

## John Muir Health Senior Services

Senior Services offers a wide range of services for John Muir Health seniors including resources, information, assessment services, and educational programs. We help older adults, their families, and those who care for them. Our goal is to help older adults keep their independence and enjoy the best possible quality of life.  
(925) 947-3300

- Berkeley Outpatient Center  
3100 San Pablo Avenue, 4th Floor  
Berkeley
- Brentwood Outpatient Center  
2400 Balfour Road, 2nd Floor  
Brentwood
- Pleasanton Outpatient Center  
5860 Owens Drive, 2nd Floor  
Pleasanton
- Rossmoor Outpatient Center  
1220 Rossmoor Parkway, Suite 100  
Walnut Creek
- Walnut Creek Outpatient Center  
1450 Treat Boulevard, 2nd Floor  
Walnut Creek

Lawren Hicks, MD  
Medical Director, Senior Services



OCTOBER — DECEMBER 2019

# Senior Services News

## What You Should Know About the Opioid Epidemic

The US Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that in the year 2018 we lost more than 68,000 Americans from drug overdose deaths, mostly (more than 47,000 or 68%) from opioids. This is more, in one year, than the total loss of American soldiers during the entire Vietnam War. It is more than our annual loss from traffic fatalities (40,000) and gunshot deaths (less than 15,000) combined. It has contributed to a drop in life expectancy in the United States for the third year in a row, the longest sustained decline since 1915-1918 during World War I and the flu epidemic. In Contra Costa County, according to the Urban Institute and senior County officials, more than 50,000 residents suffer from opioid use disorder, with more than 100 overdose deaths per year resulting. So we are justified in speaking of an “epidemic”.

Opioid deaths started rising in the late 1990’s, corresponding to a public awareness that cancer pain, and also perhaps any pain, was being inadequately treated. State Medical Boards began to encourage doctors to be more cognizant of the need to treat acute pain, chronic pain, and cancer pain more effectively. Pain level began to be referred to as a “vital sign” along with pulse, blood pressure, etc. Primary care physicians became less reluctant to prescribe opiates, Pain Management specialists became much more numerous, pharmaceutical manufacturers started promoting newer opiate preparations to doctors, and the number of prescriptions for opioids began to steadily rise. Meanwhile, access to opioid addiction treatment remained, and remains, woefully inadequate.

Opioids are morphine and morphine-like drugs, including oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Norco, Vicodin), hydromorphone (dilaudid), Oxymorphone (Opana), tramadol (Ultram), methadone, fentanyl, and heroin. Opiates cause death when an overdose suppresses the

respiratory drive center in the brain and the victim stops breathing.

The CDC noted that by 2010, alarm began to spread in the medical community and opioid prescribing by physicians started to level off and then decline. This decline in prescribing has continued to the present, although prescription rates still are three times higher than in 1999. But still the opiate overdose death rate has kept rising. This continued rise in deaths after 2010 was almost totally attributable to a rise in overdoses of non-prescription drugs. First heroin overdose deaths started to rise in 2010, then there was an even sharper rise in fentanyl deaths, beginning in 2013 up to the present

Fentanyl is an opiate that is 100 times more potent than morphine. It can be injected, swallowed, even absorbed through the skin. It is prescribed most commonly in the form of skin patches (Duragesic), but is also sold illegally on the street, often mixed with heroin or other street drugs. Because of its high potency and the lack of familiarity with street drug users, the death rate attributed to fentanyl has skyrocketed.

In response to this crisis, the California Department of Justice has created an online prescription drug database to which prescribing doctors must refer before creating any new controlled substance prescription, and every 4 months thereafter if the prescription continues. Controlled substances include opiates, benzodiazepines (like Valium, Xanax and Ativan) and sleeping pills (like Ambien, Restoril). In addition, naloxone (Narcan, an opiate-reversal agent) has

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# EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There is no charge to attend our health education events unless otherwise noted. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** Register early- class size is limited. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call (925) 941-7900 option 1.

## **Navigating MyChart – Camila Baum, MSW**

**October 18 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

**November 20 | 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Pleasanton Outpatient Center**

**December 10 | 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Berkeley Outpatient Center**

MyChart has replaced MyJohnMuirHealth and is John Muir Health's digital doorway to improve our communications with you. MyChart is an internet website and mobile application that makes it easier and more convenient to manage your healthcare. Together we will explore the components of MyChart. Learn about the advantages of securely managing your health online. Access is for patients and family members.

## **Determining Legal Capacity and Stories from the Trenches – S. Samantha Sepehr, Attorney**

**November 1 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Rossmoor Outpatient Center**

Do you have a loved one who seems to be making bad decisions? Is it their right? Is there anything you can do to help? How does capacity impact an estate plan? These questions and more will be addressed in Ms. Sepehr's talk.

## **Grocery Shopping Rx: Foods to Keep You Healthy and Lean – Kathy Napoli, MA, RD**

**November 7 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Concord Medical Center**

Research suggests that the optimal diet to prevent disease is big on plants and low in harmful fats and refined carbohydrates. Find out how to select the healthiest food for your plate to protect your health, your waistline and even your brain.

## **Impact of Sensory Changes as We Age – Jane Moore, Patient Navigator**

**November 15 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

Learn how age-related changes in smell, taste, touch, hearing, and vision may impact how people receive information and how they relate to those around them.

## **Arthritis in the Later Years – Raul Romea, MD**

**November 22 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

Dr. Romea will discuss common arthritic conditions in the later years—what are the signs and what can be done about them.

## **Taking Care of Your Neck and Back – Lori Sweet, PT, CFT**

**December 5 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Concord Medical Center**

Learn about your anatomy and core muscles that affect your neck and back. Lesson will include movement and stretches that will help improve your strengthen and flexibility.

## **Stay Connected to Combat Loneliness and Social Isolation – Alan Brast, Ph.D., C.C.H.T., CSA**

**December 13 | 9:30 – 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

Many Americans report feeling lonely for long periods of time. Connections with others are important for your health. Dr. Brast will discuss methods to combat loneliness and stay connected.

## **Medicare 2020: What You Need to Know – Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program**

**October 29 | 7 – 8:30 p.m. | 941-7900 opt. 1 | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

Learn a few basics about Medicare and about open enrollment, who needs to take action during open enrollment, changes in Medicare plans and strategies to save money on prescription drugs.

# ONGOING CLASSES

## **AARP Driver Safety Program**

**October 26 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

**November 16 | 1- day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

This Smart Driver classroom course, designed for motorists over age 50, helps drivers refine existing skills and develop safe, defensive driving techniques. Offered in an eight hour or four-and-a-half hour refresher course for those who meet the criteria for renewal. There is a charge for this class. Register online at [johnmuirhealth.com](http://johnmuirhealth.com) or call 941-7900 option 1.

## **Advance Health Care Directives – Suzanne Leib, LMFT**

**October 25 | 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

All adults should have an advance health care directive that clarifies their choices for end-of-life care. Individuals who are informed and have an advance health care directive in place are better prepared to help their families manage medical decisions at the end of life. Senior Services hosts monthly classes about advance health care directives across our communities. Required documents will be provided to attendees during the session.

## **Catch Yourself – Fall Prevention to Maintain Your Independence**

**November 8, 11, 15, 18 | 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Outpatient Center**

This four-session class series raises awareness about falls by practicing techniques in class. Learn how to improve your strength and balance, simplify your environment, and identify fall risks. Classes will cover home safety strategies, exercise, techniques, medication management, and other ways to decrease your risk of falling. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Plan to attend all four classes. If you have taken this class in the past 12 months, and feel you still need fall prevention information, we ask you to follow up with your primary care doctor or call Wellness Services 941-7900 option 1.

## **Memory Screening – What's Your Memory Fitness?**

**Appointments Available in October, November & December**

**Berkeley, Brentwood, Pleasanton, Rossmoor, Walnut Creek Outpatient Centers**

**Call (925) 947-3300 for availability**

Many people notice changes in their memory as they grow older. If you are 65 or older and have a John Muir Health primary care physician, either ask your doctor to refer you to Senior Services or call for a free individual memory screening. This screening is not a diagnostic exam but it can help to determine if your memory is functioning at a level that is typical for a person of your age. Screenings are offered on specific dates at the locations listed. Appointments are 30 minutes.

## **Welcome to Medicare – Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program**

**October 8, November 12, December 10 | 7 – 8:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Pleasanton Outpatient Center**

**October 9, November 13, December 11 | 6 – 8:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Walnut Creek Medical Center**

**October 10, November 14, December 12 | 6:30 – 8 p.m. | 941-7900 option 1 | Berkeley Outpatient Center**

This course is for those new to Medicare, or soon to enroll, who want to understand the many benefits available. Learn about Medicare coverage, the prescription drug benefit, and supplemental plan options. HICAP does not sell or endorse insurance products.

## **Special Medicare Open Enrollment Counseling Event – Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program**

**December 3 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Call HICAP (925) 602-4163 | Brentwood Outpatient Center**

Individual counseling to review your Medicare coverage and make sure you have the best option for 2020. Call HICAP for information about appointments or drop in services.



Senior Services  
 1450 Treat Blvd  
 Walnut Creek, CA 94597

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

STD FIRST CLASS  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 CONCORD, CA  
 PERMIT #196

**Change in information?** If you have a change in address or wish to be removed from our mailing list, please notify us at (925) 947-3300 or [seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com](mailto:seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com)

**PROGRAM LOCATIONS**

Concord Medical Center  
 2540 East St., Concord  
 (925) 682-8200

Walnut Creek Medical Center  
 1601 Ygnacio Valley Rd.  
 Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-3000

Berkeley Outpatient Center  
 3100 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley  
 (510) 985-5020

Brentwood Outpatient Center  
 2400 Balfour Rd., Brentwood  
 (925) 308-8100

Pleasanton Outpatient Center  
 5860 Owens Dr., Pleasanton  
 (925) 224-0800

Rossmoor Outpatient Center  
 1220 Rossmoor Pkwy., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 939-1220

Walnut Creek Outpatient Center  
 1450 Treat Blvd., Walnut Creek  
 (925) 296-9700

**Opioid Epidemic—**  
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become much more widely available, prescribed as an injection or as a nasal spray, and is available to first-responders and to caregivers and family who encounter unconscious victims.

Some seniors may not be aware that one of their prescribed pain medications is an opiate, and you should check with your doctor about this. You should not share your pain or sleep medications with others. Sharing is not compassionate, it is risky! You should keep all of your medications in their correct bottles, in a secure location out of the reach of children, and out of sight of visitors. Your risk of accidental overdose is higher if you are also taking other sedatives, or happen to be drinking alcohol. At least once a year you and your physician should review your medications, particularly pain and sleeping pills and over-the-counter medications, for potential drug interactions. You should speak to your physician or pharmacist about proper disposal of unneeded medications or check online with the Contra Costa County MEDS Coalition [ccmedscoalition.org](http://ccmedscoalition.org).

**Remember – you are getting older, and your drugs are not!**

Lawren Hicks, MD  
 Medical Director, Senior Services

**Medicare Open Enrollment**  
**October 15 - December 7**

**2020: Options for Medicare Plans with John Muir Health**

Learn about the Medicare Advantage Plans that will be partnering with John Muir Health in 2020. You will have the opportunity to compare plans and learn more about John Muir Health and the services available to you. Events are scheduled from October 8 – November 26 at a John Muir Health site near you.

For more information about these events go to our website at [www.johnmuirhealth.com/classes](http://www.johnmuirhealth.com/classes) or call 925-941-7900 option 1

**What’s the Medicare Open Enrollment Period?**

Medicare health and drug plans can make changes each year—things like cost, coverage, and what providers and pharmacies are in their networks. October 15 to December 7 is when all people with Medicare can change their Medicare health plans and prescription drug coverage for the following year to better meet their needs.

**How do people know if they need to change plans?**

People in a Medicare health or prescription drug plan should always review the materials their plans send them like the “Evidence of Coverage” and “Annual Notice of Change”. If their plans are changing, they should make sure their plans will still meet their needs for the following year. If they’re satisfied that their current plans will meet their needs for next year and it’s still being offered, they don’t need to do anything.