

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter

The Ithaca Health Alliance and Healthcare Reform

By the Members of the Education Subcommittee

While healthcare reform debates take place in Washington and around the country, Ithaca quietly and steadily oversees one solution to our national healthcare crisis: local, not-for-profit, integrative health care for all, with a focus on the needs of un- and underinsured residents.

More than 12 years ago, the roots of the Health Alliance were planted as a way to take care of the uninsured and disconnect from expensive healthcare coverage, which diverts many thousands of dollars from our local economy. The Ithaca Health Fund grew from this, providing assistance for people's health care at a cost of just \$100 a year. From the beginning, membership in the Fund has both encouraged integrative care and promoted the talents of our resident complementary practitioners, who offer discounts and attractive payment plans to members, thereby showing solidarity with the Alliance's mission.

As the organization has evolved, expanding to include a number of programs, it has become clear that we are all most empowered when we participate in the planning and implementation of our own health care. Over the years, members have joined with the Board of Directors in working toward the expansion of Alliance grant categories, adding to the list of available services as Alliance finances have allowed for expansion. Today, the most commonly accessed grant categories include dental grants, grants for annual exams, and grants to treat broken bones and repair lacerations. Last year, the Health Alliance paid out more than \$17,000 in grants and loans to

members. As a function of the Alliance's charitable role in the community, donated memberships presently account for almost one-sixth of the nearly 700 people enrolled in the Ithaca Health Alliance.

Through the efforts of the Alliance and all of its members, the Ithaca Free Clinic (IFC) opened in January, 2006. The Clinic now routinely serves the primary care needs of more than 1100 residents producing, in 2008 alone, 2091 visits. Services include care by physicians, nurse practitioners, and occupational therapists, as well as the clinical expertise of a large group of acupuncturists, chiropractors, herbalists, massage therapists, and other local complementary providers. IFC is widely thought to be the first free clinic in the U.S. to offer medically integrated services. Patient satisfaction remains high for all services at IFC, where volunteers survey every patient at the end of each visit to learn whether we have done a good job.

Whereas health insurance coverage generally fails to pay for prevention, the Health Fund program overseen by the Alliance encourages prevention,

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ITHACA FREE CLINIC HOURS AND OPERATIONS

Mondays: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesdays: 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Thursdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Located at 225 South Fulton Street, Suite B (upstairs), Ithaca, NY • (607) 330-1254

The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the **Ithaca Health Alliance**. More than 80 percent of our work is done through volunteer efforts. Whether you're interested in working with the Clinic or the Health Alliance, if you're looking for a volunteer opportunity, call the Clinic Coordinator at 607-330-1254.

The Ithaca Health Alliance

IHA was founded in 1997. Our mission is to facilitate access to health care for all, with a focus on the needs of the un- and under-insured of New York State.

Become a member of the IHA!

IHA members receive discounts from participating health providers and are eligible through the Ithaca Health Fund for grants and loans that pay for emergency and preventive care. To learn more about membership, call 607-330-1253 and ask to speak to the Office Manager.

Information about the IHA

PO Box 362, Ithaca, NY 14851

Phone: 607-330-1253 • Fax: 607-330-1194

Email: office@ithacahealth.org

Web site: www.ithacahealth.org

This quarterly newsletter is a production of the Ithaca Health Alliance.

Healthcare Reform, *continued from pg. 1* health promotion, and health education. At the same time, the Alliance supports volunteerism and the cooperative efforts of all in behalf of the most vulnerable residents among us. Members of Ithaca Health Alliance agree that by representing the underserved in our community, we are all made stronger and more cohesive. Representation occurs through advocacy as well as volunteerism, two attributes of Ithaca Health Alliance representatives since its inception.

Our voices may not always be heard by those in Washington who decide on the collective fate of our country men and women. Nonetheless, as participants in a local solution to inadequate, expensive, and hard-to-access care, Health Alliance members are part of a local solution to the problem, making evident the power and wisdom of our original vision—that health care is a right rather than a privilege and can be made available to everyone. ❀

Members of Ithaca Health Alliance's Education Subcommittee include Betsye Caughey, Brooke Hansen, Julia Lapp, Bethany Schroeder, and Shawn Tubridy. These members write, edit, help to produce, and distribute the quarterly Health Alliance newsletter.

“Apple a Day...” *continued from pg. 3*

September 12, and apples from the farm were made available at the Peachtown Native American Festival, Wells College (Aurora) on September 19th. For future reference, the farm is located at 4061 Truesdale Road, Union Springs, NY, about 40 minutes from Ithaca. You can make phone inquiries about work schedules at 315-889-5120.

Read all about apples at <http://www.allaboutapples.com/health/archives/science/index.htm>. ❀

References: Heo, H. J., Kim, D. O., Choi, S. J., Shin, D. H., & Lee, C. Y. (2004). “Apple Phenolics Protect in Vitro Oxidative Stress-induced Neuronal Cell Death.” Journal of Food Science, 69(9): S357-60. Direct inquiries to author Lee at <cyl1@cornell.edu>.

Brooke Hansen is associate professor of anthropology at Ithaca College.

“An Apple a Day...”

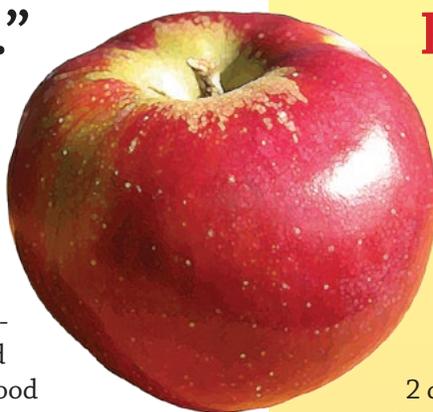
By Brooke Hansen

We have all heard the expression, and this is a good time of year to remind ourselves and families to partake of one of the best local fruits around. In addition to the cancer reducing benefits of apples, especially related to digestive and colon cancer, Cornell food scientists have recently found that phytonutrients such as quercetin and phenolic acids could protect against neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. According to the American Chemical Society apple varieties containing the greatest antioxidant properties include Red Delicious, Northern Spy, and Ida Red. Pectin is another health promoting and cholesterol reducing compound found in apples, especially available in Jonagolds.

It would be a shame to spoil all of these amazing health benefits by consuming apples laced with pesticides, chemicals, or swimming in sugar. Numerous studies have shown that apples are among the most highly contaminated fruits, with both banned and federally approved pesticides regularly in evidence (Environmental Working Group). The effects of these chemicals are most detrimental to young people in the developmental stages of their lives. While organic apples are an alternate choice for consumers, many of these apples may contain sulfur and copper compounds, which are approved for organic growers, but may have negative health and environmental effects. Sulfur and copper compounds influence allergies, and copper, in particular, requires a long time to break down. Consumers should find out how their apples are grown and what methods are used for pest control.

If you want to enjoy local apples that have had no chemicals applied you can check out the five variety orchard at the Cayuga SHARE Farm. Dan Hill (Heron Clan, Cayuga), farm caretaker and Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force Representative, calls for workdays throughout the fall when people can help out on the farm, pick apples, and get to know Native American neighbors. The first workday was

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Recipes from Julia Lapp’s Household

Cabbage & Apples

3 Tbsp butter
1 medium onion
4 cloves minced garlic
2 cups diced apples
1 Tbsp fresh thyme
4 cups purple cabbage (green and savoy also work)
dash of salt and pepper
⅓ cup red wine vinegar

In a cast iron or heavy skillet, melt the butter. Add garlic and onion. Saute until translucent. Add apples, thyme, and cabbage. Let cook down for a few minutes then add salt, pepper, and vinegar. Let simmer for about 10 minutes or until cabbage is soft. Excellent as a side dish with any meat or tofu. ❖

Apple Betty

Preheat oven 375°F.

Peel and core 4 cups of tart apples. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon lemon juice. Place in oiled pie pan or 8 x 8 casserole dish

Mix the crumble topping:
½ cup packed brown sugar
¼ cup flour (whole wheat)
¼ cup rolled oats
¼ cup butter
¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Mix lightly by hand and crumble over apples. Bake for 30 minutes until top is golden and apples are softened. ❖

Julia Lapp is assistant professor of nutrition at Ithaca College and a registered dietitian.

When Pigs Can Fly...

By Beth Harrington

Every fall and early winter a seasonal outbreak of viral influenza occurs, mainly affecting the older population in the U.S. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 5 to 15% of our population will contract this flu on an annual basis. Approximately 36,000 of those who contract influenza will die annually, usually from complications such as pneumonia or worsening of heart or other chronic diseases.

In April of this year, a new type of influenza virus was identified, now formally named H1N1 pandemic influenza, although many still call it the swine flu. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a pandemic as an infectious disease that can cause serious illness in human populations and can spread easily across continents or worldwide. The enormous public health concerns being raised about this new virus are based on “lessons learned” from the 1918 Spanish flu, which was also an H1N1 type of influenza virus, infecting about one-third of the world’s population and causing an estimated 50 million deaths.

However, although scientifically similar to the 1918 virus, this current outbreak is demonstrating somewhat different patterns than either the seasonal flu or the 1918 pandemic. The most striking difference is that this new H1N1 virus generally seems to be causing milder cases of the disease, and the death rate is much lower than even the seasonal flu. The population most affected seems to be children, younger adults, and pregnant women. H1N1 cases have been confirmed by testing throughout all of the U.S. and many countries in the world, although the total number of cases is still considered comparatively low. Information about this disease changes almost daily, as scientists are still learning about this particular type of influenza.

All indications are that a specific H1N1 vaccine will be available this fall. How much vaccine and to what “risk” groups it will be offered has not yet been fully determined. Any type of “flu” can include symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, chills, body aches, headache, runny nose, and fatigue.

What is known and strongly recommended is that people get a seasonal flu vaccination, which is different than the H1N1 vaccination. As always, your physician is a good source of information about your individual medical needs. Panic and hysteria about H1N1 will not help control its spread; instead every day infection control measures are the answer. Whatever the type of virus going around, these are basic hygiene recommendations that should always be practiced:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand cleaner when soap and water are unavailable.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- People who are sick with an influenza-like illness should remain at home and stay away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel, for at least 24 hours after fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities.
- Avoid close contact (i.e. being within about 6 feet) with persons who have influenza-like symptoms.

There is an overwhelming amount of information being offered by many sources. For reliable and current information, the following websites are recommended:

- <<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>>
- <www.flu.gov>
- <<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/>>
- <<http://www.tompkins-co.org/health/>> ❀

Beth Harrington is the chair of the Clinic Operations committee of the Ithaca Health Alliance. She is both a registered nurse and an emergency medical technician.

School's Starting! What's a Nurse To Do?

By Judy Hoffman

The starting of school is very exciting...new shoes and blisters, new environment, new teachers and, oh yeah, swine flu!

Before school starts, the Ithaca City School District nurses are busy getting ready for the students to return. A lot of things need to be put in place prior to students walking in the door on the first day of school. The nurses must get copies of immunizations records, physical exams, and health histories for students who are new to the school district. If families do not have access to health care, the nurses work with them to find a provider.

Health histories must be reviewed to determine if any special plans need to be made before the student starts school. Often school nurses will try to meet with families and students to learn more about their health needs so needs can be best managed at school. Students may have life threatening conditions, like bee sting allergies, peanut allergies, diabetes, or seizures, and will need healthcare plans. The nurses also obtain medical orders and medication from families for children who require medications at school.

The Ithaca City School District has a procedure for students with peanut allergies. It is recommended that students in elementary school have peanut-free classrooms. This means peanut products are not allowed in the room and everyone who enters the room must wash their hands. Preparing everyone is the nurse's responsibility. A copy of the complete plan can be seen on the home page of the District's health services website at <<http://www.icsd.k12.ny.us/>>.

When students show up on the first day, everyone is eager to see old friends and meet new friends and teachers. This can bring about increased excitement and possible anxiety. Nurses often help reas-



sure students who are anxious and communicate with families and staff about how to help provide support. Parents and guardians may also be anxious about needed medical support for their children and will talk with nurses about how their child's medical needs will be managed at school.

Some students can have difficulty settling in to a full day of school. The nurses may see students who are having trouble getting through an entire day. The nurses then encourage students to go to bed earlier and eat a healthy diet so they will be better able to learn at school.

And this year the nurses are helping staff, students, and families learn what they need to do about concerns related to H1N1 (swine) flu. Nurses met with staff prior to school to discuss strategies to help prevent catching and spreading the flu, and what to teach students, including hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if you have flu symptoms, and getting flu shots. Instant hand sanitizer was placed in every classroom and in the main offices where visitors sign in. Posters were also hung throughout the district buildings to remind people about the ways to decrease the spread of flu in the school community.

If you have any questions or comments about what school nurses do to help create healthy and safe environments for everyone, please contact me. ❀

In addition to being a Free Clinic registered nurse volunteer, Judy Hoffman is Ithaca City School District Head Nurse. She can be reached at <jhoffman@icsd.k12.ny.us>.

Volunteer of the Quarter



Heather Stone started volunteering with the Health Alliance's Development Committee soon after she moved to Ithaca in the fall of 2008. Since that time, she has frequently taken the lead on grant proposal drafts and edits as a part of the committee's fundraising efforts. So far, Heather has had her hand in 10 different funding proposals, which have brought in \$17,734, and counting!

Her writing talents, not to mention her great ideas about funding strategies and how team members can work together, are a wonderful asset. Her fellow committee members have come forward to say what a pleasure she is to work with, too. Heather's not usually one to put herself forward, so it's our turn to do so. Way to go, and thank you, Heather Stone! ❀

2009-2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

Bethany Schroeder, President of the Board of Directors, has been named a Cornell Civic Leaders Fellow for academic year, 2009–2010. Schroeder received the distinction as a result of her project proposal entitled, "A Project to Develop a Volunteer Base in Service to the Community at the Ithaca Free Clinic." The project is designed to document, monitor, and evaluate the outcomes of volunteers with Ithaca Health Alliance, including those with Ithaca Free Clinic and other Health Alliance programs. It is meant to reflect the needs and serve the expectations of all Alliance volunteers, with the hope that it can be replicated in other regional health and human services programs. ❀

ASK YOUR HEALTH ALLIANCE:

Who finances the work of the Free Clinic specifically?

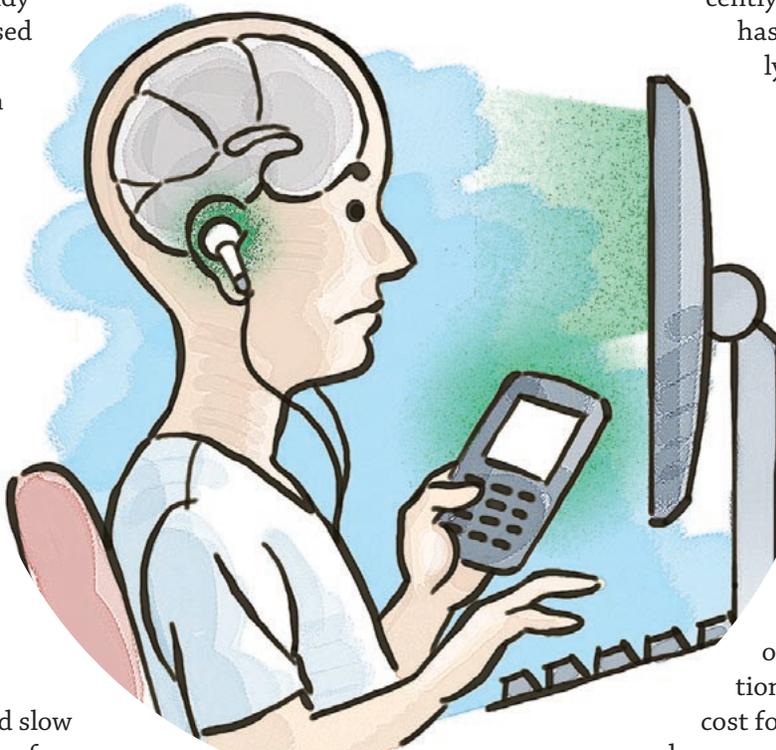
The Alliance provided seed money for the Clinic. Since the second year of operations, 2007, IFC has been financed through a combination of community donations, including many, many individual donations from Alliance members and competitive grants from organizations like the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency, Cornell Human Ecology/Sunshine Lady Foundation, United Way, Tompkins Charitable Trust, two area family foundations, a growing number of anonymous donors, and the Triad Foundation, just to name a few. The Clinic's share of the Alliance budget is about \$100,000 dollar, so outside funding is absolutely necessary to keeping the doors open. What is more, special grants to pay for medical liability insurance to cover Clinic physicians is an ongoing grant funding opportunity, meaning we never stop looking for the money to maintain this particular safe working condition for IFC physicians.

Any member with a donation or funding idea should contact Govind Acharya, chair of the Development Committee, or Betsye Caughey, Outreach Coordinator who provides support to the Community Relations committee. Call 607-330-1253 and leave a message. ❀

Compiled by Brooke Hansen and Bethany Schroeder

Multitasking: Good for Efficiency, Bad for the Brain

A recent Stanford University study has shown that chronic media multitasking may seem efficient but it causes stress on the brain, thus making it difficult to concentrate. Students were the focus of the study, as they are immersed in the culture of simultaneous texting, twittering, listening to iPods and iPhones, e-mailing, watching television, writing on the computer, and more. Heavy multi-taskers in the study showed signs of decreased cognitive control, even when they refocused on doing one task alone. With computers and other technology enabling us to multitask more and in shorter time frames, detrimental effects of such activities may be further exaggerated. The study may be good news for people put under intense multitasking pressure by their bosses, for workers can now cite the National Academy of Sciences as proof that people should slow down and concentrate on fewer things at once! ❖



Ophir, E. and Lucas, J. (Aug. 24–28, 2009.) “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.”

The “Disease of Kings” is on the Rise

Once considered the “disease of kings” because of its association with expensive food and drink, today gout affects up to six million Americans. The prevalence of gout, by all accounts a painful arthritis of the big toe and other joints, has even begun to create new opportunities for the pharmaceutical industry. Recognizing the problem of the disease as well as the potential for big returns on research investments, biomedical engineers and scientists are turning out new drugs to treat gout. Until recently, the generic allopurinol has been the most commonly prescribed medication.

As is true with many conditions, prevention is still the best choice of treatment. Although genetics and other factors play a part in the development of gout among some people, for many it is a disease of the lifestyle and can be avoided with a nutritious, balanced diet and the sparing use of alcohol. Newer generation drugs are expected to cost four to five dollars per dose—as much as a good salad at GreenStar! ❖

*Pollack, A. (June 13, 2009.) “The ‘Disease of Kings’ Extends Its Pain to the Middle Class.” *The New York Times*.*

Brooke Hansen is associate professor of anthropology at Ithaca College and a nine-year member of Ithaca Health Alliance. Bethany Schroeder is a writer and a volunteer registered nurse with Ithaca Free Clinic.



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