

The News-Review

Senior TIMES

of Douglas County

February 2011

Living her WORLDWIDE dream

*DeeAnn Melevin
fulfills passion for
traveling the globe*



Fetching memories of Dixie the dog

Although I did not have a dog during my childhood, there were many times I found a neighbor's black cocker spaniel, Dixie, curled up asleep under our dining room table when I returned home from school. I was elated with these few minutes of friendship and immediately spent time down on the floor with her, telling Dixie how glad I was to have her visit us.

Dixie was an elderly dog, and it was easy to care for her. One October my mother agreed to feed and keep track of her when the owners traveled out of town for a vacation. That was the era when neighborhood dogs could roam the area and returned home at supper time.



Laura Kruse
Memory Moments

That was Dixie's last visit, for she quickly showed signs of illness. Then there was the day I came home to find my mother had placed her on layers of newspapers in our bathtub. When she died, we followed her owners' instructions and buried her body in the corner of their backyard before they returned home. My mother gave me notice: "We will never own a dog. Don't ask for one."

During the passage of 80 years I have experienced dog-sitting in three dog owners' homes and have struggled with ownership of two dogs that were given to our family. But I never understood or learned the psychology of dog behavior. Today I am amazed at the information and enjoyment I receive from watching "The Dog Whisperer" television program. Now I know the owner needs to be trained and the dog rehabilitated when behavior problems occur that disrupt the household.

No, I have not yet learned enough to adopt a young, energetic canine friend for companionship.

Laura Kruse is a regular columnist for The Senior Times.

How to understand and prevent diagnostic errors

MARTINE EHRENCLOU
For The Senior Times

A diagnostic error, or misdiagnosis, occurs when a medical professional inaccurately comes to a conclusion about what is wrong with the patient. About one in 20 inpatient hospital deaths are attributed to misdiagnosed illness. In or outside of the hospital, about one in six of us throughout a lifetime will be subjected to a misdiagnosis by a medical professional.

There are several reasons diagnostic errors can occur, including:

- A failure on the part of the medical professional to consider all possible diagnoses.
- Lab test results that are not ordered or followed up on.
- Patients seeing several different health care providers who do not communicate with one another.
- Patients who do not provide a complete health summary and history.

To prevent diagnostic errors, have an advocate, a spouse, family member or just a friend go with the patient when he or she is visiting the doctor or is in the hospital. The advocate is a second set of eyes and ears and can help distill information that may be difficult to digest. Ask for a diagnosis from your doctor. Ask for the name of the condition that is suspected. Ask for the reasons this particular diagnosis is suspected.

Ask the doctor if there are any other possible diagnoses for what the patient has.

Take notes on conversations with physicians, whether in a doctor's office or in the hospital.

Create a list of all symptoms. Record the

time of day the symptoms occur and what makes them better or worse.

Create a brief, recent medical history if the patient is seeing a new doctor or is in the hospital. Write down their current medications and their dosages, over-the-counter medications and supplements, and allergies to medications. List their current and recent past medical conditions and surgeries. Obtain copies of their recent test results. Make a copy of all of this so you present a packet of information for each and every doctor you see with your patient. This prevents the problem of misplaced or lost medical records.

Get a second opinion. Whether in the hospital or a doctor's office, get a second opinion. You can ask for a referral from the doctor whom your patient is seeing. Or you can ask friends and family members for their recommendations. A third option is to ask a nurse in the emergency room of your local hospital for referrals.

Ask for lab tests to be repeated. Doctors can make mistakes, but so can radiologists, pathologists and other lab technicians.

Speak up. Ask questions. Research. Many of us are nervous or anxious when talking with our doctors or other medical professionals. Remember that your patient knows his or her body best. The more information you help the patient gather and contribute, the more confident you and the patient will feel.

Martine Ehrenclou is the author of "Critical Conditions: The Essential Hospital Guide To Get Your Loved One Out Alive." She is an author and patient advocate. She lectures on the topic of patient safety at universities and to organizations.

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SENIOR SHORTS

AARP Driver Safety Classes for February

The Douglas County AARP Driver Safety Program Team is offering three, two-day classes in February in the Roseburg area. The driver safety course is designed for drivers age 50 and older; however, younger individuals may also take the course. You do not need to be a member of AARP to take the course. The fee for the course is \$14. AARP members receive a \$2 discount.

Oregon law requires auto insurance carriers to offer a discount on premiums to

qualified graduates, aged 55 and older, who complete approved courses such as the AARP Driver Safety Program.

A class will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 16 and 17 at Mercy Community Education Center, 2459 Stewart Parkway, Roseburg. The instructor will be John Hope. Call 541- 679-9571 to register.

A class will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 21 and 22 at Linus Oaks, 2665 Van Pelt Blvd., Roseburg. "CJ" Jekofsky will be the instructor. Call 541- 677-4800 to register.

A class will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 23 and 24 at Downtown Fitness & Aerobics, 722 S E Jackson St., Roseburg. Instructors will be Gene and Trish Keller. Call 541-679-9571 to register. For information, call Pete Benham, district coordinator, at 541-672-1016.