

Living well with diabetes

Living with diabetes can be difficult and exhausting. The constant struggle to keep blood sugar in the “normal range,” plus wondering if blood sugar is controlled well enough, is stressful. Whether you have diabetes or not, blood sugar fluctuates and chronic high blood sugar can lead to kidney failure, blindness and amputation.

There are things everyone can do to improve their health. For example, research indicates eating foods that are low in saturated fat, maintaining a healthy weight and getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night can lower the risk of certain cancers and other health problems. Despite the recommendations, patients often feel it's difficult to make changes. It's no different for people living with diabetes — most work hard to control their blood sugar, but all too often the day-to-day effort, and lack of control over all the factors that cause blood sugar to fluctuate, leaves them feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and discouraged.

Diabetes self-management education and support are critical for people with diabetes to manage their blood sugar; the key is making simple lifestyle changes that are sustainable over time. These changes help achieve ideal blood sugar range by focusing on factors one can control and reducing the effects of those one cannot. This approach has helped some people with diabetes reach their A1c goal (a blood test indicating the patient's average blood sugar over the past 2-3 months), and find a sense of stability and purpose.

What are these simple steps and small changes? First, be an active member of your health care team. Talk to your doctor or nurse, ask questions and share your concerns.

Second, work with the members of your health care team to create a diabetes self-management plan and set a diabetes self-management goal. Your plan should include your diet and activity goals, your target weight, how often and when you should check your blood sugar, a list of your medications (including when and how to take each medication) and a plan to monitor for symptoms of diabetes-related complications and what to do if you develop symptoms. When writing your goal, pick something you're willing and able to work on and make it time-oriented. For example, “I will walk 15 minutes a day, three days a week, for the next two weeks.”

Finally, make a list of follow-up appointments, lab tests and other tests that can help you track your diabetes self-management progress. Be sure to include your current lab results and your goal results, as well as how often and when each one should be done.

Living with diabetes can be challenging, but it is manageable. Good health comes in the form of simple changes over time, recognizing what you can do to make a difference in your health both now and in the future. For more information about diabetes self-management, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran's Health Library at www.VeteransHealthLibrary.org. The VHL contains more than 1,500 health information sheets, 150 video clips and numerous links to additional online resources.

ESTHER REECE is a nurse and certified diabetes educator at the Sheridan Veterans Affairs Health Care System.

Health insurer Cigna buying Express Scripts for \$52 billion

BY TOM MURPHY
AP HEALTH WRITER

Health insurer Cigna is buying the nation's biggest pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts, the latest in a string of proposed tie-ups as health care's bill payers attempt to get a grip on rising costs.

The \$52 billion deal announced Thursday fol-

lows the drugstore chain CVS Health Corp.'s roughly \$69 billion bid to buy the insurer Aetna Inc., an acquisition the companies detailed in December.

Insurers and pharmacy benefit managers — which run drug plans for insurers and employer-based plans — have struggled to keep costs under control for clients like big compa-

nies that provide coverage to their workers.

They are pushing to shift health care from a system that treats the sick to one that essentially tries to prevent you from getting sick in the first place or keeps you out of an expensive hospital. They're not the only ones hunting for solutions. Amazon said earlier this year that it

will collaborate with billionaire Warren Buffett and JPMorgan Chase to create a company that provides their employees with high-quality, affordable care. No one knows what that means yet, but it sent a shudder through the industry.

Insurers and others say they want to get more involved in patient care.



Puppy kisses

Judy Hayworth gets puppy kisses during the Sheridan Dog and Cat Shelter Spring Fling Fair at the Best Western Sheridan Center Saturday, March 10, 2018.

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'Chosen families' gain legal recognition in sick-leave laws

BY JENNIFER PELTZ
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK (AP) — Yee Won Chong had just been diagnosed with cancer. His relatives were half a world away in Malaysia and couldn't care for him. So he turned to the friends he considers his “chosen family.”

“There was no question,” says his longtime housemate Brooks Nelson, a Portland, Oregon, charity executive who used his own sick days to accompany Chong to doctor's appointments. “That's what family does.”

Arrangements like theirs have quietly been gaining political recognition.

In the last two years, Arizona, Rhode Island and the three biggest U.S. cities — New York, Los Angeles and Chicago — have passed laws that let workers use sick days to care for anyone who's like family to them. Similar laws also passed in Austin, Texas, just last month and St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2016. Millions of federal employees and contractors also have the benefit.

To some business interests, such laws put bosses in the awkward position of figuring out who's the “equivalent” of family. But to Chong, the policies simply “catch up with the ways people are related to each other.”

At 46, the nonprofit-organization consultant has had romantic partners but also forged bonds with people in

homes he has shared and in his circle of liberal activists.

Still, as he asked for help dealing with cancer, he wondered: “Am I imposing on them?”

His friends didn't see it that way.

Roberta Hunte readily kept Chong company at chemotherapy, recalling her friends' support when her mother had cancer. Andrei Joseph, who flew in to help Chong recuperate from surgery, is a cancer survivor and part of a couple whose home Chong shared for years in Brookline, Massachusetts.

“What kind of person would I be if I didn't go in his time of need?” says Joseph, a retired teacher.

Acknowledging the “equivalent” of family relationships is rooted in a 1969 regulation about federal employees' leave for military funerals in the thick of the Vietnam War.

A 1994 law extended the “equivalent” definition to federal workers' sick time, and a 2015 presidential order did the same for many federal contractors. The more recent state and local measures cover an estimated 10 million private-sector and government workers, says Wendy Chun-Hoon of Family Values at Work, a paid sick leave advocacy group.

Workers don't get extra sick days for family. “equivalent” care; it's just a way they can use their allotted time. It's not yet clear whether the broad defini-

tion spurs workers to take more of their sick days.

Much of the impetus for chosen-family-friendly sick leave laws has come from gay people. But New York City got complaints about workers being denied sick leave to care for aunts and a fiancée before its law was broadened last fall, consumer affairs Commissioner Lorelei Salas said.

Wil Darcangelo's chosen family is one he never envisioned when he moved into a studio at a Fitchburg, Massachusetts, home five years ago in exchange for carpentry work.

The household now includes him and his husband; a 22-year-old blind woman with autism they legally adopted last summer; his husband's stroke-stricken ex-partner; a British expat who helps aides care for the ex-partner and plays music with Darcangelo and his daughter; and the 72-year-old homeowner.

“Our system works for us, but only in spite of the way the larger system works,” says Darcangelo, 48, a church spiritual coordinator whose flexible hours allow him to fill care gaps.

Regardless of laws, some employers let employees use sick or “personal” days to care for whomever they choose. “I don't need to know or research or see a birth certificate, a wedding certificate. We're dealing with adults,” says Jim Houser, co-owner of Hawthorne Auto Clinic in Portland.

But some business groups and employment lawyers are wary of managing sick time around the “equivalent” of family.

“This open-ended provision, which defies any definition or parameters, is priceless” to sick-time slackers, says Michael Soltis, a Connecticut lawyer who tracks paid sick leave laws. Lisa Horn of the Society for Human Resource Management, a major association of HR professionals, says the language “raises a host of concerns” about its meaning.

Others see better ways to be inclusive. “Who gets to decide who's the ‘equivalent of family?’” asks Richard V. Reeves, a senior fellow in economics at the Brookings Institution think tank. He suggests simply letting workers use sick time to care for themselves or “another.”

However it's worded, the meaning of chosen family seems clear to Jana Clark, who is looking forward to seeing Rhode Island's law take effect in July.

After a stint in graduate school, Clark, who is 30 and starting a job at a university, returned to Providence last summer because of her chosen family there. The friends help one another in ways as big as opening homes when someone needs to stay, and as everyday as dropping off soup when someone's sick.

“Just the same kinds of things,” she says, “a family member might do.”

SENIOR HAPPENINGS |

• Roadshow at The Hub on Smith will take place March 13 and April 10. Ken and Sue Heuermann, Alex Banks, Wayne Sullenger and Darla Judes combine knowledge to give their best estimate as to the value of your precious items. Check-in begins at 1 p.m.

• Wacky Bingo is set for March 21 at Heritage Towers senior living dining room, located at 428 N. Jefferson St. There is no charge to participate in

the game. Supper will be served from 5:30-6 p.m. and will include soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. The cost of dinner is a \$5.00 suggested contribution for registered seniors and \$8 for unregistered seniors. RSVP by calling (307) 672-2240.

• Rod Adams will present “Nature, Birds, and Wildlife of Northern Wyoming” March 22 from 10-11:15 a.m. at The Hub on Smith. Adams is a

local nature photographer and has an awe-inspiring show including many birds in this area, fox kits, moose, elk and more.

• The Hub on Smith's watercolor painting class has been postponed until April 3-27. Gail Sidletsky will offer a six-week spring session for a suggested contribution of \$25 for registered seniors and a \$30 fee for unregistered folks.

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Thurs - Cribbage	12:30 p.m.	Café
Fri - National Limerick Day/Readings	12:30 p.m.	Café
Sat- Texas Hold 'em	12:30 p.m.	Café
Mon- Table Tennis	1:00 to 3:30 p.m.	Fitness Room

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