As we age, our ability to adequately respond to summer heat can become a serious problem. Older people are at significant increased risk of heat-related illnesses, known collectively as hyperthermia, during the summer months. Hyperthermia can include heat stroke, heat edema (swelling in your ankles and feet when you get hot), heat syncope (sudden dizziness after exercising in the heat), heat cramps, and heat exhaustion.

Experts at the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, say knowing which health-related factors may increase risk could save a life. Those factors include:

- Age-related changes to the skin such as poor blood circulation and inefficient sweat glands
- Heart, lung, and kidney diseases, as well as any illness that causes general weakness or fever
- High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet, such as salt-restricted diets
- Taking several drugs for various conditions (It is important, however, to continue to take prescribed medication and discuss possible problems with a physician.)
- Being substantially overweight or underweight
- Drinking alcoholic beverages
- Being dehydrated

Lifestyle factors can also increase risk, including extremely hot living quarters, lack of transportation, overdressing, visiting overcrowded places, and not understanding how to respond to weather conditions.

Older people, particularly those at special risk, should stay indoors on particularly hot and humid days, especially when there is an air pollution alert in effect. To stay cool, drink plenty of fluids and wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes in natural fabrics. People without fans or air conditioners should keep their homes as cool as possible or go somewhere cool. Senior centers, religious groups, and social service organizations in many communities provide cooling centers when the temperatures rise. Or visit public air conditioned places such as shopping malls, movie theaters, or libraries.

Heat stroke is a severe form of hyperthermia that occurs when the body is overwhelmed by heat and unable to control its temperature. Someone with a body temperature above 104 degrees Fahrenheit is likely suffering from heat stroke. Symptoms include:

- Fainting; a change in behavior (confusion, combativeness, staggering, possible delirium or coma); dry, flushed skin and a strong, rapid pulse; and lack of sweating. Seek immediate medical attention for a person with any of these symptoms, especially an older adult.

If you suspect that someone is suffering from a heat-related illness:

- Call 911 if you suspect heat stroke.
- Get the person out of the heat and into a shady, air-conditioned or other cool place. Urge them to lie down.
- If the person can swallow safely, offer fluids such as water and fruit or vegetable juices, but not alcohol or caffeine.
- Apply a cold, wet cloth to the wrists, neck, armpits, and groin. These are places where blood passes close to the surface of the skin, and a cold cloth can help cool the blood.
- Encourage the person to shower, bathe, or sponge off with cool water if it is safe to do so.

Free publications on hot weather safety and other healthy aging topics in English and Spanish are available from the NIA website or by calling NIA’s toll-free number: 1-800-222-2225.

NIH, the nation’s medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.
It’s not enough to promise future cures. We have to find them today. This is the passion that drives us. We are City of Hope doctors and researchers, advancing science that saves lives. Our work has led to the development of four of the most widely used cancer-fighting drugs. We’ve pioneered CAR T cell therapy and are turning your immune system into cancer’s worst enemy. We’re making precision medicine a reality by using your genes to determine the best treatment for your cancer. At City of Hope, our patients depend on us for extraordinary answers. That’s why we work like there’s no tomorrow. Find out more at CityofHope.org
At the San Fernando Valley Business Journal, we are always on the lookout for innovative and successful healthcare business practices. In this healthcare spotlight, I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Stephen DeVita, MD, Assistant Area Medical Director for Kaiser Permanente’s Southern California Permanente Medical Group regarding various aspects of Kaiser’s approach to medicine.

**A Q&A with Stephen DeVita, MD of Kaiser Permanente**

Dr. DeVita: Kaiser Permanente medicine is ethical medicine, based on six pillars—we are physician-led, evidence-based, patient-centered technology enabled, from delivered, and culturally responsive. We offer a unique brand of patient care, one that is integrated—that is care and coverage together, and centers around our members. Prevention is at the core of our integrated approach and we see our patients catch problems early, when they are easier, safer and more cost-effective to treat, and include routine checkups and preventative screenings, like mammograms, cholesterol and BMI.

Through seamless care coordination, providing access to patients’ records for all their doctors, pharmacists, and specialists, our electronic medical record system helps to improve clinical outcomes on a daily basis. This coordination leads to improved care outcomes, which reduces costs and allows us to provide high-quality care despite the high cost of health care.

Teledoc and virtual care options are also part of everyday practice at Kaiser Permanente. We are transforming the way we deliver care, so we meet people where they live, work, and play to help our members live healthier lives.

With the rise of telemedicine and electronic health records—how does technology affect our business? Do our business innovates to meet the needs of patients?

Our advanced electronic medical record system enables our physicians and care teams to deliver high-quality care and strive for clinical excellence. The system provides real-time, up-to-date information about what treatments and protocols are recommended, allowing our physicians to be the best they can be.

We’re shifting the center of care from Kaiser Permanente facilities into our members’ and patients’ daily lives. Our aim is to seamlessly integrate into our members’ daily lives to allow for easy and convenient access to care. We have multiple points of interaction so health becomes a way of life for our members and communities—tools available through kp.org and KP mobile app, secure emails to providers, video and telephone visits. We also have increased access to video consultations and on-demand health education materials that members can access through kp.org.

New offerings in our facilities have also integrated telehealth and virtual care options into the everyday care experience. In Santa Clarita, our newest specialty care offices offer high-tech tools for personalized care. Video and photo appointments for skin check, vision, and digital displays in exam rooms make it easy for providers to review health information and conduct same-time video consultations with specialists from remote locations.

What role do environmentally sustainable business practices play in the day-to-day operations of hospitals and healthcare organizations?

Kaiser Permanente has a mission to make an impact on the health of our members and the communities we serve. To do that, we recognize that healthy communities and a healthy environment are critical to the health and wellness of every person.

We partner with community organizations such as Food Finders food recovery and distribution program, which distributes fresh, unsecured food from our hospitals to local nonprofits agencies to serve those in need. We also have environmental stewardship goals with an aim by 2025 to source all of our food sustainably and locally, recycle, reuse or compost 100 percent of our non-hazardous waste, and reduce the amount of water we use by 25 percent per square foot of each of our buildings.

Goals such as these shine the light on opportunity to raise the bar on environmental responsibility, not only for Kaiser Permanente but for the broader private sector in the U.S. and globally.

Does it make sense for large physician groups create their own managed care entities?

For more than 70 years, Kaiser Permanente’s integrated care model has combined care and coverage. Within this unique partnership, our Southern California Permanente Medical Group (which provides care to Kaiser Foundation Hospitals and Kaiser Foundation Health Plans) works with a service-oriented administrative staff that handle day-to-day business operations, so physicians at Kaiser Permanente can focus exclusively on patient care.

We take pride in delivering medical excellence through care that is physician-led, team delivered, and evidence-based.

Might concierge medicine be an alternative for physicians who wish to avoid today’s market pressures and reduced reimbursement?

Similar to concierge medicine, we have a robust offering of telehealth capabilities and our aim is to seamlessly integrate into our members’ daily lives to allow for easy and convenient access to care. We have multiple points of interaction so health can become a way of life for our members and communities—tools available through kp.org and KP mobile app, secure emails to providers, video and telephone visits. We also have increased access to video consultations and on-demand health education materials.

By bringing access to health care closer to home, we are stretching boundaries and empowering our members to take an active role in getting the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

This level of integration, which is supported by technology and innovative processes, enables our members to access health care that is affordable and easy to approach.

What are the business implications of the fact that people simply live longer today than they did in generations past?

We cannot take the transformation of the health care industry, and the fact that people are living longer today than in past generations, lightly.

The changes in the health care industry will impact Kaiser Permanente—and as well as all the companies and people in health care. We have a strong and solid strategy that we continue to assess based on new developments and opportunities, as well as challenges.

Our strategy centers around how to keep people well and in tune with Kaiser Permanente partners. A strong focus on prevention, and when we recognize disease, we move quickly to stabilize and get our patients into programs which modify and optimize their health. Strategies like these, along with addressing the social determinants of health, will keep people healthy and living longer.

There is a lot of discussion around living longer and the natural tendency to develop disease over time—and because end of life care tends to be very expensive—it is important to have discussions around end of life, to set plans and directives, and really look at the necessity of responsible decision making and open and honest conversations.

Keeping people healthy today will result in a less costly end of life, which is why a holistic approach to medicine is so important.

What role do business owners play in improving the health and productivity of their employees?

As one of the largest employers in Southern California, Kaiser Permanente is committed to the health and wellness of its more than 76,000 employees and physicians. Every day, we have an opportunity to improve the health of our staff by providing a healthy workplace.

We approach workplace health with a holistic point of view, with encouragement for everyone to start where they are. We have resources, tools and programs for every fitness level — including wellness coaching and topically focused training programs — to help our physicians and employees be the best they can be, in mind, body and spirit.

Kaiser Permanente in the Panorama City Medical Center Area works with other employers in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys to develop their own workplace wellness initiatives. We have invested in tools that allow our members to access care anywhere, including the workplace. From mobile health vehicles to onsite workplace clinics, to telehealth appointments, we are bringing quality Kaiser Permanente care to our members where they work, helping them stay healthy and balanced.

What can be done to ensure quality, transparency in pricing and a reduction in

Kaiser Permanente remains committed to advising for a U.S. health care system that is affordable and sustainable and that delivers high-quality care for all Americans. The health care landscape poses serious challenges to the affordability of health coverage and insurance.

People are concerned about the growing price of prescription drugs, and so we are. If pricing of widely-used drugs like ExePoint continues spiraling upward, these drugs will bankrupt the health care system, as well as federal, state, and local governments.

The current market for drugs in the U.S. is broken and we believe it is time for a new pricing model that rewards genuine innovation at prices patients can afford.

What benchmarks can consumers look for when making healthcare decisions?

Many leading organizations consistently recognize the quality of our care, adding value to our members.

For the eleventh consecutive year, Southern California Kaiser Permanente Medical Group has been recognized by Integrated Healthcare Association as a “Top Performing Provider Group.” For the past nine years, Kaiser Permanente has earned the highest possible rating for clinical effectiveness in the annual Healthcare Quality Report Card from California’s Office of the Patient Advocate.

Kaiser Permanente Southern California’s Medicare Plan received a 5 out of 5-star rating from the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA) in its Medicare Health Insurance Plan Ratings for 2015-2016. Our 5-star rating places us in the top 1 percent of national health plans. In 2016 our medical centers earned top distinctions from U.S. News & World Report, including “Best Hospitals,” “High-Performing Hospitals,” and “Elite Specialty Care Providers.”

What can we, as business owners, do to mitigate the rising costs of healthcare?

It’s important for businesses to keep their employees healthy. Poor lifestyle choices—including smoking, obesity and work-related stress—increase the risk of chronic conditions, which have a negative effect on employees’ lives and can raise costs. By providing on-site health screenings, smoking cessation programs, nutrition, exercise, healthy meetings, and more, Kaiser Permanente has invested in tools that allow our members to access care anywhere, including the workplace. From mobile health vehicles to onsite workplace clinics, to telehealth appointments, we are bringing quality care to our members where they work, helping them stay healthy and balanced.

Ultimately, to keep costs down, our integrat-ed approach to medicine focuses on prevention, which ensures that people are able to catch problems early, when they are easier, safer, and less costly to treat.

Together this is what we can do to control the rising costs of healthcare.

Stephen DeVita, MD, MD, is Assistant Area Medical Director for Kaiser Permanente Panorama City Medical Center Area.
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A Q&A with Harlan Levine, MD of City of Hope

By Harlan Levine, MD of City of Hope

Dr. Levine: I think we’re going to see a continued consolidation of health care providers over time driven by price pressures on the health care system, which will motivate providers to see if they can combine services to provide more sustainable business models. So, over time I predict consumers will have to choose health benefit plans based on a combination of outcomes and cost more than they are today with narrower networks and higher deductibles to keep them affordable. Over time, as hospital systems become larger, we may see the pendulum swing the other way and some may be able to combine greater volumes of patients based on their market share dominance as opposed to quality patient-centric care. This will lead to an unevenness in the cost of care based on geography. I’m not sure anyone knows the right answer and it will be interesting to see how this will play out. We will likely experience some instability while the health care delivery system discovers how to define and deliver affordable value based care and society decides how much it prioritizes health care for its citizens.

In your view, what is the current outlook for “the end users” – the patients?

I believe the patient experience will look very different over the next few years. On the positive side, there has been an increase of consumerism in health care and the system is starting to recognize the importance of patient input in the health care equation. As a result, access is more of a priority for providers; as a result, we’re seeing a move to more effective outpatient care and retail partnerships. Similarly, large employers are opening their own onsite clinics to make it more convenient for employees to access health care. Additionally, the focus on wellness, preventive health and health maintenance programs has been very positive. However, the negative side is for those with complex and serious health conditions, the formation of integrated medical groups and narrow network products are limiting the choice for these patients who want to go outside of their restrictive network. So, on the one hand, primary care for many is more accessible, convenient and effective, but on the other hand it can be more challenging for the patients that need more complex care.

With the rise of telemedicine and electronic health records – how does technology affect the way your business innovates to meet the needs of patients?

City of Hope is a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center to provide convenient care for patients to get the high-quality, specialized care we provide.

What are your projections for how the health care system in our country will evolve over the coming year or two and what impact will it have on businesses?

As treatments improve and cancer becomes more of a chronic condition, more patients are returning to the normalcy of their pre-diagnosis lives and their experience with their oncology provider becomes more of a long-term relationship. Over the long term, convenience and access become an issue which elevates the importance of telemedicine and being able to receive information electronically. As we think about the future model of cancer care, a truly patient centered approach isn’t just a patient friendly approach that takes really good care of people while they’re undergoing active treatment. But rather designing a comprehensive care program that envisions the patients’ lives and their experience with their oncologist.

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What role do business owners play in improving the health and productivity of their employees?

It is widely accepted that a healthier workforce is a more productive workforce and over the past few years, I have seen a continued shift in the accountability of business owners in their market share dominance as opposed to quality patient-centric care. This will lead to an unevenness in the cost of care based on geography. I’m not sure anyone knows the right answer and it will be interesting to see how this will play out. We will likely experience some instability while the health care delivery system discovers how to define and deliver affordable value based care and society decides how much it prioritizes health care for its citizens.

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Get employees walking for a healthier business

Employees who exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, three times a week are up to 27 percent less likely to miss work.* A workplace walking program is a great, low-cost way to get your employees moving — and we can help. Visit us online to download our no-cost walking toolkit, a step-by-step guide to building and managing your program.

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* Merrill et al., JOEM, January 2013.
Innovative New Self-Tuning Deep Brain Stimulation Implant May Help Treat Parkinson’s Disease

Deep brain stimulation is a method of managing Parkinson’s disease symptoms by surgically implanting an electrode, a thin wire, into the brain. The new method described in this study is adaptive, so that the stimulation delivered is responsive in real time to signals received from the patient’s brain.

Deep brain stimulation is a method of managing Parkinson’s disease symptoms by surgically implanting an electrode into the brain. This new method, called innovative new self-tuning deep brain stimulation (iNINDS), adapts to changes in the patient’s brain activity in real time, potentially improving the effectiveness and reducing the side effects of traditional deep brain stimulation.

The study involved two patients with Parkinson’s disease who had previously undergone deep brain stimulation. The iNINDS system used in this study includes a thin wire electrode implanted in the brain, an external device to monitor brain activity, and a device to deliver the stimulation.

In the study, the iNINDS system monitored the patients’ brain activity and adjusted the stimulation accordingly. This adaptive approach allowed the system to respond to changes in the patient’s brain activity, potentially improving movement and minimizing dyskinesia (an abnormal movement disorder seen in Parkinson’s disease).

The results showed that the iNINDS system was effective in improving movement and reducing dyskinesia compared to traditional deep brain stimulation. The system was able to deliver stimulation in a more adaptive and responsive manner, leading to better outcomes for the patients.

The innovative self-tuning approach of iNINDS is expected to reduce side effects and improve the quality of life for patients with Parkinson’s disease. Further research is needed to validate these findings and determine the long-term effectiveness of this new approach.

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