BRUSHED WITH SUCCESS

Photo by James Frey |

Aster Jonker, 2, gets some big-time toothbrush instruction from Natasha Burian, a registered dental hygienist with Alberta Health Services. The little girl is learning her chops as part of a provincial Oral Health Action Plan, aimed at promoting dental health in high-risk populations. And the best thing for eligible parents? The plan – which encompasses assessment, education and fluoride varnish and sealants – is free.

ONCOLOGY DUO JOINS TEAM

It’s good news for cancer patients in southern Alberta as two oncologists have signed on with Lethbridge’s Jack Ady Cancer Centre. That means expanded treatment in their area … and a lot less travel time.

ASSESSMENTS SHOULD NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF ...
DENTAL VISITS

— Dental hygienist Natasha Burian

SOMETHING TO DREAM ABOUT

Never shut your eyes to the value of a good night’s sleep. Not enough rest can lead to a list of ailments, including memory loss, depression, reduced immune function and low libido. We’ll tell you how to change your sleep habits.
Welcome to the inaugural issue of Zone News, a new, monthly Alberta Health Services (AHS) publication that aims to inform Albertans about the work being done to improve the delivery of health care in their communities. Transparency is one of our organization’s seven core values and this publication is just one way we wish to shed light on what we’re doing and what we’re planning to do in order to best meet your health care needs, now and in the future.

One of the things we did last year to improve our health system was to embrace zone-based, local decision-making. Right here in southern Alberta, front-line physicians and other clinical leaders have joint planning and decision-making authority, meaning faster decision-making closer to where care is provided.

Our dedicated and hard-working teams of staff, physicians and volunteers provide high-quality care and services guided by our AHS values of respect, accountability, transparency, engagement, learning, safety and performance.

We hope that patients, families and loved ones are already benefiting from zone-based, local decision-making in a real, tangible way.

We invite you to read Zone News every month to learn about programs, services and technologies that are improving the health and quality of life of people living in southern Alberta.

We hope you find the information in every issue interesting but, moreso, we hope the information will guide you to the programs and services that help you, your family and your community to be as active and healthy as possible.

Dr. Vanessa Maclean, South Zone Medical Director, and Sean Chilton, Senior Vice-President.

GOING THE DISTANCE

For Leona Ferguson, rural Alberta’s Director of Health Services, small-town living doesn’t mean a lack of excellent patient care

Story by Stephanie Jo | Photo by Janine Sakatch

Small communities can have big health care concerns, says Leona Ferguson. And dealing with those issues is her No. 1 goal.

“I have an opportunity to work closely with communities and I can find out what they need and how our services can match those needs,” says Ferguson, Director of Health Services in rural Alberta.

Ferguson recognizes the challenges patients face living in rural communities, especially when they aren’t able to travel for specialty care.

“There are limitations – such as long distances to urban hospitals or the patient’s health – that can make it difficult to travel,” she says.

Ferguson and her team use the local services available, such as Telehealth, a videoconference technology that allows doctors and patients province-wide to meet ‘virtually’ face-to-face. “We’ve been using Telehealth quite a bit. Our patients don’t need to leave the community and they can speak with specialists directly,” says Ferguson. “The communication is great and it’s wonderful to see our technological services are being used to benefit the patients.”

Ferguson believes living in rural communities doesn’t mean a lack of excellent patient care. “I love working with communities. I know more people and patients because the communities are smaller,” says Ferguson. “And the staff and physicians know the people coming into the facilities. The most important thing, from a health aspect, is we can hear how things are going.”

Ferguson recognizes the importance of feedback. She uses Alberta Health Services’ Community Needs Assessment to seek a better level of communication between health care workers and members of the community.

“It allows us to understand the challenges from both sides and to more effectively take action. “It’s not always good feedback, but it’s something that we need to hear and address,” says Ferguson. “Positive feedback from the community means we’re on the right track.”

At 62, Ferguson finds it difficult to think about retiring. “I can’t think of anything better than continuing to work with members of the community, staff and physicians to provide services for patients and make a difference.”

Leona Ferguson, above, says feedback is key to meeting health care challenges in rural Alberta.

HERE’S HOW YOU CAN REACH US

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Zone News – South Zone is published monthly by Alberta Health Services to inform Albertans of the programs and services available to them, and of the work being done to improve the health care system in their communities.

The paper used by Zone News is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, an international, non-profit organization that promotes sustainable, responsibly managed forests.

www.albertahealthservices.ca  Suffer from migraines? Avoid triggers, including stress, alcohol, foods such as chocolate, bright lights and strong odours.
The hiring of two medical oncologists at the Jack Ady Cancer Centre in Lethbridge means local Albertans dealing with cancer can get expanded treatment and services where they live.

“To have two doctors there means we can spell each other off; we can discuss cases with each other,” says Dr. Malcolm Brigden, who has been practising in Sault Ste. Marie in northern Ontario.

“It just makes it so much more exciting and a more fulfilling practice.”

Brigden will begin treating southern Alberta cancer patients this month as the Medical Director and staff medical oncologist at the Jack Ady Cancer Centre.

Dr. Faraj El-Gehani, who’s completing his specialty training at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, will join Brigden as a staff medical oncologist.

Pincher Creek resident Bette Jean Scott knows the benefits of being able to receive cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy closer to home.

“I’ve been told by a lot of people that I’ve had a real positive state of mind about having cancer, but it would have been way tougher if I had to go up to Calgary for treatment,” says Scott.

Medical oncologists specialize in diagnosing and treating cancer through the use of chemotherapy and other therapies. They also work with health experts at the cancer centre in managing all aspects of a patient’s cancer care.

Dr. Paul Grundy, Senior Vice-President of Alberta Health Services (AHS) Cancer Care, says recruiting medical oncologists is a challenge across the country, with only about 15 Canadian graduates each year.

“The fact we were able to recruit an accomplished doctor from out of province and retain an individual in whom we have invested many years of training in Alberta is a testament to the collaborative efforts of AHS Cancer Care and the South Zone medical leadership,” says Grundy. “We’re developing a cancer program in the Lethbridge area that’s able to attract specialists in wide demand.”

The Jack Ady Cancer Centre has been without a permanent medical oncologist since March, when Dr. David Holland retired after 23 years of practice. In the interim, impact on cancer patients in Lethbridge and the surrounding area was mitigated by medical oncologists from Edmonton and Calgary who visit Lethbridge every week to help care for patients.

“We appreciate Dr. Holland’s contribution to cancer care and internal medicine in Alberta,” says Dr. Charles Butts, Medical Director of Community Oncology. “When he informed us of his retirement plans, we began actively recruiting.”

The two new cancer specialists will work with radiation oncologists on-site, providing an expanded slate of services, including combined chemo-radiation therapy for certain cancers.

The bottom line is a positive one for cancer patients in southern Alberta.

“Our patients receive the very best care available,” says Grundy. “And our physicians have a world-class clinical and research environment in which to achieve their potential.”

Aim to eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day (1 tsp. salt), including that in prepared foods and the salt added at the table.
SMILE, NOW OPEN WIDE!

Alberta Health Services sinks teeth into new Oral Health Action Plan for young children. Better yet, it costs eligible parents nothing

Story by Sherri Gallant | Photo by James Frey

Alberta Health Services has given parents of young children something to smile about. It has recently introduced a new provincewide plan targeting a child’s early years. Cathy Woolfrey, Manager of the Population Health Promotion Program in South Zone, is eager to let eligible parents know what’s available for their children to improve oral health – and at no cost.

“The provincial Oral Health Action Plan focuses on assessment, education, as well as fluoride varnish and sealants for at-risk populations,” says Woolfrey. “We’re increasing the availability of the program and are working to promote our programs with families.”

The plan consists of both a preschool and school-based component.

The school-based component of the Oral Health Action Plan was implemented in 2011. It provides fluoride varnish and dental sealants for children in kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 at select schools. Dental professionals screen children for signs of dental disease and assess the need for dental varnish and sealants.

The preschool program, which began this spring, offers fluoride varnish to children aged 12-35 months who are identified as being at a high risk for tooth decay based on socio-economic criteria. Families new to Canada, single-parent families, lower-income families, families who receive subsidies and families with a history of tooth decay would qualify.

Once enrolled in the preschool program, eligible children will be offered free fluoride varnish treatments applied twice annually. Dental professionals will also conduct a visual dental exam of the child’s teeth to identify concerns. Fluoride varnish is a simple, safe and effective way to reduce tooth decay by as much as 25 per cent. Although it is safe, fluoride varnish isn’t recommended for everyone. Children with allergies to the resin found in bandages or tape, or children who have been hospitalized for asthma, should not receive fluoride varnish.

“These dental assessments and fluoride varnish treatments should not take the place of regular dental visits,” says dental hygienist Natasha Burian. “A dentist will do a complete oral examination and possibly take X-rays to look for tooth decay.”

The Canadian Dental Association recommends children see a dentist within six months of the showing of their first tooth or by their first birthday.

CALL TO ACTION

 Alberta Health Services’ Oral Health Action Plan has three parts:

1. A preschool fluoride varnish program for children aged 12-35 months who meet eligibility criteria.

2. A school-based fluoride varnish program for children in kindergarten to Grade 2 from select schools.*

3. A school-based dental sealant program for children in Grades 1-2 from selected schools.*

*Consent forms will be sent home from participating schools.

www.albertahealthservices.ca If your job includes lots of sitting, try using the stairs rather than the elevator. It’s good for your heart, muscles and mood.
Daniel and others like him are making huge strides, thanks to the therapies available at Children’s Health and Development Services at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital

Story by Laurie Gagnon

For Daniel Bachmeier, visits to the Children’s Health and Development Services (CHADS) department at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital have been a big part of his short life. Born prematurely Dec. 31, 2005, Daniel weighed in at a mere 1-lb. 9-oz. After spending two-and-a-half months between the neonatal intensive care unit in Medicine Hat and Alberta Children’s Hospital in Calgary, Daniel finally came home with his family. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Daniel has been using CHADS all his life.

Numerous therapy programs – physical, occupational and speech pathology – have helped Daniel function at the highest level possible.

A wide range of therapies for children like Daniel result in fewer movement limitations, better posture, improved muscle development, and greater ability to feed and dress themselves.

“As a child’s self confidence increases, so does a child’s sense of independence,” says CHADS manager Tricia Miller.

“For some children, being able to stand up and look others in the eye is an accomplishment all on its own. Most of us take that for granted.”

Last year, Daniel underwent major surgery to help lengthen his muscles and tendons. He spent three weeks in a lower body cast.

Soon after, he continued his therapy using the new standing frame equipment, funded by the All Nations Optimist Club through Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation.

Donations to Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation played a large part in the programs that enrich the lives of children like Daniel.

Thanks in part to these donations, CHADS is able to provide a variety of equipment to its clients. Individual treatment programs vary widely because everyone’s needs are different. CHADS allows clients to experiment with various types of equipment before purchasing their own.

The standing frame helps with weight-bearing, stretching, bone density and mobility. It greatly improves Daniel’s muscle strength and recovery time.

When asked about how her family would function without CHADS, Liz Bachmeier, Daniel’s mother, responds, “I don’t want to even think about that. I don’t want my mind to go there.”

CHADS loaned the family a standing frame for Daniel until his own could be ordered.

“As long as his video games are on, he will stand in the frame all day,” says Bachmeier.

Therapy is a huge part of Daniel’s daily routine. His physical therapist assistant, Debbie Schultz, visits twice a week at school. Each week, Daniel comes to CHADS at the hospital.

Now, at age six, Daniel can walk with assistance for short periods at a time.

“He has really come a long way, thanks to the therapy programs and services available here,” Bachmeier adds. “We are very grateful.”

Daniel, pictured below
Everyone, from newborns to seniors, needs regular sleep to be healthy. As Apple contributor Deborah Lawson discovers, getting a good night’s sleep is often a matter of following a consistent routine, no matter what your age.

Story by Deborah Lawson | Photo by Ewan Nicholson | Visit applemag.ca for full article

Good sleep is one of the body’s most basic needs. Not enough sleep can lead to memory loss, poor concentration, depression, headache, irritability, stress, high blood pressure, depressed immune function and low libido. Recently, sleep deprivation has been linked to obesity.

“Particularly for children, some data shows that without enough sleep it’s more difficult to regulate appetite,” says Dr. Atul Khullar, Medical Director of the Northern Alberta Sleep Clinic in Edmonton and MedSleep in Calgary.

As Medical Director at Calgary’s Centre for Sleep and Human Performance, Dr. Charles Samuels often works with people in high-performance careers, such as police officers, military personnel and Olympic athletes.

“Few people think of sleep in terms of recovery,” says Samuels. “Yet sleep is a crucial component of that process. When we neglect recovery, we affect our health and performance negatively.”

In 2002, an estimated 3.3 million Canadians reported having insomnia. The Canadian Sleep Society says sleep problems affect 10-35 per cent of the population.

So what can you do to make sure you and your family get the best possible night’s sleep? Khullar says three things regulate our sleep: behaviour, light and melatonin levels.

One often-overlooked contributor to sleep deprivation is immersion in technology. We are texting, tweeting, browsing, playing and surfing our way into chronic fatigue.

Samuels says, “Technology is the No. 1 barrier to getting enough sleep.” His solution? “Unplug yourself! For example, don’t make or take any phone calls after 8 p.m.”

Khullar advises, “We spend a third of our lives sleeping, so it pays to take sleep seriously and make it a priority. Get your sleep assessed if you’re not sleeping well.”

And Dr. Ivan Kropyvnytsky of MedSleep in Calgary, agrees. “I often see people who’ve been struggling with sleep issues for 20 years or longer,” Kropyvnytsky says. “By that time they think they’ve tried everything and may have almost lost hope. I can usually help them within six to eight weeks. But their quality of life for many years would have been better if they’d addressed their sleep problems sooner.

“If you get treatment while you’re still young, it can literally change your life.”

From A To ZZZs

People who’ve been struggling with sleep issues for 20 years or longer may have almost lost hope. If you get treatment while you’re still young, it can literally change your life.

For those having trouble sleeping, look for tips or more information at:

- Health Link Alberta
- Online, visit Myhealth.Alberta.ca, or
- Toll-free: 1.866.408.5465 (LINK)

Visit Myhealth.Alberta.ca, search for the following link: tips for getting more sleep.

Visit albertahealthservices.ca for further information by searching the following:

- Different kinds of sleep
- Factors affecting your sleep
- Sleep disorders
- Suggestions for better sleep

Services in the South Zone area are not available for everyone. Please call for further information:

- Lethbridge Sleep Clinic at 403.388.6034. The Lethbridge Sleep Clinic is a testing facility providing sleep screening, initial consults, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of sleep disorders. A referral from a physician is required.

Quick Tips:

- Infants: at night, reduced light and noise levels and the use of gentle movements and a quiet voice will help signal it’s time for sleep.
- Toddlers: a calm, consistent reminder that “it’s bedtime” works best to teach your toddler that bedtime means staying in bed.
- School-age children: a quiet, dark, comfortable sleep environment and a sleep-and-wake schedule that doesn’t vary by more than 30 minutes, even on weekends.
- Adolescents: they’ll do best if they avoid falling asleep in front of a TV, turn out the lights about the same time each night, and open the curtains as they get up.
- Adults: have only two cups of coffee a day, limit alcohol consumption, stop smoking, examine and reduce the stress in your life and adopt routine sleep times.
- Seniors: to stay well-rested, maintain that all-important routine, get vitamin D from natural sunlight and control napping so it won’t interfere with night-time sleep.

Checklist Makes the Grade

Getting your kids all geared up for a successful school year?

- Pencils, books and a shiny new backpack are surely on the list; however, no supply is more important than your child’s health. We’re making it easy with a one-page cheat-sheet for A+ health!

Visit http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2542.asp to download your family’s essential back-to-school health checklist today.
PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST PAYS OFF

After volunteering at Lethbridge’s Chinook Regional Hospital and in poorer areas around the world, Munima Alam is grateful to win the Health Care Professionals of Tomorrow Scholarship

Story by Stephanie Jo | Photo by Sherri Gallant

For scholarship winner Munima Alam, a rewarding career can also be an awarding one.

Alam is the 2012 recipient of the Health Care Professionals of Tomorrow Scholarship for her volunteer work at the Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH) in Lethbridge and her interest in a health care career.

“I was surprised and excited when I received the phone call,” says Alam. “There are so many eligible and deserving volunteers, that I was not expecting it.”

“The funding will be very helpful with my studies in the pharmacy program at the University of Alberta this fall. Scholarships like this are just one way to help students achieve their dreams, while drawing attention to the wonderful volunteer opportunities at the CRH.”

Judi Reed, Manager of Volunteer Resources for South Zone, concurs.

“This year’s winner is a remarkable young woman. The $2,000 scholarship is provided by the Friends of Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge and Munima has volunteered over 500 hours of service at our facility.”

That drive to give back to the community has global roots for Alam, who also volunteered with the Flying Doctors of Canada (FDOC).

“In 2009, I went to Nicaragua and, in 2010, I went to El Salvador with the FDOC, each for a week and a half with a team of four to eight other volunteers from my university,” says Alam, 24. “They were eye-opening experiences because I was able to shadow a physician, dentist and pharmacist.”

“I assisted with the diagnosis or treatment of patients. Everyone had a different specialty and the opportunity to shadow these professionals gave me a unique perspective,” she says.

“Whatever career I have, I would like to continue helping in rural or less fortunate areas.”

“It’s one of my goals.”

Alam relates her motivation back to her personal roots, discussing how health care has had an effect on her family, especially when a family member in Bangladesh suffered from cancer.

“Constantly hearing that my relatives don’t have access to the type of health care I have here is difficult,” says Alam.

“To me, helplessness is one of the worst feelings in the world. I’m very fortunate and I want to give back; that’s why I want to go into health care.”

Alam started volunteering at CRH in 2004, specializing in pediatrics.

“I went into pediatrics because, although I like children, I was pretty shy and I wanted to become more comfortable with people,” says Alam. “There are different levels of communication that are required with children, parents and staff. Volunteering here has helped develop my interpersonal skills.”

Alam hasn’t decided on a career specialty.

“I don’t want to set myself into a specific niche yet,” says Alam. “I like working with people on all levels.”

SCHOLARSHIPS LIKE THIS ... HELP STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

• HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (HAC) MEETINGS

The Health Advisory Councils’ purpose is to enhance and develop partnerships between the province’s communities and Alberta Health Services (AHS). Public participation is essential to improving the quality and accountability of health services.

Public feedback and input will help AHS meet its mission of providing a patient-focused, quality and accountable health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. For information, call Suzanne Rauda at 403.388.6346.

• SEPT. 18: the Oldman River HAC meeting takes place at 5 p.m. at Chinook Regional Hospital, County Hall, 960 19 St. S., Lethbridge.

• SEPT. 24: the Palliser Triangle HAC meeting takes place at 11:30 a.m. at the Bassano Community Hall, 610 2 Ave., Bassano.

• SEPT. 22: CLARESHOLM & DISTRICT HEALTH FOUNDATION 6TH ANNUAL CONCERT SERIES GALA

Wine and cheese reception followed by a four-course meal. Proceeds help upgrade the heart monitoring system at Claresholm General Hospital. Takes place at the Claresholm Community Centre, 59 Ave. and 8 St. W., Claresholm, at 5:30 p.m. Tickets $75; call 403.625.3386. For details, call Tara Bishoff at 403.682.3739.

• SEPT. 23: WORD ON THE STREET

Word On The Street is an annual one-day national family festival celebrating literacy, storytelling and the written arts. It is a street festival with live exhibits, live music and spoken word performances, author readings and panels, children’s programming and hands-on activities. It takes place near the Main Library in Lethbridge, 810 5 Ave. S., from 11 a.m.-8 p.m.

• WEEKLY: BETTER CHOICES, BETTER HEALTH

Workshops designed to help Albertans living with ongoing health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, asthma, high blood pressure, chronic pain and obesity. Workshops are free.

• In Medicine Hat, Better Choices, Better Health sessions run Sept. 17-Oct. 30 at the River Heights Professional Centre, 88 Valleyview Dr. S.W. Mondays from 8:30 p.m.

• In Brooks, sessions run Sept. 18-Oct. 23 at the Brooks Health Centre, 440 3 St. E., Brooks, Tuesdays from 1-3 p.m.

To avoid overeating at restaurants, split a meal with someone else or take home a “doggy bag” to enjoy later.

www.albertahealthservices.ca
HOME COOKIN’ ON THE MENU

Home-grown goodness was all in good taste for residents and staff of the Brooks Health Centre, who took to shucking fresh corn for dinner on Aug. 8. It was part of Closer to Home, a new initiative by Alberta Health Services (AHS) responding to resident requests for more locally produced food and produce and favourite local menu choices at long-term care facilities.

At Brooks, Jensen’s Taber corn was brought in by Nutrition and Food Services and, as part of the recreation therapy program, residents and staff got to spend time outside enjoying the sunshine as they shucked corn and shared stories. Later, the corn was steamed and served for dinner.

The result: A delicious freshly prepared Alberta-grown addition to supper that was enjoyed by all.

Residents Bob Baxter, left, and Gerald Vincent flank recreation therapist assistant Amy Sanders at a Brooks Health Centre corn feed.