolaryngology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, will discuss types and causes of hearing loss as well as the components of a hearing evaluation. Treatments including the latest advances in hearing aids and cochlear implants also will be discussed.

### Maintaining a Healthy Bladder

Presented by: Kim Wilschek, RN and Missy Lavender  
Monday, March 13; 11 a.m. to Noon

People often are embarrassed to discuss bladder issues, resulting in misconceptions about how aging affects bladder function. Kim Wilschek, RN, manager of Northwestern Memorial's Alberto-Culver Women's Health Center and Missy Lavender, executive director of the Women's Health Foundation, will discuss issues related to pelvic health and urinary incontinence in women. Lifestyle management strategies, such as activity, diet and exercise will be discussed and information on the new Total Control™ Wellness Program will be highlighted.

### From Strength and Balance Exercises to Yoga

Presented by: Jill Stein  
Thursday, March 23; 11 a.m. to Noon

Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute offers a variety of exercise classes for older adults including Strength and Balance, Pilates Mat, Tai Chi and Yoga. Join Jill Stein, coordinator of Movement Classes at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute, to learn about the benefits of these exercise programs and see demonstrations.

### High Blood Pressure, Stress and Modern Treatments

Presented by: Albert J. Miller, MD  
Friday, April 14; 11 a.m. to Noon

High blood pressure makes the heart work too hard and contributes to hardening of the arteries. It increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, which are the first and third-leading causes of death among Americans. Albert J. Miller, MD, a cardiologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and professor of Cardiology at the Feinberg School, will review the history of treating high blood pressure. Learn how emotional and physical stress impacts blood pressure and how you can combat its effects.

### Arthritis and You: Learn How to Take Control

Presented by: Walter G. Barr, MD  
Thursday, April 27; 11 a.m. to Noon

Osteoarthritis affects more than 30 million people in the United States. Walter G. Barr, MD, a rheumatologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School, will review how arthritis develops and highlight ways physicians treat this condition including use of over-the-counter medications. Dr. Barr also will discuss how self-care and prevention practices can minimize pain and improve overall health.

### Spider and Varicose Veins

Presented by: Richard Vazquez, MD and Cheryl Dann, RN  
Friday, May 12; 11 a.m. to Noon

Spider veins, red or purple "bursts" of tiny blood vessels on the surface of legs, and varicose veins, bulging or twisted-looking veins, may not be attractive, but do they affect your vascular health? Richard Vazquez, MD, a surgeon on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and professor of Surgery at the Feinberg School, along with Cheryl Dann, RN, clinical coordinator of Northwestern Memorial's Prentice Surgical Services, will discuss methods to diagnose small venous disease and varicose veins and highlight the latest treatment options available.

### Stroke Prevention and Treatment Issues

Presented by: Richard A. Bernstein, MD, PhD  
Thursday, May 25; 11 a.m. to Noon

Learn the symptoms of stroke, if you are at risk and how you can decrease your risk. Richard A. Bernstein, MD, PhD, a stroke neurologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Neurology at the Feinberg School, will highlight stroke risk factors and preventive treatments. Also, he will discuss how to recognize a stroke, which can help you act quickly if it occurs. State-of-the-art treatments and possible future approaches to interrupt a stroke, prevent another one and improve recovery also will be discussed.

## Workshop

### How to Handle Medical Bills

Facilitator: Yvonne Henry  
Tuesday, March 14; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.  
Tuesday, April 18; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.  
Tuesday, May 16; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

If you are overwhelmed by the paperwork associated with medical bills and find it difficult to understand Medicare's explanation of benefits, this session, led by a Northwestern Memorial Billing Inquiry Unit representative, will help you keep it all straight.

## Health Resources

### Medicare Part D Information Day

Presented by: Douglas S. O'Brien  
Monday, March 20; 11 a.m. to Noon - Overview  
Noon to 4 p.m. - Counseling and enrollment sessions  
Douglas S. O'Brien, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Region 5, will provide an overview of Medicare Part D. Individual counseling and enrollment sessions follow. Registration required for overview and sessions.

### Ask the Pharmacist

Tuesday, April 11; 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Bring your questions about medications and nutritional supplements, along with your medications, to a free individual appointment with a Northwestern Memorial pharmacist.

## Conferences

### Women's Health: Midlife Transitions with an Eye to the Future

Saturday, March 18; registration 8 to 9 a.m.; program 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; seating is limited

#### MORNING KEYNOTE LECTURE

Menopause and Postmenopausal Healthcare Issues: Achieving a Healthy Transition  
9 to 10 a.m.

Presented by: Patricia F. Katz, MD, an obstetrician and gynecologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and clinical instructor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Feinberg School.

#### BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The Pickle in the Sandwich: Feeling Squeezed at Midlife  
10 to 11 a.m.

Presented by: Michele Wolff, MSMFT, staff therapist and program director, Midlife and Beyond Program for Maturing Adults at the Family Institute at Northwestern University and Karen Krefman, LMFT, staff therapist and associate vice president of Strategy and Planning at the Family Institute at Northwestern University.

or

Bone Health: The Power of Staying Strong and Vital  
10 to 11 a.m.

Presented by: Beatrice Edwards, MD, medical director of the Bone Health and Osteoporosis Center at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School.

Caring for Your Older Parent: Caring for Yourself  
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Presented by: Darby Morhardt, MSW, ACSW, LCSW, clinical social worker, research assistant professor and director of education for the Northwestern Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center and Michele Wolff, MSMFT, staff therapist and program director, Midlife and Beyond Program for Maturing Adults at the Family Institute at Northwestern University.

or

The Power of Memory  
11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Presented by: Nancy A. Johnson, PhD, a neuropsychologist at Northwestern Memorial, director of data core at the Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center and assistant professor of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences at the Feinberg School.

### Essential Information about Essential Tremor

Wednesday, May 3; 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Registration required; seating is limited

#### Update and Current Research

Presented by: Tanya Simuni, MD, a neurologist-movement disorders specialist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial, medical director of Northwestern University's Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Center and assistant professor of Neurology at the Feinberg School.

#### Essential Tremor and Surgery

Presented by: Joshua Rosenow, MD, a neurosurgeon on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial, director of Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery and assistant professor of Neurological Surgery at the Feinberg School.

#### Manage Stress Before it Manages You: An Overview

Presented by: Kim R. Lebowitz, PhD, director of Cardiac Behavioral Medicine at the Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute of Northwestern Memorial Hospital and professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School.

#### An Introduction to Yoga and Meditation

Presented by: Tara Parker, yoga instructor at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute.

To register and obtain location information for all events, call 312-926-8400.