Announcements/What's New

The Hollister Photo Contest Reaches Out To You

Smile for the camera and win $250 for your IOAA chapter! This year's photo contest theme is “Reaching Out,” and Hollister wants to see just how you do it. Submit a photo of you, a colleague or your support group in action—hamming it up, vacationing, playing with your grandchildren—anything that shows you reaching out and living life to the hilt. We'll choose 20 winning photos from around the globe and award each of the photographers' IOAA chapters with $250! Submit photos to Diane Dreis at wod2009pc@hollister.com or Hollister Incorporated, 2000 Hollister Drive, Libertyville, IL 60048. The deadline is August 1, so say cheese! Questions? Call Diane at 1.847.932.3573.
This is an exciting time to be alive, thanks to the speed of new technology.

I used to think, “Who has time in their day to read blogs, let alone write them?” And now I’m one of those people! I have Google Alerts set on my computer to receive all articles that pop up concerning colostomy. You can set it for anything you want to know more about, such as your latest heart throbs (Tom Cruise and Richard Gere are mine). Some blogs are very inspiring, especially when the writer appears to be honest about his or her struggles with physical challenges.

I was a little shocked when I viewed a video of a guy changing his ostomy pouch, but I’m sure it was enlightening for many. Do a Google search for “colostomy” and most things that pop up are slanderous. It is an off-used reference when someone deeply wants to insult another by calling him a colostomy bag. Often these writers will refer to a boring event as comparable to caring for an ostomy. Come on people; let’s come up with something more original!

I have to admit all this ignorance irks me. Many of these writers lump old age and an ostomy together as well and this shows their complete lack of knowledge. Many adults with ostomies were also children with ostomies. I was 39 when diagnosed with colorectal cancer, not quite a senior citizen.

I urge my fellow blog and article writers to be more creative when needing to insult someone. Ostomy humor can be effective, but unless you have an ostomy or love someone who has one, you might not really know how to do it well. It can be done…and can have its funny moments. My book I’d Like to Buy A Bowel Please! is filled with true humor about living with an ostomy from 80 different writers. Having an ostomy can be life enriching in so many ways…not to mention prolonging.

As intimidating as all this technology is, it has been lifesaving for people as well. I have heard stories where someone posts a concern about an unusual symptom or strange disease and another person in another part of the country or world writes to him or her. Lo and behold, they compare notes and get a life saving idea! Even our United Ostomy Association of America has set up technology so people with ostomies can exchange information. This electronic reaching out may not be as personal as a face-to-face meeting, but friendships have bloomed, and marriages have been created via cyberspace.

Now Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and a plethora of other hosting sites allow people to exchange information or make business contacts. Some even connect to your phone so you can get instant messages all day long. It’s hard to keep up and must we really? I talked to someone recently whose husband challenged the family to get through a week without using cell phones, TVs, or computers. After all, they were on vacation! He even threw $1000 into the mix and the mom won. The young adults didn’t last more than a day.

So hop on your favorite search engine, heat up the latest hosting site and blog away…we only have this moment and if that makes you happy, go for it. You can read my weekly musings at C3Life.com or watch me do some comedy on my website www.livingandlaughing.com. This is an exciting time to be alive, thanks to the speed of new technology. We’ve come a long way from the days of the battery–operated calculator! Now they could just invent a microchip implant for my tongue that would make me spit out food once I hit my 1500 calories for the day I’d be in business! Who am I kidding? Instead of jogging, I think I’ll stick with blogging for now.

Brenda Elsagher is a comic, national speaker, and author of If the Battle is Over Why am I Still in Uniform? She also enjoys hearing from you at Brenda@livingandlaughing.com or 952.882.9882.

“Donna Doll at Mount St. Helens on her trip to the Northwest”
Talking Points

A New Year Brings New Beginnings

Updated Medicare fee schedule resolves to boost reimbursement for the ostomy community

The new year has rung in a new president, new resolutions, and a new billing cycle for Medicare. The biggest change for this year is a fee schedule update. There has been a five-year freeze on reimbursement increases for all Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) that was mandated by Congress in an effort to control costs for the Medicare program. 2009 marks the end of that freeze and, therefore, most products in this category will see an increase in reimbursement. If you, however, must pay for any portion out of your pocket, this increase may help. I say it may help because there are many other factors at play like, is your supplier raising his/her price? Hopefully, though, some of this increase will be realized by you as well.

As for the Medicare Policy for Ostomy Supplies, there was only one change that was added last year that does not affect Hollister-manufactured products. Therefore, let’s review a couple of highlights from that policy.

Medicare’s maximums are outlined in the Medical Policy by their billing codes. As a general rule, the published maximums include the following:

- There are some supplies that currently do not have a published maximum in the Medical Policy (extended wear skin barrier products and pouch deodorant, to name a couple). In the event that a maximum quantity is not established, it will be up to the regional Durable Medical Equipment Medicare Administrative Contractor (DME MAC) to determine what is reasonable and necessary for the beneficiaries’ needs.

Of note, if you require both drainable and closed pouches to effectively manage your stoma it is technically up to each regional DME MAC to decide what is reasonable and necessary. The maximum quantity in this situation will be the appropriate amount of pouches that can be derived by what makes sense for your situation.

What does this mean for you? If you currently receive your supplies from a supplier that “accepts assignment” or accepts Medicare’s fee schedule as payment in full, then your supplier will see an increase in higher reimbursement. If you, however, must pay for any portion out of your pocket, this increase may help. I say it may help because there are many other factors at play like, is your supplier raising his/her price? Hopefully, though, some of this increase will be realized by you as well.

The Vanessa Camisole with panty or thong. Available in black or white.
If the Battle is Over Why Am I Still in Uniform? 

Humor as a Survival Tactic to Combat Cancer 

by Brenda Elsagher 

To most people, cancer is not a laughing matter, but comedian and professional speaker Brenda Elsagher uses humor to heat battle scarred bodies and broken spirits in her first book “If the Battle is Over Why Am I Still in Uniform?” 

Though irreverently funny, sometimes shockingly so, this book is no lightweight, rose-colored-glasses romp through recovery. Brenda invites the reader into the trenches with her to experience almost every detail of her battle with cancer of the rectum. 

Brenda’s detailed accounts of her everyday skirmishes, from diagnosis and surgery to recovery, are riddled with no-holds-barred humor. For example, Brenda calls her surgeon “The Rear Admiral” and her stoma “Perry” after St. Peregrine, the patron saint of cancer. 

Brenda ends the book with “Fifty Ways to Help a Cancer Patient,” information about ostomies and colon cancer, a medical glossary, and information resources. This is a great read for patients, families, caregivers and friends. It’s a life-changing story of triumph over not only cancer, but everything that comes along with it. On the other side is Brenda’s lifelong dream of becoming a stand-up comedian, and it’s certainly obvious that she has earned her stripes. 

Note: If you read this book while recovering from ostomy surgery, watch out for your stitches! To order this book and others by Brenda, go to her website at www.livingandlaughing.com.

Ask the Expert 

Connection is the Answer 

Hook up with a panel of expert clinicians on C3Life.com 

The “Ask the Clinician Panel” on the C3Life.com website receives questions concerning ostomy products and maintenance from people with ostomies every day and the questions and responses are posted on the site for all users to view. Below is just a small sample. If you have product-related questions of your own, please register for the site (if you haven’t already) and visit the “Ask the Clinician Panel” section. Please be aware that information provided by C3Life.com is not medical advice and is not intended to substitute for the advice of your personal physician or other healthcare provider. 

Q: Since I have gone back to work, I keep having periods where I just feel tired all the time. Is this normal? 

A: For many, fatigue can be a real problem, even months after the operation. More often than not, people start back to work gradually (perhaps a couple of mornings a week at first) before going back full time. Unfortunately, it’s not always possible to do this in all jobs. It’s a good idea to check the employment rules at any place of work before requesting or receiving either time off work or reduced time. 

Q: The paste stings when I put it on the skin around my stoma. Is this normal? 

A: Pastes generally contain alcohol. If your skin is broken the paste will sting on application, but this usually goes away as the alcohol evaporates. Lower alcohol pastes are available, or you can try using a seal or ring instead of paste to fill in uneven surfaces. Generally, seals and rings are alcohol-free. 

Q: Can a retracted urostomy stoma be corrected? How can I prevent leakage? I use a convex barrier. 

A: The only true way a retracted stoma can be corrected is by having surgery. Leakage may be reduced by using a different type of pouching system or additional products. Adding an ostomy belt or trying a pouch with a thin, transparent dressing as the adhesive instead of a skin barrier may be helpful. A different degree of convexity may also do the trick. I would recommend meeting with an ostomy care RN or physician to get further suggestions.

Announcements/What’s New 

UOAA Conference to Spice Up New Orleans 

Save the dates! You are warmly invited to the second annual UOAA National Conference August 5-6 in the “Big Easy” this year’s theme, “Let the Good Times Roll,” says it all. Educational workshops, ostomy product exhibition, and WCON stoma clinic will keep you informed while parties, an early morning Fun Run, and nights on the town will get you hopping. Opening night festivities include “A Taste of New Orleans” sponsored by Hollister Incorporated and an appearance by veteran race car driver and person with an ostomy, Tim Mitchell. Register online today at www.uoaa.org. See you there with bells on!

Announcements/What’s New 

It’s Time to Get Your Guts in Gear! 

Start training today! The Ride for Crohn’s & Colitis is a three-day, 21-mile cycling event on two coasts that raises funds and awareness for Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis. The Hudson River Valley ride is June 12-14 and the Pacific Northwest ride is October 2-4. You don’t have to ride to make a difference. You can become a crew member, sponsor a rider, or simply make a donation. For more information, go to www.ibdride.org.

If you have any question about ostomies, contact Hollister at 800-325-0702 or visit: www.hollisterinc.com

Hollister reaches out to you! See back cover for details.

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