

CHECKup

Important news from the nation's leading health care facility serving the LGBT communities.

Volume XV, Number 2 • Fall 2003

Preventive Care Keeps Lesbians Healthy

Even though most lesbians know that they should have regular checkups, feeling well convinces many that they don't need vital exams. For some, shame and fear of discrimination can become additional obstacles. Others may feel they just can't afford it.

Callen-Lorde helps women understand the importance of these exams, offers treatment in a respectful environment, and provides connections to no-cost screenings. (See box below.)

Here are some guidelines to follow:

Anyone over 21 and everyone who is sexually active — whether that is with women, men, or both — should have a pap smear once a year. Women over 65 can stop, as long as they have had at least three normal pap smears in the last 10 years. Screening for sexually transmitted infections (syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, hepatitis, and HIV) should be added to the exam for sexually active women.

These same women should routinely have clinical breast exams, but they shouldn't stop at age 65.

Everyone over the age of 30 should have their blood pressure checked every 1-3 years.

All women between ages 40 and 50 should have a mammogram every 1-2 years. After the age of 50, they should get one every year. If they have a first degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) with breast cancer, they should begin having mammograms 10 years earlier than the age of the diagnosed relative. For example, if the relative was 42



when she was diagnosed, first degree female relatives should start having mammograms at age 32.

All women over age 50 should have a colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer every 3-5 years. Similar to mammograms, if they have a first degree relative with colon cancer, they should begin having colonoscopies 10 years earlier than the age of the diagnosed relative.

Screening for osteoporosis should begin for women at age 65. Those at higher risk — Caucasian and Asian women, and those who are thin, smoke, or have a first degree relative with osteoporosis — should consider starting at age 50.

No matter your age, sexual orientation or health status, Callen-Lorde strives to create an environment that reduces fear and shame around getting health care. But still, a lack of insurance and costs keeps many women away. If inability to pay is an obstacle for you, contact us. We have many ways to help ensure that you get the preventive health screening you need at either low or no cost.

From the Executive Director



Dear Friend,

I recently read in *The New York Times* that President Bush said he doesn't "understand how poor people think."

Now, it wouldn't be a stretch to think that he probably has even less understanding of the LGBT community, let alone our special medical needs.

That's why Callen-Lorde plays such a vital role. Where else can members of our community receive the specialized and sensitive care they need? On this page you'll read about the latest preventive measures lesbians can take to ensure good health — and new programs that provide access to these services at no cost.

On page 3 you'll meet Dr. Jeanne Carey, our "hospitalist" bringing Callen-Lorde's unique standard of patient care to Beth Israel Hospital.

And, I am very pleased to update you on our expanded Oral Health Services (see page 3) enabling us to treat even more patients with dignity and respect in our state-of-the-art facility.

I hope you enjoy reading our Fall Newsletter — it's filled with stories of recent accomplishments made possible through your support.

In closing, I just want to say that it is deeply satisfying to know that Callen-Lorde is recognized as a community that has come together to care for its own.

Whether you are a patient, donor — or both — thank you for the caring support you give.

Sincerely,

Jay Laudato
Executive Director

Callen-Lorde offers low-income, uninsured women enrollment assistance into state-funded insurance programs:

Family Planning Benefit Program

- Reproductive health and related health screening services

Columbia Breast Health Partnership

- Diagnostic gyn and breast health services

Please call our Patient Entitlements Desk at **212-271-7207** for more information.



Current Health Issues is a feature of the *Check-Up* which highlights current issues in health care that may affect your well being as well as that of your partner and your family. Each health issue is followed by Internet links and/or references for more information.

First Nasal Mist Flu Vaccine Approved

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu is responsible for an average of 36,000 deaths per year in the US, with the most severe illnesses and deaths among individuals with underlying medical conditions, children less than 2 years old, and adults over the age of 65

FluMist, a nasally administered flu vaccine, has been recently approved for healthy people age 5 to 49. Unlike the injected vaccine, FluMist contains strains of the live flu virus and cannot be given to anyone with immune suppression (people with AIDS or cancer, those being treated with immunosuppressive drugs). In addition, it has not been established as safe or effective among people with asthma and people over the age of 50.

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2003/NEW00913.html

Beneficial Effects of Eating Fish

The amount of fish eaten on a weekly basis is inversely tied to heart rate according to a new study published in the August issue of *Circulation*. In a study of nearly 10,000 older men without coronary heart disease, as fish intake increased, heart rates fell significantly. Fish consumption remained a significant predictor even when

accounting for a variety of potential confounders (age, smoking status, physical activity). Given that increased heart rate is a risk factor for sudden death, this finding may explain why fish consumption seems to protect against sudden death. As expected, increased fish intake was also associated with a rise in omega-3 fatty acids which are the likely cause of this and other "heart healthy" effects. Other beneficial effects noted in this study included a drop in blood pressure, decreased triglyceride levels (fat found in the blood), and increased HDL (good) cholesterol levels.

[Circulation 2003;108.](#)

Hormone Replacement – the Latest News

In July 2002, information came out about the potentially harmful effects of combined hormone replacement therapy. At that time, the Women's Health Initiative, a clinical trial of combined estrogen/progestin of 16,608 ethnically diverse, postmenopausal women was stopped early because overall health risks, including invasive breast cancer, exceeded benefits. Questions remained about the characteristics of the breast cancers observed and the potential influence of the hormones on mammography.

In the five-year duration of the study, women taking combined estrogen/progestin were diagnosed with more total and invasive breast cancers than the women taking placebo, and breast cancers found among women taking hormones were larger and at more advanced stages. In addition, after only one year, the percentage of women with abnormal mammograms was substantially higher among hormone users compared with placebo users. These results suggest that estrogen plus progestin may stimulate breast cancer growth and hinder breast cancer diagnosis.

Another study also evaluated the relationships between the duration and pattern of hormone use and risk of breast cancer. In this study, women that took estrogen replacement (with-



out progestin) showed no increased risk of breast cancer, irrespective of recency or duration of use. However, women who took combined estrogen/progestin, whether exclusively or ever, had an increased risk of breast cancer that increased with longer duration of use. This increased risk was not influenced by the pattern of use (continuous vs. cyclical).

Further studies are needed in order to assess the risks of estrogen replacement therapy alone, although this small study suggests no increased risk for breast cancer. However, use of combined estrogen/progestin replacement does show an increased risk of breast cancer, regardless of how the hormones are taken, and these breast cancers may have a worse prognosis.

[JAMA 2003;289:3243-53.](#)

[JAMA 2003;289:3254-63.](#)

Sincerely,

Dawn Harbatkin, MD
Medical Director

Expansion in Oral Health Services

In response to a growing need, Callen-Lorde has greatly expanded the capacity of its Oral Health Service.

“Although the dental clinic opened less than a year ago, the demand for services has sky-rocketed,” stated Dr. Calix Ramos, Director of Oral Health Services.

To handle the increased patient load, three full-time dentists were added: Dr. Oleg Goncharov, and residents Dr. Euyenia Kollia and Dr. Glen Kakpawan. Dental residents differ from medical residents in that they are fully licensed and have elected to participate in a residency

to gain specialized knowledge.

Dr. Goncharov waited two years for a position to open at Callen-Lorde because of his commitment to the community and special interest in treating patients living with HIV.

The addition of these highly qualified professionals will make Callen-Lorde’s state-of-the-art oral health services available to even more people.

Dr. Ramos sums up the expansion with enthusiasm. “What’s truly rewarding is that people who had given up on their oral health are now coming to us for help.”



An Innovative Approach to Hospitalization

To help ensure that our patients receive proper care during a hospital stay at Beth Israel, Callen-Lorde has hired Dr. Jeanne Carey as our “hospitalist.”

A hospitalist is a physician who works only in hospitals. Familiar with hospital systems, this doctor can advocate on behalf of patients. The other enormous benefit is that patients have greater access to a hospitalist — normally primary care physicians make

rounds only in the morning.

Dr. Carey is a Board Certified physician in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases. She has a comprehensive understanding of health and illness as well as specialized knowledge about infectious diseases, including HIV. Dr. Carey also has a special interest in serving LGBT people.

Throughout a patient’s hospital stay, Dr. Carey is in constant communi-

cation with the primary care physician at Callen-Lorde — assessing needs on a daily basis.

Callen-Lorde patients and medical staff have been extremely pleased with the care she is providing. We believe that this innovative relationship is another important way Callen-Lorde extends quality and sensitive health care to the community.



Learn more about health issues important to you at Callen-Lorde’s Health Education Resource Center (HERC). Staff and volunteers are available to assist you with books, medical journals, and the internet.

Our Mission

The Michael Callen—Audre Lorde Community Health Center provides quality health care and related services primarily to New York's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community — in all its diversity — regardless of ability to pay. To further this mission, Callen-Lorde promotes health education and wellness and advocates for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender health issues.

Services

Primary Care
Annual Physical Exams
Immunizations
Care for Common Medical Problems
Care for Chronic Health Problems
HIV/AIDS Medical Treatment
HIV Testing
STI Testing and Treatment
Health Outreach to Teens (HOTT)
Gynecologic Care
Transgender Health Care
Senior Health Care
Oral Health Clinic

Medical appointments 212-271-7200
Oral Health Clinic appointments 212-271-7152

Hours

Monday 12:30pm—8pm
Wednesday 2:30pm—8pm
Tues., Thurs. & Fri. 9am—4:30pm

Location

356 West 18th Street
(between 8th and 9th Avenues)
New York, New York 10011

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Visit us online:

www.callen-lorde.org

Sea Lions Steal Show

More than 350 guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and cocktails among polar bears, penguins, and monkeys at Callen-Lorde's Walk on the Wild Side on June 17 at the Central Park Zoo.

This annual event is an opportunity to thank donors for their support. "I love this party," said Joy Tomchin, co-chair of this year's event committee. "The setting is completely unique, even the hot dogs are fantastic. And, it's the one event my 9-year-old son looks forward to year-after-year."

Everyone enjoys the zoo, and this year the lucky winner of our fish raffle got to feed a sardine to the sea lions!

Special thanks to the Central Park Zoo, performers Staceyann Chin and Michael Holland, \$10,000 sponsor Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, and to all of our guests who made the party such a success. Donations totaled more than \$75,000.



PHOTO BY DOUG MESZLER

Central Park Zoo Curator John Rowden encouraging a sea lion performer.



Save The Date!

Third Annual Callen-Lorde Community Health Awards benefit at Tribeca Rooftop

Tuesday, November 18th, 2003

Visit Callen-Lorde.org or call 212-271-7263 for details.