

## Health

## 'Safety net' clinics benefit uneven

## Plan 'ahead' for child's doc visits, say experts

NEW YORK, July 5, (RTRS): Parents can make the most of their time at their child's routine pediatrician visits by preparing for each appointment, according to a new resource published in JAMA Pediatrics.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children see a pediatrician regularly and often during their first three years of life.

"Parents' time is becoming more and more precious, and these appointments are so frequent, that we want to help people make the most of that time," said Dr Maheen Quadri of Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, who co-wrote the one-page primer intended for parents and caregivers.

"One of the most important things we do during these visits is give vaccines," Quadri said in a phone interview. "Before appointments, it's important to know what's up-to-date."

The freely accessible patient page emphasizes the best ways for parents to prepare children and their medical files before meeting with doctors.

"It's also really valuable to have that one-on-one time with a doctor, especially when we have so many resources online with different medical advice," she said. "Having that connection with a person who has expertise can be a source of support as you go through the new experience of parenting."

Quadri and co-author Megan Moreno of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health in Madison first recommend knowing your child's history and family's history to ensure that medical records are accurate and up-to-date. Don't forget to transfer them if seeing a new clinician, and consider taking a folder with your child's records to appointments.

The doctor will ask questions about your child's health, your family's health and your child's development at every visit. It helps to be familiar with developmental milestones, such as crawling, walking, and different phases of talking. The doctor may ask you to fill out development questionnaires to assess how your child's growth is progressing, so pay attention to these milestones between visits.

"Many parents don't realize that yearly health supervision or 'check-up' visits are recommended for children age 3 (years) and up as well," said Dr Jennifer Shu

of Children's Medical Group in Atlanta, Georgia, who is also medical editor of HealthyChildren.org.

"When children are younger and making frequent visits to the pediatrician for routine immunizations and the expected toddler illnesses, going to the doctor is top-of-mind," she told Reuters Health by email. "Once kids start elementary school, check-ups can fall out of habit."

The patient resource also recommends bringing a list of questions about health and development topics to visits. For questions about movements or behaviors, for instance, consider bringing a picture or video. For children who take medicine, including inhalers, it helps to bring the drugs to the visit to confirm current doses and ask any questions.

**Smoking:** Health clinics where low-income people in the US obtain medical care don't always offer help with quitting smoking — and availability of that assistance may vary by patients' ethnicity and insurance, a recent study suggests.

So-called safety net clinics exist to reduce barriers to healthcare. Patients at these clinics have higher-than-average rates of smoking, so it's particularly important to address these disparities, said Dr Steffani Bailey, a family medicine researcher at Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine in Portland.

"We need to ensure that all patients, particularly in these settings, are getting access to the assistance that they need to help them to quit smoking," she said in an email.

Bailey and her team examined electronic health record data from 136,314 smokers at 143 clinics in 12 states between 2014 and 2016. The researchers analyzed the type of smoking cessation assistance these patients received — whether it was no assistance, counseling only, medication only or counseling and medication together.

They also looked at whether age, gender, race, income level, insurance status and the presence of medical and psychiatric conditions influenced who received cessation help.

The odds of getting both counseling and medication — which is considered best practice — were lower among patients of all ethnicities combined than they were among non-Hispanic whites, the researchers found.



In this Dec 23, 2015 file photo, a photo of Jahi McMath is shown on a video screen next to her uncle Timothy Whisenton at a news conference in San Francisco. (AP)

## Caring for girl amid brain-death debate 'worth it'

The mother of a girl at the center of a medical and religious debate over brain death said she does not regret moving from California to New Jersey so her daughter could receive care after being declared dead.

Nailah Winkfield told reporters Tuesday that she gave up everything for daughter Jahi McMath.

"Everything that I did, from selling my house,

to quitting my job, to moving across the country and taking all that time away from my family, it was all worth it," Winkfield said.

She has said doctors declared Jahi dead on June 22 from excessive bleeding and liver failure after an operation to treat an intestinal issue.

Jahi had been declared dead in December 2013 at age 13 after suffering irreversible brain damage during surgery in California to remove

her tonsils. A coroner signed a death certificate.

Winkfield refused to accept the conclusion and took Jahi to New Jersey, which accommodates religions that don't recognize brain death.

Winkfield said Tuesday that her daughter grew and went through puberty — evidence she was not dead.

"There's no way in the world that I would be holding onto a corpse for 4-1/2 years," she said.

## Waning eyesight may hasten cognitive decline pace

## Healthy vision may keep brain in shape

NEW YORK, July 5, (RTRS): Waning eyesight may hasten the pace of cognitive decline in older people, suggests a US study.

The results suggest that vision fixes, like a new eyeglass prescription or surgery to remove cataracts, can go a long way toward helping older people stay mentally sharp, said lead author D. Diane Zheng of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

"Taking care of your vision is important in order to maintain good cognitive function," she said in a telephone interview.

Poor eyesight and weakening mental function are common in older people and related to one another, but the question of whether vision influences cognition, or vice versa, has not been clear, the study team writes in JAMA Ophthalmology.

To investigate, Zheng's team followed 2,520 adults for eight years, testing their vision and cognitive status every other year.

Over the course of the study, average visual decline was roughly equivalent to losing the ability to read one line of an eye chart. People who had worse vision at the beginning of the

study had worse scores on the cognitive exam as well. A person's vision at their previous check-up was related to their mental function at the following check-up. While mental function at one check-up was also related to vision at the following exam, the effect of vision on subsequent mental function was significantly stronger.

While the mechanism behind the vision-cognition relationship isn't well understood, Zheng said, worsening vision can discourage people from brain-stimulating activities like doing crosswords and engaging with other people.

She recommended that older adults get regular eye checkups, and have any vision symptoms checked out and treated promptly.

"This study provides additional evidence that would suggest that people who can keep their vision healthy as they age might also be protecting their cognitive health," said Dr Heather E. Whitson of Duke University School of Medicine and Durham VA Medical Center, who wasn't involved in the research.

"If you're aging without good vision, not only are you giving your

brain less stimulation, you might be altering your brain at a structural level," she said in a phone interview.

The good news, Whitson added, is that poor vision is one of the few risk factors for cognitive decline that is potentially modifiable. Even incurable causes of age-related vision loss such as glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration "are highly treatable, so we can reduce the amount of vision loss that people suffer from if they're detected early."

## Also:

**PARIS:** Sanofi sees a more diversified pipeline driving a return to growth at its diabetes unit in the coming years and will consider acquisitions and partnerships to help boost performance, a company executive said on Tuesday.

The French drugmaker's diabetes revenues have fallen since 2015, slumping some 11 percent last year alone, as its patent-expired Lantus insulin is being squeezed by pricing pressure in the United States, the world's-largest health market.

Analysts said the company had been slow to work on finding successors to Lantus and had underestimated com-

petition.

"I will not commit to a new guidance for 2019 but we are clearly optimistic for the business," Stefan Oelrich, executive vice-president for diabetes and cardiovascular at Sanofi, told Reuters.

He cited new drugs under development, the rising number of diabetes sufferers around the world and technological breakthroughs among his reasons for optimism.

Shares in Sanofi, France's largest market capitalisation, edged 0.4 percent higher after Reuters first reported Oelrich's comments.

The number of people with diabetes has risen from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014, according to the World Health Organisation.

Oelrich said the figure could climb up to 600 million in the next two decades. "We are facing an enormous unmet need in terms of medicines and solutions," he said of diabetes, pointing to areas of future demand such as China and the Middle East.

Competition remains tough, with companies such as US Eli Lilly and Denmark's Novo Nordisk developing new products.

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