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# UCI MEDICAL CENTER SeniorHealth

INSIDE: SeniorHealth

QUARTERLY NEWS FOR SENIORS

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## CLOCK IS TICKING FOR ENROLLMENT IN PRESCRIPTION PLAN

Have you decided yet whether to enroll in Medicare Part D, the new prescription drug program? Unless there is a last-minute extension of the enrollment deadline (pending at press time), seniors must submit their forms by May 15 or face a penalty for filing late.

Evaluate your individual needs and seek free help understanding whether the program is beneficial to you, advises Julie Schoen, an attorney with the Health Insurance Counseling Advocacy Program. For more information, call the Center for Medicare Services at 1-800-MEDICARE or go online at [www.medicare.org](http://www.medicare.org). Locally, the Council on Aging-Orange County is assisting seniors at 1-800-434-0222 or [ww.coaoc.org](http://ww.coaoc.org).



## A Leg Up on Vascular Disease

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) – like its close relative, heart disease – develops slowly and quietly. An estimated 8 million to 12 million people in the United States have PAD, yet about 75 percent have no symptoms. Even those who do have symptoms often mistake their leg or hip pain after walking or climbing stairs as normal muscle fatigue or cramping.

“Even minimal PAD is an indication of plaque buildup and arterial disease elsewhere in the body, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke,” says UCI vascular surgeon Dr. John S. Lane. Fortunately, improved screening and new treatment technologies have drastically improved the lives of those with PAD.

So what is PAD? It is a disease in which fatty plaque builds up inside the arteries of the arms and legs—the peripheral arteries—and restricts or blocks blood flow. Symptoms include pain in the legs or arms during or after exercise and changes in skin color and temperature. In severe cases, this may progress to pain at rest, ulcers, gangrene or loss of the limb.

However, older adults with sedentary lifestyles often don’t discover the problem on their own. “They might not feel anything unless they exercise vigorously or go on a longer-than-normal walk,” says Lane, who is conducting clinical research into PAD. “They have cramps or muscle soreness, but they would expect that, so they think nothing is wrong.”

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## SAVE THE DATE

**Register Now!**

**TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2006**

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual Taking Charge of  
Your Health Care Conference  
Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove**

You won't want to miss Orange County's largest senior health care event. Register yourself and a friend. Look inside this newsletter for registration cards and more information.

**UCIrvine**

## Certified Commitment to Excellence

UCI Medical Center's Stroke and Cerebrovascular Center and orthopedic hip and knee replacement program have been recertified with a "Gold Seal of Approval™" from the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), signifying compliance with the highest national standards for safety and quality of care. UCI has the only JCAHO-certified Primary Stroke Center and joint replacement program in Orange County.

## Vascular Disease (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

To reach more older adults for testing, UCI is participating in a vascular screening program on May 18 instituted by the American Vascular Association that focuses on detecting PAD and two related and potentially dangerous vascular conditions—carotid artery disease and abdominal aortic aneurysm. For more information about the screening, call 714-456-5453 by April 30.

Screening for PAD is easy and painless for the patient. The doctor or nurse simply takes the blood pressure in the patient's feet and compares it to the blood pressure in the arms, a test called the ankle-brachial index. An abnormal ratio indicates likely PAD.

Exercise is the most effective early treatment for PAD, especially in combination with a low-cholesterol, low-fat diet and an end to tobacco smoking. Doctors might also prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs, aspirin and blood-pressure lowering medications.

For more severe cases, Lane says, a traditional bypass graft in the limb or a minimally invasive angioplasty or stent-placement surgery are effective. About half of PAD patients receive the minimally invasive procedure, which offers faster recovery.

**PAD will be one of the topics of discussion at UCI Medical Center's annual senior health event, Taking Charge of Your Health Care, on May 16. For more information and to register, please see the card included in this newsletter.**