THE DAILY CLIPS

July 28, 2008

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
July 26, 2008

Weight Drives the Young to Adult Pills, Data Says

By STEPHANIE SAUL

A growing number of American children are taking drugs for a wide range of chronic conditions related to childhood obesity, according to prescription data from three large organizations.

The numbers, from pharmacy plans Medco Health Solutions, Express Scripts and the marketing data collection company Verispan, indicate that hundreds of thousands of children are taking medication to treat Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and acid reflux — all problems linked to obesity that were practically unheard-of in children two decades ago.

The data, disclosed publicly in recent months or provided at the request of The New York Times, shows that concerns that children will be taking adult medications — heightened recently by a controversial recommendation by a national pediatricians group — are already a reality.

This month, the American Academy of Pediatrics said that more children, as young as 8, should be given cholesterol-lowering drugs. The recommendation was quickly attacked by some experts as a license to put children on grown-up drugs.

While the drugs do help treat the conditions, some doctors fear they are simply a shortcut fix for a problem better addressed by exercise and diet. Even so, some pharmaceutical companies are developing new versions, including flavored ones, of adult medications for children.

While some of the percentage increases in the three analyses are significant, doctors empha-size that prescriptions of these drugs to children still represent less than 1 percent of their sales.

Express Scripts and Medco developed estimates of how many children might be taking such drugs by extrapolating their data — involving a total of more than four million children — across the broader population.

The companies use different assumptions to reach their estimates, but the data suggests that at least several hundred thousand children are on various obesity-related medications.

The greatest increase occurred in drugs for Type 2 diabetes, with Medco’s data showing a 151 percent jump...
from 2001 to 2007.

Medco’s data, released in May, showed that use of drugs to treat acid reflux problems in children, often aggravated by obesity, increased 137 percent over seven years. Its analysis also showed an 18 percent increase in drugs to treat high blood pressure and a 12 percent increase in cholesterol-lowering medications during the seven-year period.

Express Scripts found a 15 percent increase over three years in drugs to treat cholesterol and other fats in the blood, a category that is primarily statins.

“We were amazed at how quickly the rates of drugs used have climbed,” said Dr. Donna R. Halloran, an assistant professor at St. Louis University who worked on the Express Scripts analysis, presented at a meeting of the American Public Health Association in November.

Verispan data recorded a 13 percent increase in high blood pressure prescriptions in the under 19 age group from 2005 to 2007. Its numbers show, however, a less than 1 percent increase during the period in cholesterol-lowering drugs in children.

Doctors and some financial analysts have said that less pronounced increases in cholesterol drugs compared with some other medications — seen in all three analyses — reflect a wariness by some doctors about using those drugs in children.

Some experts have expressed concern that the increases in many of these obesity-related drugs reflect a systemic failure, with doctors and parents turning to them because they find lifestyle changes too difficult to implement or enforce.

“I think a lot of people in pediatrics, myself included, are struggling with what is the right management to do for these kids,” said Dr. Russell L. Rothman, an assistant professor at Vanderbilt University, who recently surveyed doctors and found wide variations in how children were being treated.

“You see elevated blood pressure, or elevated sugars, or elevated cholesterol and you try exercise and diet and you don’t see any improvement,” Dr. Rothman said. “I worry that some providers and some families are looking for the quick fix, and are going to want to start medication immediately.” Some pediatricians say they have been treating children with statins for several years.

Dr. David Collier, director of a pediatric weight management center at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., an area where 45 percent of the children are overweight, is among doctors who support the recent recommendations that statins may be warranted in some children as young as 8. “We have been using statins for two or three years now,” he said.
One of his statin patients, he said, was a 6-year-old girl.

Dr. Collier, who describes his location as “right smack dab in the middle of the stroke belt,” believes that aggressive therapy is needed to prevent a health crisis. “It’s hard to overstate the size of the problem,” he said.

Dr. Francine R. Kaufman remembers a patient, a 13-year-old girl, whose weight had ballooned to 267 pounds. The teenager appeared destined for the same fate as her grandmother, who lost a leg to Type 2 diabetes.

“To control her high blood sugar level, her high blood pressure, and her high cholesterol, this young girl left my office with five medications,” Dr. Kaufman, a pediatric endocrinologist in Los Angeles, told a Senate subcommittee last week during hearings on obesity in children.

The girl stood out as unusual more than 10 years ago, but children with the same array of problems are increasingly seen in the diabetes center where she practices at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, Dr. Kaufman said.

Diet and exercise are tried first, but “lifestyle is really tough,” Dr. Kaufman said. Some of her patients live in neighborhoods without grocery stores and attend schools that do not offer physical education programs.

“They deserve to be treated,” Dr. Kaufman said. “I think the slant from most of the media is that pediatricians are jumping to put kids on medications. That’s not true at all. Since lifestyle is so difficult, we have no other choice but to go to pharmacotherapy.”

At Camp Pocono Trails, a weight loss camp in Reeders, Pa., that enrolls about 700 children each summer, owner Tony Sparber said that campers are arriving with medications, a pharmacopeia that include statins and diabetes medications.

“You just look at these kids’ medical forms,” Mr. Sparber said. “You see kids with some very high-risk numbers. Cholesterol in the high 200s.”

Experts say that the trend could balloon health care costs. As many as 30 percent of children nationwide are overweight. And children who start such medication often rely on the drugs for a lifetime and are prone to health problems as adults.

Despite a push by the Food and Drug Administration to foster drug studies in children, many experts believe that many clinical studies in children have not been extensive enough. And adult doses are often not correct for children.

The agency publishes a list of drugs for which pediatric versions are needed. So far, the size of the pediatric market is not big enough to make it profitable for companies to make special children’s formulas of drugs for
disorders that commonly go along with obesity and high-fat diets. That appears to be changing.

Madeira Therapeutics, based in Leawood, Kan., is formulating a liquid statin for children that will be sold in either grape, cherry or bubblegum flavor, according to the company’s chief executive, Peter R. Joiner.

Madeira became interested in the drug to treat children with a genetic cholesterol condition, familial hypercholesterolemia, which strikes 1 in 500 children regardless of their diet. The recent American Academy of Pediatrics statement adds to the potential market, according to Mr. Joiner.

The company, whose liquid statin may be available by late 2010, is also interested in a liquid oral diabetes medication.

“Because of the obesity epidemic in the United States, we see diabetes as another important area for contribution,” Mr. Joiner said.

A nonprofit group in Cambridge, Mass., the Institute for Pediatric Innovation, is working to encourage the reformulation of medications for children.

Dr. Stephen P. Spielberg, the former dean of Dartmouth Medical School, is leading the effort.

“What we’ve learned over the years is that the way in which the body handles medicines, the half life of a medicine, how it’s metabolized, how it’s excreted by the body, does vary, from babies all the way up to adolescents,” Dr. Spielberg said.

Hypertension medications present a particular challenge in dosing for children. “Even in clinical trials where adult pills were crushed and such, you often can’t even demonstrate that the medication works,” he added.

Medco cautioned that hypertension data can be misleading because some children with attention deficit disorder are treated with hypertension drugs.

The most significant increase in the use of drugs for children has been in oral medication for Type 2 diabetes. And some doctors believe much of those prescriptions were “off-label” use of the drug, metformin, to treat prediabetes, which may affect two million children nationwide.

But some doctors object to the use of metformin for that purpose in children, even though studies have shown it may prevent diabetes in young adults.

“There are no studies like this in children,” said Dr. Tamara S. Hannon, a pediatric endocrinologist at the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh.
“The argument may be that we know what happens in adults, so the same should happen in children. It’s been proven untrue in several cases in the history of medicine.”
ECU sets new record with one-year donation total

BY ECU NEWS BUREAU

Special to the Daily Reflector

Halfway through its Second Century Campaign, East Carolina University has raised $106,829,000, or 53.4 percent, of its $200 million campaign goal.

This achievement comes at the end of a record-breaking fund raising year at East Carolina. Gifts and pledges to ECU from all sources reached $36.2 million in the 2007-08 fiscal year, an all-time high.

"Raising half the financial goal for the Second Century Campaign represents great progress, yet we know the second half of a campaign is always more challenging," said Mickey Dowdy, vice chancellor of University Advancement at ECU. "We are grateful to the alumni, friends and donors who have supported the Second Century Campaign and look for-ward to even greater things to come."

East Carolina embarked on the Second Century Campaign, an ambitious campaign to support ECU Tomorrow: A Vision for Leadership and Service, the university’s strategic plan adopted in 2007.

With a financial goal of $200 million, the campaign’s aim is to enrich, change and save the lives of East Carolina’s students, the citizens of eastern North Carolina, the state and beyond.

The strategic plan’s initiatives include expanding and strengthening scholarship programs, establishing distinguished professorships, endowing established cultural programs, strengthening research programs with a direct impact on economic development, expanding research into the cause, treatment and cure of diseases most prevalent in the region.

See ECU, B3
ECU
Continued from B1
and state and supporting the construction of new campus facilities.

ECU mandates alcohol awareness course

As part of a campus-wide effort to reduce underage drinking and the problems that can stem from it, entering freshmen at ECU will undergo awareness training starting this week.

Every member of the entering class under the age of 21 will have to complete College Alc, ECU's new online alcohol awareness training program.

"The misuse of alcohol is the No. 1 health and safety issue on all college campuses," said Robert Morphet, assistant director of ECU's Center for Counseling and Student Development. 'College Alc will allow students to explore safe and responsible choices about alcohol."

The program is an initiative of ECU's Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug (ATOD) Taskforce, and made possible through a $10,000 grant from the Pitt County Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and ECU's Office of the Dean of Students.

Its goal, Morphet said, is to reduce underage drinking and ensure that all new students will be exposed to the laws and consequences that pertain to it.

Additionally, the students will learn about low-risk and high-risk drinking and the behaviors associated with each.

The program will be available to all incoming students this week.

Students must complete the program by Oct. 10 or their university account will be tagged, which will make them unable to register for spring classes.

The online course takes approximately 75 minutes to complete.

Patriarca is new dean for College of Education

Dr. Linda Patriarca has been named dean of the university's College of Education.

She comes to ECU from Caldwell College in New Jersey, where she was associate dean and professor, after a 25-year career at Michigan State University. She is a nationally-known expert in special education programs.

"I am proud to join an institution that has at its very core the preparation of teachers, especially one that has amassed such a fine reputation as a leader in teacher education. The College of Education is an extraordinary assemblage of talented and dedicated individuals who are making significant contributions to education in this state and in the nation at large," she said.

"The substantive connections that have been made between the College of Education and the community must not only be maintained but strengthened," she said.

Patriarca earned her undergraduate and master's degrees in speech and language pathology from Eastern Michigan University.

She earned her doctorate degree in special education, teacher education and reading from Michigan State University.

During her career she has been active in national groups and task forces focusing on education.

She has served as president of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children and as a national professional advisory board member for the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

GEAR UP NC introduces students to college

High school students from across eastern North Carolina participated last week in GEAR UP NC. The program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs North Carolina, is designed to encourage young people to consider and begin preparing for college.

Approximately 50 students attended the week-long program at East Carolina University's College of Education. Students learned about teaching, nursing and engineering careers and attended workshops focused on college readiness, study skills, creative problem solving, conflict resolution and team building.

GEAR UP North Carolina is a statewide partnership dedicated to increasing the number of students ready to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through mentoring, tutoring, counseling and outreach.

Students from Cleveland, Columbus, Craven, Forsyth, Granville, Lexington, Martin, Rutherford, Washington and Wayne counties participated at ECU.

Frelix elected to lead medical society

Dr. Gloria Frelix, a clinical assistant professor of radiation oncology at the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, has been elected president of the Old North State Medical Society. Frelix was elected June 13 and sworn in July 19. Her term lasts two years.

The Old North State Medical Society is the nation's second-oldest association of black physicians and represents the interests of approximately 2,200 North Carolina physicians.

Founded in 1886, the society works for equity in health care, equal opportunity for African American and other health care professionals and equal care for blacks, other minorities and the poor.
East Carolina clinic helps better explain the game

BY KELLEY KIRK-SWINDELL
The Daily Reflector

Real women love football. That's what the back of the East Carolina University's 2008 women's football clinic shirt said. And 175 women, mostly dressed in purple or gold, were at the Murphy Center early Saturday morning to prove just that.

Morehead City residents Jackie Lancaster and her daughter Mary-Elizabeth got up at 5 a.m. to attend the event.

Lancaster's husband is the head football coach at West Carteret High School and the family attends all ECU games, both home and away.

"I would like to learn as much as possible," she said. Lancaster hoped to pick up a few coaching tips for her husband.

Lauren Davis, 24, didn't know she was attending the clinic until

Former ECU quarterback David Garrard is eager to prove his worth with the Jaguars. C1

Saturday morning. Her fiance signed her up as a birthday present.

"I knew where I was going when I saw my outfit lying on the bed," she said. Davis was wearing an ECU football jersey.

The 2005 ECU graduate wasn't really a big football fan until meeting her future husband.

"When I was in school, I

See CLINIC, A7

CLINIC

Continued from A1

maybe went to two games," she said. Last year, she was at every game and is even planning her wedding around the football season.

During the registration and continental breakfast, all of the football coaches were on hand to sign autographs and take pictures.

Tight end coach Phil Petty introduced head coach Skip Holtz who outlined the day's events which included a tour of the Murphy Center's gym and the football team's newly redesigned locker room.

"We're excited to be here. We usually talk to a room full of rotten, stinking guys," said Holtz, setting the tone for a fun-filled, laugh-out-loud experience.

A question and answer session with the coach kicked it all off.

One woman asked, "I'm not afraid. I notice you're sporting a slimmer profile. What are you doing differently?"

"My wife called me fat back and decided to lose some weight," Holtz said.

He followed up by saying that he has two wardrobes, one for early season and one for late season, when he's gained weight because of all the food-catered meetings he attends during the football season.

Jennifer Holtz adamantly refuted the "fat back" statement later, when all the coaches' wives were introduced.

The equipment portion of the program drew the greatest crowd response.

ECU graduate and former tight end Jay Sonnhalter dressed, piece-by-piece, in the protective equipment that the players wear during a game.

"We decided to put the equipment on, then take it off," Holtz said.

A woman seated at the back of the audience said she needed a better view when Sonnhalter donned the protective — and tight — pants.

With raucous cheers from the crowd, Sonnhalter walked down the aisle to hug the lady who made the suggestion.

Following an information session from both the offensive and defensive coaches, the ladies were taken to the Murphy Center gym, where the players work out every day.

While in the gym, Holtz ran through a typical game day scenario then got the group together to run through the tunnel.

And just like during a real football game, the smoke billowed through the pirate ship and the siren blared as all 175 participants ran out onto the field.

The women were taken to the home sideline where everyone packed together, raised their arms, did a "12-" and "0" cheer in unison for a good luck towards a perfect football season.
Jennifer Tripp, an alumna and employee of East Carolina University, has joined the staff of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences in the position of director of development.

Tripp will use her knowledge, skills and experiences at ECU to create a bond between the college and its alumni and donors. One of Tripp's initial goals is to make herself known to the college's faculty, staff and friends.

"I want to get acquainted with external and internal constituents of the college as quickly as possible," Tripp said. "I'd like to achieve the level of funding needed for the college, while at the same time, reconnecting and involving alumni with their professors and departments that they spent so much time with."

Tripp received her bachelor's degree in sociology with a minor in law and society from ECU in 2005. She said earning her degree from Harriot College gives her insight into the college that she can apply to her position.

"I feel I have a better understanding of the liberal arts," she said.

Through her studies of sociology and social environments, Tripp said she also has acquired knowledge that will assist in her interactions with the college's alumni and donors.

"I want to continue to learn and expand within the university development field, building lasting relationships," Tripp said about carrying on her career pursuits at ECU.

Prior to beginning her position with Harriot College, Tripp held positions with the ECU football and baseball programs, managing athletics operations and coordinating recruiting efforts.

While attending ECU, Tripp served as the alumni relations coordinator for Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority and was an ambassador for the Greenville-Pitt County Area Chamber of Commerce.
UNC researchers link genes, criminal behavior

The study's authors say parenting, social factors can override the genes' effects; they're careful to limit theory's application

Blame it on the genes

The concept of being "born bad" is by no means new, intriguing scientists and philosophers for centuries. It's also a common theme in literature.

■ FRENCH CONNECTION: The French writer Émile Zola was fascinated by the idea that criminal tendencies could run in bloodlines, and included the idea in his portrayal of the fictional Macquart family in his series of novels Les Rougon-Macquart.

"Heredity has its laws, just like gravity," he wrote in the introduction to the first book in the series.

■ ENGLISH WHO-DONE-IT: Educated Victorians were particularly taken by the idea of "bad genes." In Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," Sherlock Holmes correctly determines the violent tendencies of a man by noting the cruel, sadistic nature of the man's 6-year-old son.

"I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of parents by studying their children," Holmes explains to his friend Dr. Watson.

■ MOVIE CLASSICS: In 1969, Mario Puzo brought criminal families back into the collective imagination with his novel "The Godfather," later a series of movies. The story centers around Michael Corleone, who tries to leave the "family business" of organized crime behind. But when his father Vito is gunned down, his need for revenge drives him to murder. Michael quickly ascends to the top of the Corleone crime family, demonstrating his predilection to criminal supremacy.

■ THUG DNA: In the late 1800s, sociologist Richard Dugdale published a detailed study arguing for the existence of a "criminal gene." Dugdale's work, titled "The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity" chronicled the family tree of a New York family he called the Jukes, who he claimed had been raising generations of deviants since colonial times, and had cost the state of New York $1.4 million for years of institutionalization and housing.

Evolutionary leg up?

From an evolutionary perspective, aggressive behavior might be beneficial. According to the UNC-CH team's research, which will be published in the August edition of American Sociological Review, boys who tend to be more aggressive could have advantages when it comes to getting a mate, protecting their families and getting enough food.

Studies of violent behavior
among wild chimpanzees suggested to the study's authors that "human violence is rooted in pre-human history." In other words, we could be hard wired for delinquency based on the social skills needed for survival before we had even evolved into homo sapiens.

Guo was careful not to overstate the potential for applying this knowledge, particularly because the ethical and legal implications could be significant and complex. As an example, Guo suggested the hypothetical of a juvenile delinquent who has had genetic testing and is known to have a high genetic predisposition for aggression.

"Some people might say in court that they're not responsible because they're driven by genes and it could reduce their sentence," said Guo. "But ... the gene may indicate that they are more likely to repeat their offense, so that the court would be very reluctant to release them, and that might actually increase the penalty."

**A slippery slope**

Right now, there isn't enough research to assess delinquents for genetic traits, said Virginia Pirrelo, Clinical Services Administrator for the state Department of Juvenile Justice and Prevention.

She was not surprised to hear that genetics may put some boys at higher risk for anti-social behavior, but said other factors could be equally or more influential.

"Environment definitely plays a part," she said. "But I think a lot of research suggests an interaction between variables, which makes sense."

The idea of "bad genes" has been around for centuries, and is associated with some dark periods in U.S. history. In 1927, based on the now-discredited theory of selective human breeding, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of forced sterilization of the mentally ill and dangerous criminals.

In defense of the decision, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that "It is better for all the world if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for their crime...society can prevent those persons who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind."

The practice continued until 1942 when the court ruled it unconstitutional.

zoe.huck@newsobserver.com
or (919) 829-4753
Paralyzed doctor's career at full speed

Focus is helping others begin anew

BY KAREN GARLOCK
THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

Surrounded by doctors and nurses, the man in the hospital bed, paralyzed from his waist down, worried about his upcoming move to a rehabilitation center.

Dr. Jesse Lieberman tried to reassure him.

"There's life after injury," the young doctor said. "You can do all kinds of stuff."

Lieberman, who at 31 is finishing his third year of residency at Carolinas Medical Center, knows what he's talking about.

Five years ago, a spinal cord injury left him paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Lieberman was a third-year medical student at Wake Forest University in February 2003 when he fell three stories from a balcony.

But he didn't let paralysis stop him from chasing his dream.

As a patient at Carolinas Rehabilitation, next to CMC, he became friends with rehabilitation specialists who helped him realize he could still become a doctor. Through his experience, he decided to work with others who are facing life after brain and spinal cord injuries.

In August, he'll move to Pittsburgh with his wife, Michelle, and their five-month-old twins, Saul and Gracey. There, Lieberman will do a yearlong fellowship in spinal cord injuries before returning to Charlotte as a full-time physician at Carolinas Rehab.

Despite his disability — or maybe because of it — Lieberman's colleagues say he's already an exceptional doctor.

"He has experience he can share with patients," said Dr. Patti Shannon, one of his residency supervisors. "He knows what it's like to be in their situation. It's kind of hard to look at Jesse and say, 'I can't.'"

Only 10 weeks after his accident, Lieberman was back in school, using a motorized wheelchair, and with lots of help from Michelle, an occupational therapist.

He graduated with his class on May 17, 2004. Then on May 22, he and Michelle married at Temple Beth El in Charlotte.

That July, he started his first year of residency, in internal medicine, at the only program that would take him — East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. The teaching hospital, Pitt County Memorial, hired a nurse practitioner to be with him during the day. After one year at ECU, Lieberman moved to Charlotte to enter the residency program in physical medicine and rehabilitation at CMC and Carolinas Rehab.

Without the use of his hands, Lieberman relied on others to do physical exams of patients. But he did the rest — medical history, diagnosis, treatment — by using his calm voice and careful observation.

At Carolinas Medical Center, Lieberman's independence depends on another certified nurse assistant, Patty Aykroid.

"She functions basically as my hands," Lieberman said.

Aykroid writes notes as they make morning rounds. She grabs thick patient charts from the shelves, opens them to the right page and sets them on his wheelchair tray. If he needs to dictate notes, she sets a recorder on the tray.

On the trauma floors at CMC, room after room is occupied by 20-something males who have suffered brain and spinal cord injuries in accidents.

In that setting, Lieberman and his whirring wheelchair don't draw special notice.

He's part of the circle of doctors who regularly discuss cases in the hallway. Patients recognize him and seek his advice.

"Jesse, when you use the power chair, how do you grip it?" asked Joey West, lying in bed with his neck in a brace.

The 22-year-old Charlotte man has been unable to move his arms and legs since a June 9 car accident.

Lieberman demonstrated his technique. Using his shoulder and biceps, the young doctor reached for the joystick and inched his chair closer.

"Slowly, he lifted his arm. His curled fingers reached toward the patient."

West slowly lifted his own shoulder and arm until their hands touched.

A fist bump — or as close to one as they could get.

Then, Lieberman backed up and rolled down the hall to see his next patient.
Campus robbery puts town on alert

CHAPEL HILL – The UNC-Chapel Hill Department of Public Safety is warning people to be on alert after a strong-arm robbery on campus early Saturday.

Campus police say a 24-year-old man was walking west with his sister on the sidewalk between Hill Hall and the Smith Building just after midnight when he was grabbed from behind and pushed to the ground. The robber fled after being confronted by a UNC Public Safety officer.

The robber is described as a black man in his early to mid-20s, 5 feet 8 inches, with a medium build. He was wearing dark jeans and a dark T-shirt, possibly navy blue. Police did not provide additional information such as facial features and skin tone.

Anyone with information is asked to call university police at 962-8100 or Chapel Hill-Carrboro-UNC CrimeStoppers at 942-7515.
Prescriptions surging for childhood obesity ailments

Some doctors fear drugs are a shortcut fix for a problem better addressed by exercise and diet.

BY STEPHANIE SAUL
N.Y. Times News Service

A growing number of American children are taking drugs for a wide range of chronic conditions related to childhood obesity, according to prescription data from three large organizations.

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While the drugs do help treat the conditions, some doctors fear they are simply a shortcut fix for a problem better addressed by exercise and diet.

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Experts say that the trend could balloon health care costs. As many as 30 percent of children nationwide are overweight. And children who start such medication often rely on the drugs for a lifetime and are prone to health problems as adults.
Downtown developer aims high

Real estate developer Collice Moore and others want to build a six-to-eight-story mixed-use development in downtown Greenville.

BY GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Reflector

The high-rise dorms of East Carolina University may be joined by another structure if the plans of a Greenville businessman and his partners work out.

Real estate developer Collice Moore and others want to build a six-to-eight-story mixed-use development in downtown Greenville. They’ve hired an architectural firm to research the project’s feasibility in the current Greenville market. The report should be completed in 60 days, Moore said.

“It is something that looks positive,” he said.

The structure would be built on 2.5 acres at the corner of Reade Circle and Dickinson Avenue. In preparation, a former retail auto shop has come down and the demolition of the former Pirates Landing apartment complex, across the street from Sheppard Memorial Library, is under way.

Rising gas prices, growing numbers of home mortgage foreclosures and recent instability in the banking sector are contributing to uneasy economic times, nationally. Locally, Starbucks Coffee announced last week its Fire Tower Road location is one of 600 it is closing nationwide. Several newly built retail outlets on Fire Tower Road and Charles Bou-

PROJECT
Continued from A1

levard are empty, as are shops surrounding the Greenville Grande movie theater.

Still, Moore seems optimistic. He said banks are looking favorably on the proposed project, which would take 1½ to 2 years to complete, he said.

“Timing for completion will be happening during the period we expect the market to be getting better,” he said. “I think it is the best time to be prepared for things.”

Moore said the vision for the development is to have between 30,000 to 40,000 square feet of retail space on the ground level, between 30,000 to 50,000 square feet of office space on the next two or three floors and 100,000 square feet of housing divided between one-, two- and possibility three-bedroom condominiums.

The project was motivated by the continued growth of the university and medical school, as well as the desire of many to have shopping and living near the university and the medical center without traffic congestion, he said.

“I’ve been in the real-estate business 40 years, and my firm and I have been involved in the appraisal of similar projects in other towns,” he said.

He believes the signs for pursuing this project are positive. So far, an environmental survey has found no problems with the site, and the land is zoned for mixed development use.

If the market review is positive, all that is needed is final city approval of the building plans and plat, he said.

Greenville’s tallest buildings are owned by East Carolina University: Green and Clement residence halls which are 10 stories each and Tyler residence hall with its nine stories. The tallest non-university building is the eight-story University Towers next to Green and Clement.

Moore is senior partner of Moore & Piner, a real estate development company. The company is handling the developers contract for Moore and his partners.

“It is a planned learning procedure that I and my partners are willing to go through to learn what will be a good investment for Greenville’s future,” he said.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@coxnc.com and 329-9573.
New kids

Laurels — To a new and larger crop of college freshmen finishing orientation sessions this week at East Carolina University. More than 700 new students participated in two days of orientation sessions last week. They were among nearly 4,500 to visit the campus over the summer. The students will move into dorm rooms and apartments in the coming weeks to become part of what makes Greenville a thriving and growing community.

Darts — To strong thunderstorms that damaged homes, trees and blew off part of the roof at the Pitt Conty Agricultural Center on Wednesday. With the area still suffering drought conditions, however, the darts apply only to the damage caused. The much-needed rainfall that quickly soaked into the ground is more than welcome.

Let it rain

Laurels — To Greenville’s recent ranking as North Carolina’s 10th largest city. The News comes from 2007 U.S. Census Bureau data putting the city’s population at 76,058. The number reflects a nearly 26 percent increase over the 2001 census, which had 60,476 people living in Greenville. With rapid growth comes the necessity for responsible planning. Properly managed, the greater numbers can mean great things for a city that continues to grow and prosper.

Laurels — To the Ulster Project, which is in its 18th year (in Greenville) of fostering tolerance, understanding and friendship among young Irish Catholics and Protestants from Northern Ireland. Host families, churches and community organizations this week wrapped up a month-long visit by several teens involved in the project and its 33-year tradition of promoting peace in Northern Ireland.

Laurels — To the ranking of University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina in a national magazine among the country’s 100 most wired hospitals. The designation comes as a new electronic medical records system, “HealthSpan,” and wireless connectivity are being implemented at Pitt County Memorial Hospital and other UHS facilities. The magazine points to better outcomes in patient satisfaction and risk-adjusted mortality rates among hospitals that use such technology.

Compiled by Mark Rutledge, writer/columnist for The Daily Reflector. Contact him at 329-9575 or via e-mail at mrutledge@coxnc.com
Greenville mayor traveled to Romania to help build homes

BY GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Reflector

WEB POLL: Have you ever volunteered with Habitat for Humanity? Answer online at reflector.com

Greenville Mayor Pat Dunn's ideal vacation combines international travel, the chance to help others, and a little heavy lifting.

She took on the full complement earlier this month when she traveled to Romania with fellow church member Anne Briley and 13 others to participate in a Habitat for Humanity Global Village work camp.

"I love to travel and I like to travel in a way where you get to see the life of people and how they live," said Dunn, 71.

It was her 12th Global Village event, only four of which were in the United States.

During this summer's stint, the group installed sheetrock and insulation at a duplex in the southeastern village of Cumpana. Each duplex unit had four rooms, two bedrooms, a living area and kitchen and a bathroom, she said.

Cumpana is a community of 12,500 near Romania's third largest city, Constanta, on the Black Sea. Habitat for Humanity's Web site reports that 6.5 million people in the former Soviet-bloc nation live in poverty, and 35 percent of its total housing stock is in disrepair.

Dunn, a retired professor with East Carolina University's Department of Health Education and Promotion, became involved with the local branch of Habitat for Humanity in 1994. She served as its president in 1998.

"There isn't anything more fundamental than the need of humans for shelter," she said. "At the end of the day, everybody goes home somewhere, unless they are homeless. ... It is the common denominator."

There also is the enjoyment of working with people of different ages with diverse backgrounds.

See HABITAT, A9

HABITAT
Continued from A1

It's recharging. Dunn said.

"For me personally there is something very refreshing about physical work and you are engaged with people are very excited about their work because they wanted to be there," she said. A day spent hauling sheetrock also is a good reminder of what people whose jobs involve daily physical labor endure.

"It reminds you why they might want to stand around for five minutes," she said.

Even prior to her Habitat work, Dunn spent a large part of her adult life volunteering in the community. She's been a church leader, worked with international students, promoted voter education and voter involvement, championed tree planting and promoted improved relations in the community.

She said she inherited her volunteerism and desire to serve from her parents.

"My parents were people who cared for other folks and they were people who cared about people who were down and out," she said.

Born and raised in Wake County during the World War II and Cold War eras, Dunn said she remembers her father, a telephone company employee, taking out a loan to help a family friend having money problems. Her mother, a clerk and receptionist, was a church and PTA volunteer.

Having built homes in Asia, Africa, Central America and Europe, Dunn said she is heartened to see how alike people are.

"People celebrate life," she said. "No matter how limited their material goods are they celebrate life, they celebrate birthdays or communion."

While in Romania, the group dined with Cumpana's mayor, Mariana Gaju, and other city leaders and watched a performance of folk dances by local teenagers.

Using an interpreter, mayors Gaju and Dunn spoke briefly about their duties.

Municipal government in Romania is responsible for many services that North Carolina municipalities don't provide, such as schools. Daily sights were a bit different, too.

"You saw the latest and some of the oldest," Dunn said. Along with automobiles and bicycles, they saw Cumpana's families use horse-drawn carts to attend church and other local functions. The carts were built on old automobile axles like the Hoover carts used in the Depression-era South.

Still, she said, what she saw there was much like what she had seen before.

"No matter where people live they want the same things," she said, "a safe place to live, education for their children, a safe community and to have fun."

Ginger Livingston can be contacted at givingson@coxnc.com and 329-9573.
Holland ready for C-USA changes

BY NATHAN SUMMERS
The Daily Reflector

When it comes to Terry Holland's thoughts about the future of Conference USA, pretty good just isn't good enough.

East Carolina's director of athletics has never feared ruffling a few feathers for the greater good, and his ideas about the future of ECU's conference reflect a steadfast desire for improvement now instead of later.

Holland, now in his fourth year in Greenville, has had plenty of time to mull over his concerns about the need to better geographically align the nationwide league and then try to develop legitimate, lasting rivalries within.

But the same basic problems Holland sees in C-USA keep bringing him back to the same solutions.

In Holland's eyes, less is simply not more when it comes to C-USA. The conference needs to either grow large enough to have two more regional, more concentrated divisions, or it needs to pursue some other plan to make the travel less painful and the rivalries less diluted.

"We're doing pretty good, but I've always felt like pretty good will eventually get your butt beat," Holland said of the progress C-USA has made since taking on five new members in 2005. "If there is something better you can do, you'd better do it now, as soon as you can, instead of coasting. That's why I keep pushing on that (expansion) issue."

Holland has been saying for some time that a further expansion of the league — to at least 16 teams — would

See HOLLAND, D3

HOLLAND
Continued from D1

erasure some of the conference's current flaws and allow the two-division system to eliminate many of the cross-country journeys to play league games.

Holland feels the league's rivalries, long a subject of concern given the C-USA's expanse from North Carolina to west Texas, would develop more rapidly with a primary concentration on teams playing within their own divisions.

Even when great games have been staged in football between cross-division rivals, Holland said there is an immediate disconnect.

"We had a great game with UTEP (a 45-42 overtime win for ECU in El Paso last season), and they're going to come here this year and there will be a reaction to that," Holland said. "But then we won't see them again for two years. That is going make it very difficult to build a long term rivalry. Since we don't play them in all the sports every year, it just gets harder and harder to build that rivalry."

The other primary concern with C-USA's status quo, according to Holland, is that it potentially creates unfair advantages for certain teams in terms of the divisional championship.

The top two teams in each division play in the C-USA football championship, but often that top team has played different cross-division opponents than its fellow division members. A larger league, according to Holland, would put greater emphasis on winning a division crown by beating intra-division opponents.

"Let's face it, your three non-divisional opponents could be Houston, Tulsa and UTEP," Holland said. "The team you're competing against for the divisional championship could be playing Rice, Tulane and SMU. Now, those teams could be good in a particular year, but by and large I'd say those other three are going to be better. You have to see the divisional championship be decided by who you play in the other division, especially when the other team doesn't play the same schedule."

It's not that Holland thinks there hasn't been progress. He said ECU's own recent football surge — the Pirates have played in consecutive bowl games and also were in the hunt for the divisional title in C-USA during both of those campaigns — has naturally made some of those ho-hum league games much more entertaining.

But it might be those small successes by the league which keep C-USA from having big successes and big rivalries.

That stability is what keeps league officials from discussing expansion.

"We've made a lot of progress in terms of building rivalries, but I think we can do more," Holland said. "I think we can have a better long term plan, and I hate to see us get stuck in a short term mode. I think it will reach its maximum very quickly. I understand it's tough to make those kinds of decisions when things are going pretty good."

Nathan Summers can be reached at nsummers@coxnc.com or at (252)329-9595.