

Winter 2012

## Top Stories

### Men: Don't Drop the Ball on Exercise!

A new study suggests vigorous exercise causes positive changes in about 180 prostate genes among men with early stage prostate cancer, including genes that are known to suppress tumor growth and repair DNA. This means exercise could prevent or delay progression of the disease. The genes of men with low-risk prostate cancer were compared to normal prostate genes, and men who did activities such as jogging, tennis, or swimming for at least three hours a week were found to have these positive changes. Exercise has also been found to have benefits for breast and colon cancer. (*US News*, 2.1.12) Read [more](#) about [prostate cancer](#).


### A Safer Test for Down Syndrome

A new, non-invasive test to diagnose Down Syndrome in an unborn child is now available in New Jersey and the surrounding area. Sequenom's MaterniT21, now available at New Jersey Perinatal Associates (NJPA), uses a mother's blood sample to test for Down Syndrome and has a greater than 99% accuracy rate. Responses to this new test have been



### Who We Are

Hollywood, Health & Society is a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. HH&S is a free, on-demand resource for entertainment writers working on medical and health storylines. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The California Endowment, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, The Grantham Foundation and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.



Exercise could prevent or delay progression of prostate cancer.

overwhelmingly positive, considering other tests are more invasive and carry small risks of miscarriage or other complications. Down Syndrome, also called Trisomy 21, delays a child's mental and physical development due to the presence of an extra chromosome. It affects 1 of every 691 babies born in the U.S every year. (*Suburban News*, 1.27.12) Read more about [Down Syndrome](#) and [birth defects](#).

### Air Pollution Can Affect the Unborn

A recent study conducted in Stockholm—a city that has relatively low exhaust emissions—shows that air pollution (high exhaust levels and ozone) can affect a fetus more than if the mother were a smoker. In early stages of pregnancy, ground-level ozone can disrupt the placenta's development and thereby influence when the baby is born. During later stages of pregnancy, traffic exhaust fumes can inflame the mother's airway and expedite delivery. Babies born prematurely have a higher risk of asthma and other respiratory problems. (*The Local*, 2.5.12) Read more about [ground-level ozone](#), [climate change](#), and [premature birth](#).

## Funding Agency News

### Survey Finds Rampant Violence in the U.S.

A new survey by CDC finds sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence affects millions of adults in the U.S. Key findings show that 1 in 5 women have been raped in her lifetime, and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in his lifetime. This type of violence is a major public health burden and can cause health problems that last a lifetime, such as diabetes, headaches, chronic pain, and difficulty sleeping. The findings of the survey will help government agencies combat these issues and focus on prevention efforts. (*CDC*, 12.14.11) Read the [press release](#), [report](#), and [more](#) on [sexual violence](#) and [prevention](#).

### Scaling Up HIV Treatment Around the World

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation commends President Obama's plan to get HIV treatment to an additional 2 million people by the end of 2013. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will also focus on scaling up medical male circumcision,

prevention of mother-to-child transmission and condom distribution—each a proven HIV-prevention intervention. In low-income countries, only half of people in need receive HIV treatment. PEPFAR programs are becoming more efficient about how they spend limited resources—a factor that is crucial to curbing the AIDS pandemic around the world. (*Gates Foundation, 12.1.11*) Read the [press release](#) and [more](#) about [HIV transmission](#) and [treatment](#).



## First Lady Supports FreshWorks Fund

First Lady Michelle Obama joined Dr. Robert Ross, CEO of The California Endowment, and other local leaders to celebrate the progress of the California

FreshWorks Fund. The \$264 million public-private partnership brings affordable healthy food access to underserved communities throughout California. Partners include grocers, major banks, health care entities, and research ex-

perts. By supporting economic development and promoting healthy food retailing practices, the Fund is not only creating jobs, but also helping Californians get more access to healthy foods and lead healthier lives (*The California Endowment, 2.1.12*). Read the [press release](#) and [more](#) about the [Fund](#).



## Help for Writers

If you need health topics for scripts, an expert to answer questions or even a health-themed poster to help dress a set, contact us at [hhs@usc.edu](mailto:hhs@usc.edu), (800) 283-0676, or visit us at [www.usc.edu/hhs](http://www.usc.edu/hhs).

## Real People, Real Lives

**Distracted Doctoring** Scott Eldredge, a medical malpractice lawyer in Denver, recently represented a patient who was left partly paralyzed after surgery. The neurosurgeon was distracted during the operation - phone records show he made at least 10 personal calls on his cellphone headset to family and business associates during the operation. This type of “distracted doctoring” is on the rise. Physicians are using Facebook, Amazon, Gmail, and various shopping sites while on duty. Although technology has had a huge positive impact on medicine, some hospitals are changing policies and medical students are reminded to focus on the patient instead of their gadgets. (*The New York Times, 12.14.11*) Read more about [patient safety](#) and [medical errors](#).

**Beauty Queen Dies of Breast Cancer** Former Miss Venezuela Eva Ekvall lost her battle with breast cancer at the young age of 28. She was crowned Miss Venezuela in 2000 when she was 17, and went on to work as a model, actress and TV news anchor. She authored a book called “Fuera de Foco” (“Out of Focus”) about her struggle, including

images of her without makeup and a shaved head while going through chemotherapy. Eva was a strong advocate for cancer prevention. Her story reiterates that the risk of cancer is real for those below 35. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women. Early detection and diagnosis is crucial to preventing deaths from the disease. (*Associated Press, 12. 20.11*) Read [more](#) about [breast cancer](#).

**Curbing High School Violence** Cindi Santana, a 17-year old senior, was stabbed to death at South East High School. Her ex-boyfriend, Abraham Lopez, 18, remains in custody on \$1.3 million bail for the alleged murder. Reports say Abraham allegedly attacked his ex-girlfriend after a lunchtime argument—also injuring the Dean and another student who tried to intervene. Sadly, Cindi’s case is not an isolated one. About 1 in 3 teen girls in the U.S. has been physically, emotionally or verbally abused by a dating partner. Cindi’s death prompted The Los Angeles Board of Education to unanimously approve the creation of an anti-dating violence program throughout the district. The educational program will train teachers and staff in helping students identify when a relationship is becoming abusive. (*Los Angeles Times, 10.11.11*) Read [more](#) about the [program](#) and [violence prevention](#).



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