Dr. Walter Lawrence Lauds "Human Connection" to Future Docs

Click [here](#) to read Dr. Walter Lawrence's column to future medical school students in this week's issue of "Discover Richmond" in the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

In "A seasoned doc shares a message," the TD notes the surgeon's participation in RAM for more than 50 years: "At age 90, Dr. Walter Lawrence Jr. of Richmond - who entered med school during World War II - is still seeing patients. Through our friends at the Richmond Academy of Medicine, we asked him to write a letter to aspiring doctors today."

Dr. Lawrence is professor of surgery emeritus and director emeritus of the Massey Cancer Center at the VCU School of Medicine. He also

*Making the human connection! (photo by Mary Beatty-Brooks/McGuire VA Medical Center)*
treats fellow veterans at the **McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center**.

"What is it about treating other human beings that's so fulfilling? It starts with that aspect of medicine that seems as powerful now as when I was a medical student: the patient," he writes.

"Many call this the doctor-patient relationship, but I like to think of it as the human connection." Dr. Lawrence served for many years on the **VCU School of Medicine** Admissions Committee and said that was always a reminder that "even though medicine has greatly progressed over the years, we still need compassionate physicians, with a talent for science, who will both love and seek the opportunity to serve others in need."

Dr. Lawrence's column is also posted on RAM's website, so click [here](#) for an easily printable version!

---

**Access Now in TD's 20 Area "Vital Signs"**

Along with **Dr. Walter Lawrence's** advice to med students (above) in Monday's Times-Dispatch, we were also pleased to see much-deserved recognition for the good work done by RAM members who participate in the Academy's **Access Now** program. Click [here](#) to read all about it!

**Access Now** was listed as only one of 20 organizations that made the TD's "Vital Signs" of "a vibrant, varied health and medical presence" in the Richmond region.

The Academy began the program in 2008 to work with the area's safety net clinics and currently has more than 850 physicians and other healthcare providers in 41 specialties who have provided more than $32 million in FREE specialty care since its inception.

Thanks to all of Access Now's committed volunteers, clinic partners, funders, and staff. Click [here](#) to read our 2015 Annual Report!

---

**Looking for a Fun Family Night?**

Look no further! Please join your fellow Academy members at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on Wednesday, **July 13th** for RAM's Annual Family Night. We'll have live music, waterplay in the Children's
Garden, face painting, balloon animals and a family-friendly dinner! Drop by from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. for a night of family fun!

CLICK HERE to register, call Lara at 804-622-8137 or email her at lknowles@ramdocs.org

Be sure to let Lara know the number of adults and children attending and the ages of those children.

**We hope to see you there!**

---

Is the Way to a Doc's Rx Pad Really through His/Her Stomach?

A new study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* finds that "doctors who ate a single meal on a drug company's tab had a higher likelihood of writing a prescription for the name-brand drug that is being promoted instead of equivalent drugs that were cheaper," reports The Washington Post. "And the more meals - or the more expensive the meals - the greater the rate of prescribing the pitched drug."

According to the Post, "researchers at the University of California at San Francisco examined the practices of nearly 280,000 doctors for
Medicare patients." Using a federal database that includes meals, travel, speaking fees and other financial sweeteners, they "looked narrowly at doctors who receive free meals promoting one of four commonly prescribed drugs," such as a brand-name statin, Crestor, used to lower cholesterol.

All it took was a meal with an average cost of $20 to influence docs to prescribe costlier brands, according to the study. But the industry association, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, criticized the study, saying it "cherry-picks physician prescribing data for a subset of medicines to advance a false narrative." The group also noted that drug-makers often interact with doctors to share drug safety and efficacy information.

One Pfizer rep told the Post that it's worth noting that physicians, teaching hospitals and drug companies often work together on research and share up-to-date information about the medicines to benefit patients. And while the study showed the increased prescriptions after more meals, it could not definitively prove the food/prescribing thesis.

Click here for another report on the study from The Wall Street Journal - but don't let it give you heartburn!

Sen. Tim Kaine on Hillary's Short List for Veep

While predicting vice presidential nominees is about as easy picking the next Super Bowl champ, this Chicago Tribune item caught our eye since it mentioned an oft-repeated prediction: Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine is high on the list of potential running mates of Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee.

Her "search for a running mate is moving into a more intense phase," the Trib reports, "as aides contact a pared-down pool of candidates to ask for reams of personal information and set up interviews" with Clinton's vetting team.

The reported short list also includes Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Julian Castro of Texas, the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

No word yet on the Veep short-list for GOP's presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump. Health care will continue to be a campaign issue, and today House Republicans offered yet another plan to replace Obamacare, one based on tax-credits to allow people to buy insurance from private insurers. Click here to read more.
Meanwhile, according to the Trib, "Kaine, a former Virginia governor who previously headed the Democratic National Committee is well-liked within the party and is more moderate than Warren. While he may not excite liberals, he's seen as a running mate who could appeal to independent and swing voters in his home state and elsewhere."

Kaine was also thoroughly vetted by the Obama campaign in 2008 as a potential V.P. running mate, but then-Sen. Joe Biden was picked instead.

For more coverage of the Kaine-for-Veep story, click here!

Lesson after Orlando

Up to 1 in 5 people may be dying unnecessarily from car crashes, gunshots or other injuries, "a stark conclusion from government advisers who say where you live shouldn't determine if you survive," reports The Washington Post. "The findings take on new urgency amid the increasing threat of mass casualties like the massacre in Orlando."

The Orlando massacre happened just blocks from a major trauma care hospital, "an accident of geography that undoubtedly saved lives," the Post reports. But the recent study "found that swaths of the country don't have fast access to top care, and it urges establishing a national system that puts the military's battlefield expertise to work at home."

The ultimate goal: Zero preventable deaths after injury, and minimizing disability among survivors, said the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report. Click here to read it!

There's no single organization in charge of trauma care in the U.S., but the study's authors said local and state improvements could begin immediately. "The meter is running on these preventable deaths," said Dr. Donald Berwick of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, who chaired the NAS committee.

Trauma is the leading cause of death for Americans 45 and younger, killing nearly 148,000 people in 2014 alone, costing an estimated $670 billion in medical expenses and lost productivity.

The biggest opportunity to save lives occurs well before reaching a doctor, with about half of deaths occurring at the scene of the injury or en route to the hospital. Here's an article about advances in stopping bleeding from traumatic injuries.
Last week, the AMA voted overwhelmingly at its annual meeting in Chicago to end two years of debate over its stand on gun violence research and called on Congress to lift a 20-year ban on federal support, reports Modern Healthcare.

AMA delegates approved a resolution calling for the nation's largest medical society to declare gun violence a public health issue and to employ a "public health response" to address the problem.

Supporters said that following that approach to gun violence requires an end to what amounts to a de facto ban on gun-related research that dates back to a 1996 spending bill passed by Congress that effectively ties the hands of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We need to be realistic about those that are obstructing science and public health in regard to the crisis," said Dr. Mike Miller, an AMA delegate from Wisconsin. "We are the shame of the world, other nations look at us and go 'what is wrong with America' - let AMA be part of turning the tide to make something right."

AMA President Steven Stack, an emergency medicine specialist, said in a statement that "an epidemiological analysis of gun violence is vital so physicians and other health providers, law enforcement and society at large may be able to prevent injury, death and other harms to society resulting from firearms."

AMA Chief Knocks "Digital Snake Oil"

Click here to read a recent address to AMA's House of Delegates by AMA CEO and Executive VP James L. Madara, MD, in which he used the term "digital snake oil" to start a critical conversation about emerging technologies in medicine.

"The premise of Dr. Madara's remarks is that innovations in
medicine must be validated, evidence-based, actionable and connected," AMA said. "For new technologies to reach their potential, they must exhibit these primary features in order to bring patients and physicians closer together for the common purpose of improving health outcomes."

Click [here](#) for a Q&A with Dr. Madara where he discusses the immediate response to his remarks, which he says "has fallen into two general camps:" The first is those who are generally OK with the pace of development of new technologies, digital tools and apps; the second camp is more skeptical and feels "we are moving toward a mess where the useful tools are not clearly differentiated from the toys. We had better get this right if we really believe in a digital health future. But there is too much fantasy now..." Click [here](#) to read more!

And click [here](#) on more from the AMA's annual meeting on related issues, from EHRs to MOC. And [here](#) for a look at a telemedicine kiosk.

---

**Birth Control Apps Raise Concerns**

"A quiet shift is taking place in how women obtain birth control," reports The New York Times. "A growing assortment of new apps and websites now make it possible to get prescription contraceptives without going to the doctor."

At least six digital ventures - by both private companies and nonprofits, including Planned Parenthood - "now provide prescriptions written by clinicians after women answer questions about their health online or by video. All prescribe birth control pills, and some prescribe patches, rings and morning-after pills. Some ship contraceptives directly to women's doors."

Some accept insurance, including Medicaid, and some charge modest fees. All this has happened "beneath the political radar" and through word of mouth, "with little of the furor that has come to be expected in issues involving reproductive health."

With nearly 40 percent of all pregnancies in the U.S. unintended, "birth control is a critical public health issue."
Dr. Hazel: Virginia Faces Opioid Epidemic

"Virginia is facing a health epidemic," writes Dr. Bill Hazel, Virginia's secretary of health & human resources, in the Times-Dispatch. "Last year we lost more than a thousand Virginians to opioid or heroin overdoses. More Virginians now die from drug overdoses than from car accidents."

Click here to read more about some of the new laws that take effect July 1, including the Prescription Monitoring Program and expansion of the state's Medicaid program. "We will be fighting this epidemic for a long time to come, and we need to fight it together," Dr. Hazel writes.

Leading Cancer Docs Boost Use of HPV Vaccine

The nation's leading cancer doctors are pushing pediatricians and other providers to help increase use of the HPV vaccine, "which studies show could help avert tens of thousands of cancer cases during young Americans' lives," reports The Washington Post.

"The oncologists' goal is to rebrand the vaccine to focus on cancer prevention. They are determined to dismantle what researchers say is the No. 1 obstacle to wider inoculation: pediatricians and family doctors who aren't strongly recommending the vaccine."

Studies show that a "forceful recommendation from a physician" makes all the difference in whether children get the vaccine that's recommended for ages 11 and 12.

Meanwhile, the American Academy of Pediatrics is calling for more government action to prevent lead poisoning such as what occurred when thousands of kids drank contaminated water in Flint, Mich. Click here to read more in USA Today and here for the journal
Antitrust Regulators Concerned about Anthem-Cigna Merger

Federal antitrust regulators have privately expressed concern about the merger of Virginia's largest health insurer - **Anthem Inc.** - in a $48 billion proposed acquisition of **Cigna Corp.**, reports The Wall Street Journal.

Company officials met recently with Justice Department staffers, and left the federal overseers "skeptical that the health insurers can offer concessions that would fully preserve competition in the industry," the Journal reports.

Both companies expect to get a decision from the feds by mid-July. Meanwhile, Cigna has reached an agreement in a $59 million lawsuit it brought against Richmond-based **Health Diagnostic Laboratory** over alleged overpayments for HDL's blood tests.

"Too Sick to Transplant"

A recent study of the "delisting" of patients at 102 liver transplant centers around the country suggests that - in an effort to keep good performance ratings from the federal government - some transplant centers have been labeling some patients "too sick to transplant" and dropping from the waitlist some who may have been viable candidates, reports Kaiser Health News.

"The study authors speculate that the new [Medicare] standards made transplant centers more averse to risk and encouraged them to drop sicker patients who might affect their patient survival rates."

The study, published online in the **Journal of the American College of Surgeons** in April, also found that "despite removing sick patients from the waiting list, one-year survival rates for patients who received transplants didn't improve."

Governor Taps Dr. Koziol for Virginia Board of Medicine

 Congrats to RAM member **Dr. Isaac "Ike" Koziol** for his recent appointment to the state Board of Medicine by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

Dr. Koziol is a retired urologist who volunteers at **Fan Free Clinic** and **Bon Secours' Care-A-Van**, among his many
For Docs in Training, a Dose of Health Policy Can Help the Medicine Go Down

We treasure RAM's medical students, residents and interns who get involved early in organized medicine! Click here to learn more about the special membership opportunities the Academy offers. Stay tuned for more info about upcoming summer socials for students, residents, interns and fellows. Learn to dig organized medicine in our Digital Age -- and how RAM helps you link in with our medical community!

And click here to read how RAM's future leaders at the VCU School of Medicine are outpacing their peers around the country where "many are taught next to nothing about the workings of the health care system."

Coming Clean on Hands

A new study explores how "the Hawthorne Effect" - where people change behaviors when they know they're being watched - applies even to physicians and nurses when it comes to good hand hygiene, reports ABC News.

The study "found that hand hygiene compliance... differed
dramatically when health professionals knew they were being evaluated, versus when they did not."

We Love to Hear from You!

We draw from a wide range of print, online and medical journals to bring you information we hope is relevant to your practice of medicine.

But as a former journalist and nonfiction author, I recognize that mistakes do happen. So please contact me if you have any concerns, complaints, or ideas/articles you'd like to share by clicking here or calling 622-8136.

Click here if you'd like to see some of my other writing. THANK YOU for being part of the Academy and its continuing conversation about the best practice of medicine.

And please check out some back issues!

Chip Jones
RAM Communications & Marketing Director

Seeking inspiration at the Temple of Confucius in Beijing