Summer Issue:

Vacation anyone?

The kids are home, it is hot outside and reruns are on the television. You know what that means? It is time for a vacation. Summer is the traditional time of year when families escape the boredom and heat of Houston for parts known and unknown.

Having multiple sclerosis does not mean you should avoid travel. In fact, if you enjoy vacations and travel, it is even more important for you to continue this activity which is a valuable tool for coping with day to day stressors. However, it does mean that you should carefully plan your trip to minimize travel-related stressors and ensure that you have an enjoyable and rejuvenating experience.

Let’s take a look at some of the most common barriers to travel for persons with multiple sclerosis. Due to the unpredictable nature of the disease, many persons worry that their symptoms may prevent them from fully participating or limit others accompanying them on the trip. Some persons have concerns about traveling with their injectable drugs. Others may have some anxiety about being far away from their usual health care providers while away. Finally, there are those that find the whole process of planning and executing a trip exhausting.

Here are some strategies for ensuring a successful trip:

Injectables
Will you need to bring your injectables? Did you know you can carry on injectables and a small cooler with gel packs for medicals?

Fatigue
Have you considered bringing your cooling device to use on the plane (often there is no cool air circulating in the cabin while the plane is still at the gate) or your destination if traveling to a warm climate? Some foreign cities do not have air conditioning in all buildings so it is important for you to research your chosen locales. What kind of transportation options exist at your destination? Perhaps budgeting more money for convenient and readily accessible transportation might be easier than negotiating a foreign public transportation system or walking long distances. Are accessible cabs/vans available?

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Preventing Medicare Fraud

- Keep your personal information from falling into the wrong hands. Never give out your Medicare or Social Security numbers to solicitors.
- Shred all important documents before throwing them away.
- Compare your bills with the Medicare summary notices to make certain that the charges are correct.
- Keep your statements in one place.
- Report any incorrect billing by phoning your service provider.

If your concerns are not answered or your bills are too complicated to handle, call the Better Business Bureau Education Foundation @ 713/341-6184 or 1-877-468-9222.

Vacation? (continued from page 1)

Are you willing to include some time for resting during your trip? It can be helpful to plan for assigned times each day so travel partners know what to expect. Perhaps there is something your fellow traveler/s really want to do or see that is not so important to you. They can press on allowing you to conserve energy.

Accessibility
It is crucial to research this aspect of travel. We are fortunate to have the American Disabilities Act in the US which governs accessibility to public spaces and businesses. However, in many of the older cities around the globe, you might find sidewalks or venues that are non-accessible so you will want to check with the hotel, public transportation and attractions you plan to visit. Also, most airports/airlines have assistance desks. Although some of these options may result in extra charges, they can really cut down on some of the stress and fatigue of traveling.

Good websites to check out:

www.disabledtravelers.com

Prior to joining Baylor College of Medicine, Crystal worked ten years at the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Association managing Housing and Urban Development grants addressing homelessness.

She was born and raised in Houston where she learned to fish and ride motorcycles. She is the proud owner of a 1977 Harley which she loves almost as much as her two daughters!

Meet The Staff: Receptionist

Crystal Rivera

We are pleased to welcome Crystal Rivera, our new Senior Office Support Specialist who is also bilingual.

Crystal greets and directs visitors to the clinic. She also assists by answering the phones and verifying insurance so that patients of the clinic can obtain needed services.
Self-help group for patients who speak Spanish
Grupo de apoyo para pacientes con Esclerosis Multiple de habla-espanol

We are in the process of developing a self help group meeting for persons with MS and their caregivers who primarily speak Spanish. If you or someone you know has an interest in such a group, please call Mary Gonzalez @ 713-864-6568 or email megigf@aol.com.

Estamos iniciando un grupo de apoyo para los pacientes con EM y sus proveedores de atencion. Si usted or alguna persona que usted conoce esta interesado en este grupo por favor llame a Mary Gonzalez al 713-864-6568 or email megigf@aol.com.

$$$$ Summer Utility Assistance $$$$

On June 22nd, the Public Utility Commission authorized a 12% electricity discount during summer for low income residential customers in areas with competing energy retailers.

Households receiving food stamps, TANF, SSI, Medicaid or low-income Medicare should be automatically enrolled.

If you are on one of these programs and are not automatically enrolled - OR- your family income is at or below 125% of federal poverty guidelines ($25,813 for a family of four), you may contact LIDA (Low Income Discount Administrator) at 1-800-241-7011 or apply online at www.puc.state.tx.us.

Community Events

Don’t forget to check with MS Activesource 1-800-456-2255, MS Pathways 1-800-788-1467, MS Lifelines 1-877-447-3243 and Shared Solutions 1-800-887-8100 for community presentations and teleconferences. These are a great way to get information about a variety of topics. Some upcoming programs focus on relationships, sexuality, family, fatigue, cognition, head-aches, and treatment management. Brochures for the various programs can be found in our lobby and exam rooms.
**National MS Society Corner**

**PEARLAND ADAPTIVE YOGA CLASSES**

There are two classes now offered by a registered yoga therapist at the West Side Events Center @ 2150 Country Place Parkway every Saturday and sponsored by the NMSS:

- **Hatha Yoga** which is a standing class from 10am-11:15am.
- **Chair Yoga** which is a sitting class from 11:30am-noon.

If you have any questions or need more information, please call Lissa @ 713/526-8967, option 2.

**ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Did you know that the NMSS can potentially help those who meet chapter established guidelines with the following services:

- prescribed durable medical equipment
- home modifications
- disposable items used for personal care
- public transportation vouchers
- respite care
- professional counseling?

If you are in need of services and equipment, please call Vickie Stevens @ 713/526-8967, option 2.

**FALL INTO STEP FOR UPCOMING MS WALKS**

Now's the perfect time to lace up, step up and get your family, friends and neighbors ready to join the movement against multiple sclerosis!

Why? Because the Fall 2007 MS Walks are less than two months away!

Here's the lowdown on when and where:

Saturday, Sept. 8: Katy, Kemah and The Woodlands
Sunday, Sept. 9: Downtown Houston

The Blue Fish Worx MS Fun Run will also be held in The Woodlands.

Day-of registration for each MS Walk will begin at 7 a.m. with the event stepping off at 8 a.m.

Free -- yes, FREE! -- online registration is open at mswalklonestar.org, so don't wait 'til it's too late! Fall into step and sign up now!

If you have any questions, contact Naomi Dingle @ ndingle@nmsslonestar.org or 713-526-8967 option 2.