ADVERTORIAL

SENIORS

Wellnews

Stating the facts

Lipid-regulating statins, used to treat high blood cholesterol and other cardiovascular problems, are among the world's most popular prescribed medications by class, with hundreds of millions of prescriptions filled annually in the U.S. alone.

More than a third of American adults are eligible to take statins and similar drugs based on current medical guidelines — and many obviously do. In raw numbers, it's estimated that more than 78 million Americans take a generic statin.

But here's the thing: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half of eligible Americans do not take statins. Based on these statistics, black people and Mexican-Americans are less likely than white people to take a statin or similar drug.

"Nearly 800,000 people die in the U.S. each year from cardiovascular diseases — that's one in every three deaths — and high cholesterol continues to be a major risk factor," said Carla Mercado, a scientist in CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. "This study reveals opportunities to reduce existing disparities through targeted patient education and cholesterol management programs."

What are indicators for cholesterol-lowering medication?

- People with heart disease, a prior heart attack or some types of stroke or angina
- LDL cholesterol levels of 190 mg/dL or more
- People ages 40 to 75 with diabetes and LDL of 70-189 mg/dL
- People ages 40-75 with LDL of 70-189 mg/dL and estimated 10-year risk of heart disease of 7.5 percent or more.

If you're wondering what to do, ask your doctor.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

There are 34 muscles in the human face and all of them are activated when you kiss someone.

GET ME THAT, STAT!

Diagnoses of early-stage cervical cancer in women under the age of 26 have risen dramatically. For women 21 to 25 diagnosed with cervical cancer, 79 percent were diagnosed in 2011-2012, according to findings published in *JAMA*, compared with 71 percent in 2007-2009. One possible reason, according to researchers: More young people have health insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

MEDICAL HISTORY

This week in 1827, the Boston School Committee voted to require, effective March 1, 1828, that public school students show that they had been vaccinated against smallpox prior to school entrance. Certificates for free vaccinations were offered. The state of Massachusetts passed the first school vaccination law in 1855, followed by New York in 1862 and then Connecticut in 1872.

MEDICAL MYTHS

All parents fear "the sugar high," the nightmare notion of children run amok after consuming too many sweets. In fact, it's all in their heads.

Numerous studies have shown that sugar has no significant behavioral effect upon unruly kids. In fact, it might be quite the opposite: One study found that kids with high blood sugar levels were calmer than kids with lower.

Researchers suggest the sugar-chaos connection may be more an artifact of children being given sugary treats at times when they're likelier to be extra enthusiastic, such as a birthday party or a holiday.

– Scott LaFee/Creators Syndicate

CALENDAR

HEALTH & WELLNESS

TAI CHI CLASSES
Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning Jan. 4 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., White Rock United Methodist Church, 1450 Oldgate Ln., Dallas. Classes will also be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, beginning Jan. 5 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and 7 to 8 p.m., and Saturdays from 9:30 to 11 a.m., Central Congregational Church, 5600 Royal Ln., Dallas. Contact the Taoist Tai Chi Society at 214-762-1661 or tx@taoist.org for more information.

CHAIR YOGA
Wednesdays from 1:30 to 2:15 p.m., Wylie Senior Recreation Center, 800 Thomas St., Wylie. Step-by-step instruction combines low-impact cardio with resistance training and stretching. Free. Call 972-442-8119 for more information.

CASA DE VIDA CAREGIVER'S DAY OFF
Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., NorthPark Presbyterian Church, 9555 N. Central Expressway, Dallas. Individuals caring for loved ones with early onset Alzheimer's or related dementia get a respite while their loved one participates in a variety of art, exercise and craft activities. Participants must be pre-registered. Contact Ann Anderson at 972-783-8780 or Kambiz Afkhami at 972-680-2090 for more information and admission requirements.

SILVER SNEAKERS FITNESS PROGRAM
M, W, F at 9:15 a.m., Medical City Natatorium, Jewish Community Center fitness center and the Finley Ewing Cardiovascular & Fitness Center. Free with most Medicare policies. Call Jann at 469-644-2230 for more times and locations.

TREASURED TIMES
Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Custer Road United Methodist Church, 6601 Custer Rd., Plano. Respite care is offered to those in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, providing caregivers free time from responsibility. $10. 972-618-3450.

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THE LAW OF GIFTS

You would think that giving a gift would be easy. You would be wrong.

People have fumbled with gift-giving for years. They have tried, unsuccessfully, gifting in the future, characterizing business transactions as gifting to avoid taxes, and taking back completed gifts.

Why is making a gift so darn difficult? Because to be successful, a gift must meet three requirements: intent to make a gift; delivery of the gift; and acceptance of the gift.

Then you add the details. Each element has to be proven by clear and convincing evidence. A gift promised in the future is no gift at all. "Delivery" requires taking a definite action (like signing the deed to a gifted house).

Even delivering a wrapped package isn't a completed gift. The recipient can still refuse the intended gift (oh, really, thanks for the schizophrenic feral cat, but no thanks).

The law of gifts is so intricate that it invokes the usage of Latin. Gifts can be made "inter vivos" (during the donor's lifetime) or "causa mortis." A gift is made "causa mortis" when it is made in contemplation of death from a present illness or anticipated peril (I am going on my first skydive; take my diamond necklace). The circumstances must be such as to show that the donor intended the gift to take effect when made, but if the donor should recover or survive, the property would be restored to him (the skydive was fun; I want my diamond necklace back). A gift causa mortis is the ultimate claw-back, and often this leaves the recipient in an awkward position (you know what is really fun? Skydiving twice).

Even the IRS gets into the gift-giving act. A donor can make an annual gift of $14,000 (this amount occasionally increases) to each recipient, and never has to report it to the IRS. A gift over that amount needs to be reported, but isn't taxable unless the total amount of lifetime gifting exceeds $5.43 million (this increases to $5.45 million in 2016).

Be ye donor or recipient, gifting should not be taken lightly.

Hammerle Finley Law Firm. Give us a call. We can help.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

NEW YEAR'S EVE WATCHING PARTY
Dec. 31 (Th) from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Wylie Senior Recreation Center, 800 Thomas St., Wylie. Ring in the new year with friends, pizza, popcorn and New Year's-themed movies. Free. Call 972-442-8119 for more information.

FRIDAY FELLOWSHIP
Jan. 8 (F) at 11 a.m., Highland Park Presbyterian Church, 3821 University Blvd., Dallas. *Dallas Morning News* columnist Jacquielynn Floyd will be the featured presenter. Free. Lunch ($10) is available but requires an RSVP by Thursday to 214-525-4151.

SENIOR SOCIAL HOUR
Jan. 14 (Th) at 2 p.m., Garland Central Library, 625 Austin St., Garland. Vocal duo Lady and the Tramp will perform songs from the '50s and '60s. Free and open to seniors age 55 and older. Call 972-205-2502 for more information.

BINGO
Mondays at 12:30 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Dallas Elks Lodge, 8550 Lullwater Dr., Dallas. Lunch available Mondays at 11:30 a.m. for $5. Call 214-349-1971 for more information.

BRIDGE
Mondays at 5 p.m., Jason's Deli, 5000 Belt Line Rd., Addison. No partner needed. Call 972-999-3035 for more information.

DANCES & SOCIALS

BILL G BAND
Today at 7 p.m., Plano Senior Center. $5. 972-941-7155.

LEARNING & ENRICHMENT

WOODCARVING CLASS
Dec. 23 (W) from 1 to 3 p.m., Wylie Senior Recreation Center, 800 Thomas St., Wylie. Learn the proper use of tools, easy-to-follow techniques and safety guidelines. Free, supplies provided. Call 972-442-8119 for more information.

EMAIL ITEMS TO SENIORS@DALLASNEWS.COM

Your input needed

Have the lights gone out at SSA?

YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY

TOM MARGENAU
thomas.margenau@comcast.net

I have a friend who, like me, is a retired Social Security Administration employee. But we are different in that I retired more than 10 years ago, whereas he just walked out the office door for the last time earlier this year. We like to commiserate about old times and share war stories about our years in the public service trenches. Like many old codgers, we tend to think of the good old days as, well, the good old days. We both agree that, sadly, the service provided by SSA has been going downhill for a while. My recently retired friend put it to me this way. He said, "Since you retired, Tom, the lights have gone out at SSA."

I've written about this topic before. I pointed out that I get frequent emails from readers who complain about overflowing waiting rooms, generally unpleasant surroundings and overall poor service following a visit to the Social Security office. I get many more emails complaining about the service provided at SSA's 800 number. I hear horror stories every day from people who say they waited on hold for an extremely long time, only to finally be connected with someone who was unable to help them with their Social Security problem.

But then today, I got an email from a reader in Texas who had good things to say about her interaction with SSA. Here, in part, is what she wrote.

"We waited in line outside our local Social Security office. Promptly at 9 a.m., the security guard opened the door and politely held it for everyone. Each person was greeted by an SSA employee who checked him or her in using a machine. We were asked briefly about our business and then given a number for our visit. Numbers were displayed so you would know where you were in line. The most surprising part was how quickly each person was served. People seeking new Social Security cards were handled at a separate window very quickly. Our number was called and we were escorted to a spacious cubicle in the back room where the agent understood our issue immediately. He asked us to sign a form. He entered the information in the computer and we were out of there in a half-hour with a resolution much to our satisfaction."

Even though I was pleased to get that report of a good service experience with SSA, I