

# A Breath of Fresh Air

A newsletter for Reliant Medical Group COPD patients and their families

Vol. X, No. 2

*Edited by Margalit Lai, RN, MS, COPD Program Care Manager*

Spring 2013



It looks like we have broken a record this winter for snowfall. Unfortunately, it's the kind of record we can do without. The good news, though, is that spring is here and we should try to enjoy every minute of it. I have to admit that

I was not able to wait for spring to come and went to Israel in March to enjoy an early start. Too bad I am not able to share the actual warm breezes with you, but here at least is a picture of the beautiful beach in Tel Aviv.



A lot has happened since our last newsletter was sent to you. One of the issues that has caused the most concern to some of you is Reliant's decision to accept just one Medicare Advantage Plan in 2014 – Tufts Medicare Preferred HMO. This means that in 2014, Reliant will no longer accept Fallon Senior Plan (also a Medicare Advantage type of plan). Those of you who are affected by the change received letters explaining the change, both from Reliant and from Fallon Community Health Plan. That, unfortunately, just added to the confusion for many of you. From my conversations with you I have learned that there still seems to be some misunderstanding about the difference between Reliant and Fallon Community Health Plan so I will try to use an analogy that I believe will help. The analogy is to your car being in an accident. When that happens, you go to your car insurance so that they will pay for the repair of the car. Then you go to a car repair shop for the actual repair to occur. So, Fallon Community Health Plan is like your car insurance. They pay your medical bills. We, at Reliant are like the car mechanic – we provide you with the care you need. Fallon and Reliant are two separate organizations. By switching from Fallon to Tufts you change your insurance, not your health care providers, (i.e., physicians, etc.).

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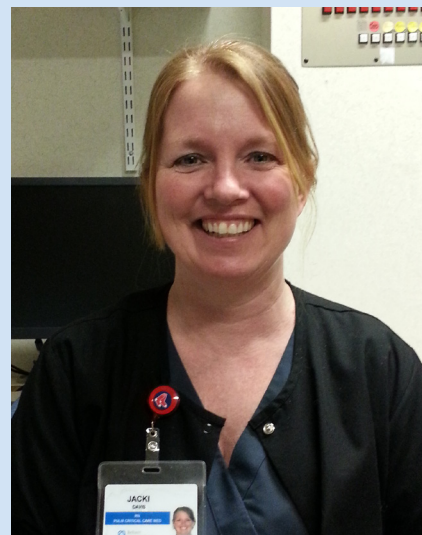
Some of you have already met our new nurse Jackie Davis and I am sure you had a good experience. Most of you will see Jackie if you come to our treatment room. In the meantime I wanted to introduce her to you:

*Hello,*

*My name is Jacki Davis and I am a new RN working in the Pulmonary Department here at Reliant Medical Group. I have been employed with Reliant Medical Group as a nurse since 2008. Prior to coming to the Pulmonary Department in March, I was a nurse in Internal Medicine at Plantation Street for the past five years.*

*I very much look forward to meeting all of you and assisting you with your health care issues and needs.*

*– Jacki*



I was also very lucky to spend a week in Paris this spring and have learned first hand why the French don't gain weight despite their love of wonderful deserts and using cream and butter with everything.



Here is how they do it: they control their portions. They don't eat between meals. They eat slowly and savor every bite. They walk everywhere. Even when using the subway, they have to walk a lot and go up and down many stairs. See if you can adopt at least some of these sensible habits that will help you feel so much better.



Our tough winter this year with its many snow storms unfortunately caused us to close the clinic a few times. These decisions cannot be made too far in advance since the weather forecasting for our area is not always

reliable. We only close when it's absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of our patients and the staff. In addition, we make every effort to contact all the patients who have appointments scheduled for the times the clinic is closed. Here is how you can check for yourself, if you would like:

- Check our website homepage at [www.reliantmedicalgroup.org](http://www.reliantmedicalgroup.org)
- Check our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/reliantmedicalgroup](http://www.facebook.com/reliantmedicalgroup)
- Listen to WSRS 96.1 FM or check their website at [www.wsrs.com](http://www.wsrs.com)
- Listen to WTAG 580 AM or check their website at [wtag.com](http://wtag.com)
- Call (508) 425-5696

Hopefully it will be a while before we need to close again, so please put this information where you can find it when needed.

# Taking your Medications

By Margalit Lai, RN, MS

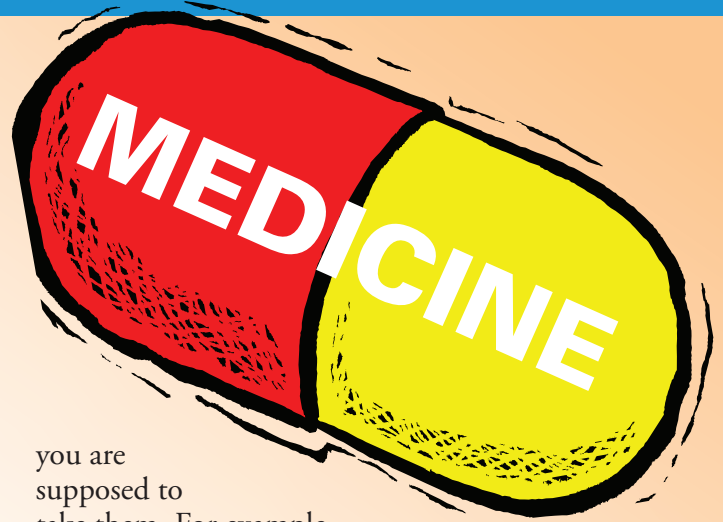
COPD Care Manager

Most of you are on quite a few medications that both our pulmonologists and your other physicians have prescribed for you. Those medications are expensive but usually very helpful at improving your health and physical wellbeing. Some even improve your mental wellbeing. People don't always react the same way to the same medications and some are even allergic to certain medications. Unfortunately, we are not able at this point to predict how certain individuals will react to a specific medication. The good news, though, is that a lot of research is done so that in the future we will be able to more accurately target the medications to the people who would benefit from them.

One crucial point to keep in mind is taking the medications exactly as instructed. If you feel that you are taking it as instructed, but it's not agreeing with you, you should call us and we can see what changes should be made. Inhalers, nebulized medications and Aerolizer capsules require teaching to ensure correct administration technique. If you feel the inhaler, or nebulizer or Aerolizer are not working, you might not be taking them correctly. Call us and we'll go over it and maybe ask you to come to the clinic to demonstrate how to take them.

Another crucial part of taking medications correctly is taking them at the right time every day and not forgetting to take them. There are many ways to ensure that. A medication that is taken once a day should be taken every day at the same time. If not contraindicated, taking it before or after breakfast, will increase the chances of not forgetting. A medication that is prescribed for twice a day should be taken every 12 hours. A medication that is prescribed for three times a day should be taken every eight hours, and a medication that is prescribed for four times a day should be taken before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner and at bedtime. That should enable you to sleep through the night. These are general guidelines and apply to inhalers. Pills, though, have to sometimes be taken on an empty stomach or a full stomach or not too close to other medications or supplements such as vitamins and calcium. It is very important that you read the instructions you get so you take your medications correctly.

To help you remember to take your medicines on time you can get a medication reminder at your local drug store or place them where you are going to be when



you are supposed to take them. For example, if you are supposed to take a certain medicine before, with, or after breakfast, put it on the table where you have your breakfast. If you are supposed to take it again later in the day, put it, after taking it, where you are going to be when you should be taking it next. If you are supposed to take it at bedtime, put it on your night table. Using a pill box that you or a family member fill once a week will help ensure that you don't take a medication twice, or forget it altogether.

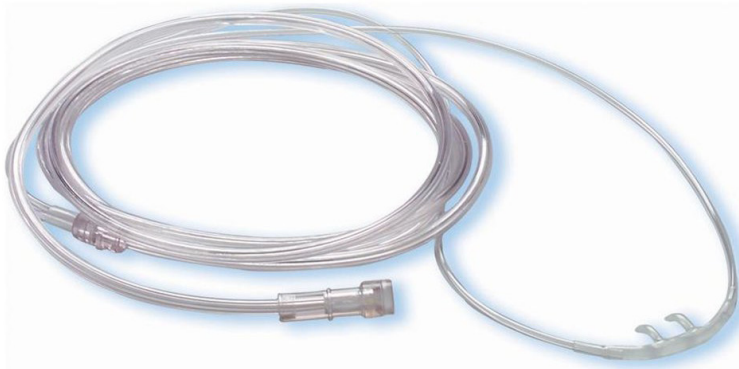
For medications that have irregular schedules such as a Prednisone taper or medications that are not taken every day, it's helpful to write the schedule on your calendar and erasing it as you take the medicine. Keep the calendar where you can see it so you don't forget to check it. If you decide, for whatever reason, to stop taking one or more of your medications, you need to let us know. Depending on the reason, we might help you make some changes that will solve the problem that led you to stop the medication. Similarly, it's important not to make any changes in the dose or frequency of taking your medication without letting us know. We cannot provide you with the right care if we don't know what is going on.

Another important point to consider these days is the abundance of information available in the media including online. There can be some good information there that you can benefit from but since this is not directed towards you personally, it might actually not be appropriate for you and sometimes even be harmful. Please call us to discuss any information related to your lung health before you start on anything you hear about that is not from your health care provider. If it relates to any of your other health issues, call your primary care physician.

# Patients' Contribution



Here is a very useful tip from **Ron Pirani** for those of you who are on oxygen. Anyone who uses oxygen knows the frustration of new tubing being all twisted and curly, catching on everything you pass. So here's the solution – boil some



water in a small pan, remove the pan from the heat and submerge the tubing in the boiling water for a few seconds – it doesn't take very long. Then remove the tubing and just let it hang straight and all the twists and kinks will be gone.

## Here's how to reach us

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### *Our "old fashioned" address:*

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### *Online you can check us out at:*

[www.reliantmedicalgroup.org/copd](http://www.reliantmedicalgroup.org/copd)

