



Houston Chapter United Ostomy Association

December 2004

Houston Chapter UOA
PO Box 25164
Houston, TX 77265-5164
www.uoahouston.org

"We help ourselves by helping others to help themselves."

"UOA is a volunteer-based organization dedicated to providing education, information, support and advocacy for people who have had or will have intestinal or urinary diversions."

Monthly support and information meetings are held in two locations for member convenience.

Central Group

Monthly: Third Monday
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: American Cancer Society Building
6301 Richmond Avenue, Houston
Contact: Ed Wood 281-493-5015
(ewood6@houston.rr.com)

Meeting: No regular meeting in December.
Next meeting Monday, January 17, 2005

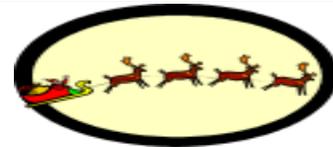
Northwest Group

Monthly: Tuesday following the third Monday
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: NW Medical Professional Bldg. (The Cali Bldg.)
17117 Cali Drive (This location is just off of
1960 and West of I-45. Turn north on Cali
Drive from 1960. At the stop sign turn left on
Judiwood and left again to park behind the Cali
Building.)
Contact: Bill Propst 281-320-8005 propst@neosoft.com

Meeting: No regular meeting in December.
Next meeting Tuesday, January 18, 2005



*May you have a
blessed and joyous
Holiday Season!*



J-Pouch Group

Monthly: Third Monday
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: American Cancer Society Building
6301 Richmond Avenue, Houston
Contact: Ron Meisinger 281-491-8220

Meeting: Jan. 17, 2005 Monday evening

Program: Round Table Discussion

Ulcerative colitis and the J-Pouch connection. See you in January.

Baytown Group

Monthly: Second Monday
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Cancer Center Community Room
4021 Garth Road, Baytown
Contact: Cindy Barefield 281-420-8671

Meeting: Dec. 13, 2004, Monday evening

Program: ConvaTec Product Updates

Dan Hernandez, Professional Care Manager, will be our speaker. Please join us!

Patient Visiting and Support Services

Doctors and ET Nurses please note: Upon request from a doctor or nurse, a specially trained visitor will be sent to visit an ostomy patient before and/or after surgery. The visitor will be matched as nearly as possible according to sex, age, and type of ostomy. There is no charge for this service. The visitor does not give medical advice.

Please contact our Visitor Coordinator, Dorothy Andrews at 713-789-4049.

We are a health support group, a non-profit, tax-exempt, organization of volunteers whose purpose is to provide mutual aid and education to persons who have ostomies and to their families. Membership fees and donations are tax deductible.

Chapter News

Bridgett Wilson, dietitian at West Houston Medical Center, was the speaker for our November meeting.



Bridgett Wilson, speaker, and UOA member, Mary Harle

Bridgett has family members who have ostomies so she has first-hand knowledge of ostomies and diet. Her presentation included a handout on all the different aspects of diet and their relation to ostomy care. We thank her for her time and excellent presentation.

We welcomed as first time attendees Joe and Kathie Longrigg, Howard Schoenike, and Karen Pennywell. They heard about our group from a number of sources: visitors at the hospital, UOA website, and a community information booklet at a Walgreens drugstore. We welcome them and hope to see them at many more meetings.

Cindy Barefield planned and organized the first meeting of our Baytown support group. Clarice Kennedy and Ed Wood traveled to Baytown to attend the meeting. During the meeting attendees voted to start a group to serve ostomates in the area and will meet on the 2nd Monday of each month. Look for their announcement on the front of the newsletter

alongside information about other Houston area meetings. Ed and Clarice were presented gifts that were shared as door prizes at the Central group meeting.



Cindy Barefield, BSN, RN, C, presenting gift basket to Clarice Kennedy and Ed Wood

We will be forming a nominating committee, a present officer and member at large, to find candidates for the two positions to be voted on at our regular May meeting. The nominees' names will be published in the March, April, and May newsletters. The offices which we will fill are the Second Vice-President and Secretary. The duties of the two offices, as described in the By-laws, are as follows:

Second Vice-President: "The Second Vice President shall be responsible for greeting and hospitality." (As you can see, attendance at meetings is important. Part of the duties involves constructing a list of volunteers for providing refreshments at the monthly meetings.)

Secretary: "The Secretary shall record minutes of all proceedings, keep a record of attendance and handle correspondence of the Houston Chapter."

We would like to thank the following individuals for providing refreshments for the year 2004: Debby Hobart, Mary Lou Hartranft, Ed Wood, Shirley Mucasey, John Flowers, Betty Barrett, Tom Green, Dorothy Andrews, Clarice Kennedy, Chuck Bouse,

Starting in December, the National UOA office will send a **national** dues notice directly to each members' address for annual dues of \$17.50. This will be the amount to pay the National UOA **if** you pay local dues. If you do not pay local dues, then the National UOA will bill you as an associate member at an annual rate of \$25. The first part of next year our Chapter Treasurer, Chuck Bouse, will send a **local** dues notice for \$10.50, to those whose membership renews during the first six months of the year. The \$10.50 is to be sent to Chuck. In June or July, Chuck will send a local dues notice to those who are due to renew in the second half of the year. We anticipate questions as we change over to this new of billing procedure. If you have any question about any dues billing that you receive through the mail, at anytime during the year, you can call Edgar Wood at 281-493-5015 or Chuck Bouse at 281-495-1840.

On Saturday, February 12, the Houston Chapter will have their biannual Visitors Training at the American Cancer Society building at 6301 Richmond Ave. This will train new visitors and will renew for another two years those visitors who previously have been trained. We will use the new training video that was produced by the Fort Worth Chapter of UOA. Training will take place from 9 AM to 12 noon. For more information call Ed Wood or Dorothy Andrews.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Diana Burkett's father. She has been our steadfast contact at the American Cancer Society and diligently arranges for the needs of our Chapter for our monthly meetings.

Please see "Chapter News", Page 4

*"Against the assault of laughter
nothing can stand."*

- Mark Twain

ANNIVERSARY GIFT

After seeing the following suggestion in the Tyler Chapter newsletter, it was decided to offer the same to members of the Houston Chapter.

As you celebrate the anniversary of your ostomy surgery each year, consider making a monetary gift to the Houston Chapter UOA. A gift of \$1.00 for each year you have had your ostomy is a guideline; however, each person determines the amount, if any, he/she wishes to give. If you desire to make such a gift, make your check payable to Houston Chapter, UOA and please send it to:

*Houston Chapter, UOA
Attn: Chuck Bouse, Treasurer
P.O. Box 25164
Houston, TX 77265-5164*

We encourage you to bring your spouse or significant other and members of your immediate family to our meetings.

MEMORIAL FUND

The Houston Chapter of UOA has established a Memorial Fund. Donations can be made to the fund to memorialize or honor individuals. All donations should be made payable to the Houston Chapter, UOA and sent to:

Mary Harle
9643 Winsome Lane
Houston, TX 77063-3725

When sending a donation, be sure to include the name of the person being honored so that appropriate acknowledgement can be sent.

INTERESTING FACTS

From AARP Magazine

- 80%** of boomers plan to work during their retirement years.
- 44%** of all adults eat in a restaurant on a given day.
- 66%** of American adults are seriously overweight or obese.
- 60%** of adults think drugs bought on the Internet are not as safe as those bought from a drugstore.
- 77.2** years is the average life expectancy of an American child born today.
- 9 million** American adults have sight or hearing impairment.
- 20 million** is the number of adults with a disability that limits their mobility.

Donation of Supplies

If you have ostomy supplies that you no longer use, please consider donating them. The Houston Chapter of UOA is contacted on a regular basis by individuals who are in need of donated supplies of all kinds. This is one way that you can assist your fellow ostomates in the Houston area. Please contact Ed Wood at 281-493-5015 with any questions.

Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.

DIARRHEA FROM CHEWING GUM

Via Port Huron, MI Chapter and NV Town Karaya

If you are sold on sugar-free gum because it does not cause cavities, you might not be thrilled to know that large amounts, a pack for instance, can cause gas in adults and diarrhea in children. Some of the sugar-free gums get their sweetness from sorbitol. While this substance is not digestible, its molecules can draw extra water into the intestine. This extra water tends to move food through the digestive tract faster, triggering diarrhea. When the sorbitol gets in the colon, bacteria acts on it, causing gas.

ATTENTION... Ostomates and Medical Personnel

Clarice E. Kennedy, Certified Enterstomal Therapist and Immediate Past President of the Houston Chapter, UOA, is available for consultations by appointment only at Spring Branch Medical Supply at 8700 Long Point Road, Houston, Texas. Clarice is an ostomate herself and has over 30 years of knowledge and experience to share with anyone who has questions about, or needs assistance with, the care of an ostomy both prior to and following surgery. The Houston area is fortunate to have such a dedicated individual available for personal consultations. Appointments can be made by calling Clarice at 713-647-8029.

Disclaimer: The information contained within this newsletter is presented expressly for informational purposes only and may not be applicable to everyone. It should not be substituted for professional medical care or attention by a qualified practitioner. Always check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your condition.

Chapter News

Continued from Page 2

Our sympathy also goes to Gay Nell Faltysek on the lost of her father. Gay Nell is a loyal member and leader in the Northwest Group. We hope for continued recovery of Shirley Mucasey from her surgery.

Bill Propst has announced his desire to step down from his duties as leader of the Northwest Group. Bill has been a very active member and valuable to our chapter. He has served as newsletter editor, started our website, arranged shipments of supplies to Friends of Ostomates Worldwide, helped to update our By-Laws and our brochures, attended and reported from a National UOA conference, and provided the most humorous moments in our visitors training just to name a few of his contributions. In addition, Bill and Margo have hosted our Chapter's October Picnic the last few years. I have enjoyed working with Bill and hope to continue to see him and Margo at many of our meetings and events.

Our January newsletter will contain pictures of our Holiday Dinner on December 7th at Pine Forest Country Club. As usual, we are expecting great fun and delicious food.

The January meeting will be a round-table discussion of plans for the coming year. Please join us!!

I wish you Happy Holidays and a great New Year!

Ed Wood
President

YOGURT TABLETS

Via Port Huron, MI Chapter

Taking two or three yogurt tablets a day is a great aid in lessening stoma noise, and it also counteracts odor and acidity. Tablets contain the same culture (*Acidophilus Lactobacilli*) as in regular yogurt purchased in the grocery store, but perhaps the tablets will be easier to tolerate for those who dislike yogurt.

This supplement will not harm you and there is no toxicity involved. You might try them to see if they work for you. If you are uncertain, consult your doctor.

A woman goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. She says to the clerk, "May I have 50 Christmas stamps?" The clerk asks, "What denomination?" The woman says, "God help us. Has it come to this? Give me 6 Catholic, 12 Presbyterian, 10 Lutheran and 22 Baptists."

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE OSTOMY FUNCTION

via *Austi-Mate Journal*, Austin, TX

Quite often patients experience a sudden reversal in normal ostomy function due to medications or treatments they are undergoing. The following information might be helpful to keep in mind.

- **Antibiotics** - These often cause diarrhea, even in patients without an ostomy. Ostomates are no exception, and if the problem becomes severe, notify your physician immediately. In the meantime, keep Gatorade or a like-drink on hand to maintain adequate electrolyte balance.
- **Pain Medications** - These are often constipating. Extra irrigations or laxatives or stool softeners might be required for colostomates to combat the side effects of medicine. Perhaps the dosage of pain reliever can be reduced to eliminate the situation. If not, consider one of the above alternatives.
- **Chemotherapy** - Many cancer patients have follow-up chemotherapy after surgery or as an alternative to surgery. That often produces nausea and/or vomiting. Gatorade is again good to keep on hand for electrolyte balance.
- **Radiation Therapy** - This often produces the same effects as chemotherapy and should be treated accordingly.
- **Travel** - Travel can cause constipation in some patients and diarrhea in others. Be aware that these are possibilities. Altered diet when traveling accounts for some of this, plus the excitement of new surroundings. Allow sufficient time for irrigations and take along an anti-diarrhea medication. Check with your doctor if you are not familiar with what works best for you to control diarrhea.
- **Antacids** - Those with magnesium can cause diarrhea. Perhaps you will want to ask your doctor to suggest some with aluminum rather than magnesium.
- **Drink plenty of liquids** - Tea is always a good source of potassium (so are orange juice and bananas). Coca Cola also contains some potassium. Bouillon cubes are a good source of sodium. Remember that some of the signs of electrolyte imbalance are irritability, nausea and drowsiness. Be prepared and prevent this problem when possible.

SURGICAL SUPERGLUE?

Source: *AARP Magazine* from *Nature Materials*

A strong, new cement may be the answer to repairing bones broken or weakened by diseases like osteoporosis.

Surgeons have used calcium phosphate cement since the 1980s, but researchers at the University of Birmingham in England recently discovered that the cement could be made more than three times stronger by adding sodium citrate.

The cement can be used to repair load-bearing bones such as the jaw, the spine and the bones of the leg. Because it can be injected through small needles, surgeons can use it in hard-to-reach areas, thus avoiding invasive surgery.

BAYTOWN SUPPORT GROUP

The newly organized ostomy support group in Baytown had an introductory meeting on November 8, 2004. We were happy to have several local ostomates present as well as Ed Wood and Clarice Kennedy from the UOA Central Group in Houston.

Our next meeting will be Monday, December 13th at 7:00 pm. Our speaker will be Dan Hernandez, Professional Care Manager, who will present *ConvaTec* product updates. Our January 10th meeting will be presented by *Hollister*.

Please plan to join us in the Cancer Center Community Room at 4021 Garth Road in front of San Jacinto Methodist Hospital. Ostomates and their families are invited to attend.

Cindy Barefield
281-420-8671

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT GROUPS

Via the Austi-Mate Journal, Austin, TX

Years ago support groups for people diagnosed with cancer were often frowned upon or dismissed as 'touch-feely.' Many believed that talking about their feelings or asking for help were signs of weakness. Some even feared that meeting others with similar problems would fuel depression and self-pity.

Times have changed, however, and so have theories about the value of talk. Today, more and more hospitals are offering emotional support—with groups and one-on-one counseling—as part of the standard treatment for rehabilitation. Earlier this year, the National Cancer Institute, together with two other groups, launched a national campaign to raise awareness of the vital role emotional support plays in enhancing quality of life for people with cancer. Some research suggests that support may even increase longevity.

With a little help from strangers, it makes sense that emotional support from a caring circle of close friends or family would buffer the stress suffered. But many patients say they lack open communication within their families. As research and the experiences of many people have born out, involvement in a support group comprised of others in the same boat can fill a unique void.

Experts also speculate that emotional assistance confers physical benefits by decreasing stress. Depression overworks the body's stress response system, and it may be that participating in a support group helps lift depression.

Thus a group of peers can be a place where people can vent some of their feelings without suffering guilt about burdening an intimate partner or friend. While research on the mind-body connection and cancer is still preliminary, there is no doubt that emotional support can ease psychological stress. Support groups that were once considered ancillary aspects in treatment have moved into the mainstream, playing an integral role in enhancing—and possibly prolonging—the lives of millions of people.

NORTHWEST GROUP HAPPENINGS

There will be no regular meeting of the Northwest group in December due to the Annual Holiday Dinner at Pine Forest Country Club on December 7th.

Our next meeting will be a round table discussion on Tuesday evening, January 18th, 2005.

Join us as we discuss plans for the coming year as well as have a group discussion to answer any questions pertaining to your ostomy.

Regards,
Bill Propst

The ABCs of Ostomy Care

(Continued from last month)

From ConvaTec's Health & Vitality publication

Q IS FOR QUESTIONS

Wondering what keeps that flange attached to your skin? Not sure about the difference between a colon and a semicolon? Never be hesitant to ask your doctor or nurse any questions, big or small. Other great resources for information include the United Ostomy Association; the Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society (888-224-9626, www.wocn.org); and ConvaTec's Customer Interaction Center (800-422-8811). (*Editor's note: Don't forget that much information can be gained by attending your chapter's monthly UOA meetings.*)

R IS FOR ROMANCE

Yes, you can still get romantic with that special someone. Having an ostomy is no barrier to sexual intimacy. You will want to make some preparations for sex: Be sure your pouching system is odor-free, and empty it ahead of time. If the pouch or covering seems to get in the way, be willing to experiment with different sexual positions. And even if you're just kissing or cuddling, reassure your partner that physical closeness won't hurt your stoma or disturb the pouch. You may also want to try out a mini-pouch, so that the system is less obtrusive.

S IS FOR SKIN CARE

Cleaning the skin around the stoma is a must for preventing rashes, irritation, and infections. Wash the stoma and surrounding skin whenever you bathe or shower and every time you change pouches. Use simple soaps that are residue-free (soaps containing oil or moisturizers may interfere with the skin barrier you use). Be sure to clean the skin of any adhesive buildup.

T IS FOR TELLING

Most of the people who know you won't know you have an ostomy unless you tell them. And who you tell is up to you. When you do decide to share your story, don't overwhelm your listener with details. Just state the facts simply, and emphasize that your condition doesn't stop you from living the life you want to live.

(This article will be continued next month)

HOW TO TREAT ILEOSTOMY BLOCKAGE

Source: United Ostomy Association, National Office

Symptoms: Thin, clear liquid output with foul odor; cramping, abdominal pain near the stoma; decrease in amount of or dark-colored urine, abdominal and stomal swelling.

Step One: At Home

1. Cut the opening of your pouch a little larger than normal because the stoma may swell.
2. If there is stomal output and you are not nauseated or vomiting, only consume liquids such as Coke, sports drinks, or tea.
3. Take a warm bath to relax the abdominal muscles.
4. Try several different body positions, such as a knee-chest position, as it might help move the blockage forward.
5. Massage the abdomen and the area around the stoma as this might increase the pressure behind the blockage and help it to “pop out.” Most food blockages occur just below the stoma.

Step Two: If you are still blocked, vomiting, or have no stomal output for several hours:

1. Call your doctor or WOC/ET Nurse and report what is happening and what you tried at home to alleviate the problem. Your doctor or WOC/ET Nurse will give you instructions (i.e., meet at the emergency room, come to the office). If you are told to go to the emergency room, the doctor or WOC/ET Nurse can call in orders for your care there.
2. If you cannot reach your WOC/ET Nurse or surgeon and there is **no output** from the stoma, go to the emergency room immediately.
3. **IMPORTANT:** TAKE ALL OF YOUR POUCH SUPPLIES (e.g., pouch, wafer, tail closure, skin barrier spray, irrigation sleeve, etc.)

Looking for answers to your GI symptoms? Ask yourself these questions:

Source: *The Diabetes Health Connection Newsletter*

- ? *What did you eat?* List all foods, beverages, and condiments.
- ? *When did your symptoms occur?* Keep track of how soon after eating the discomfort began and how long it lasted.
- ? *Where is the pain or discomfort?* Describe it as specifically as you can.
- ? *Were you taking any medications?* Write down what you took and when.
- ? *What were you doing and how were you feeling?* Were you tense? In a hurry? Angry? Note your emotional state.
- ? *Does anything seem to make your symptoms worse or recur?* This can be an important clue to the cause.

COLOSTOMY HINTS

Via *Austi-Mate Journal*, Austin, TX and Lawton-Ft. Sill Chapter, Lawton, OK

In a normal state of healthy, the consistency of stool, which the bowel puts out, is related to what is put in. Timing and frequency of meals, emotional experiences, medicines, and sickness also play a role. This is true whether one has a colostomy or not.

Constipation is often the result of an unbalanced diet or too small an intake of food or liquids. A medicine may also be the cause. Fear may be at the root of it, or faulty irrigation practices. These are matters to talk over with your ET nurse or physician. If you have had constipation problems in the past, before surgery, remember how you solved them and try the same methods. **DO NOT** use laxatives without asking your physician.

Diarrhea is usually a warning that something is not right. Diarrhea is defined as frequent, loose or watery bowel movements in greater amounts than customarily experienced whether one has a colostomy or not. Diarrhea must be distinguished from loose bowel movements. Loose bowels are common in transverse, as well as ascending colostomies. This is due to the shortened length of the colon and is not a sign of sickness or disease. Certain foods or drinks may produce diarrhea. If this happens, and you should discover which they are, avoid them.

If you have persistent diarrhea or constipation, talk with your physician or WOC/ET nurse. Discuss the foods and liquids you take, your eating schedule and quantities, and any medications you might be taking. Something may be prescribed for you to help slow things down or to stimulate the bowel—you need a well balanced diet and sufficient fluids to obtain a good output.

Odors are usually associated with gas, loose bowels, or diarrhea. Some foods can produce odor, i.e., eggs, cabbage, cheese, cucumber, onion, garlic, fish, dairy foods, and coffee are among them. If you find one or the other bothers you, avoid it. Some medicines cause stools to have an odor, for example, some vitamins and antibiotics. Discuss this problem with your physician. He may be able to prescribe another type of medicine.

Odors may be particularly prominent with transverse colostomies. This problem may be combated by placing deodorants in the appliance and by frequently replacing pouches. It is best to use odor-proof pouches, which can be thrown away after a single use.

If the colon is emptied well, odors are likely to be less; irrigation may be helpful. It may be necessary to use an oral deodorant; there are several on the market. Discuss these problems with your ET nurse or physician.

*Certain foods
or drinks
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diarrhea*

AGING AND THE OSTOMATE

via the Oakland County, MI Chapter

Growing old is a life-long process, and the physical, social, and psychological liabilities of aging are all part of it. Thanks to gerontology and geriatrics, we know more information than ever before on an intelligent approach to aging.

As we grow older, subtle changes occur in our bodies. The most insidious is our skin. It loses elasticity and becomes thinner and drier, thus becoming prone to wrinkles and irritation. These

*When one
considers the
alternative,
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bad!*

changes can become real problems for those who must wear an appliance all the time. To prevent leakage as the skin becomes more wrinkled, one should stand up straight when changing the appliance. With one hand, stretch the skin so that it is tight, and with the other hand attach the appliance (using a mirror may help you see what you are doing).

The skin over the entire body tends to bruise more easily and heal more slowly as we age. We need to be more careful when removing an appliance. A skin barrier covering the entire area under the appliance, or a very thin application of a skin-care product may help protect the tender skin.

Aging may also result in less strength in the hands. Arthritis, lessening mobility, or pain in the fingers can make it difficult to put together a two-piece appliance. A one-piece appliance may eliminate the task of stretching a pouch over a faceplate. To sum it up, aging is a phenomenon we must all face, and when one considers the alternative, it's not too bad!

SENIOR LINK

There is a web site available for seniors age 55 and over that can be used to check up on any benefits—federal or state—that may be available to them; it is called Benefits Check Up, a free online service from the National Council on the Aging.

Just go to www.benefitscheckup.org fill out a short questionnaire and obtain a report in a few minutes for those services that you may qualify. It may amaze you at the number of programs and benefits available.

**Children in a family are like flowers in a bouquet:
there's always one determined to face in an opposite
direction from the way the arranger desires."**

- Marcelene Cox

KEEP A LITTLE BIT OF CHRISTMAS IN YOUR HEART THE WHOLE YEAR THROUGH

Keep a bit of Christmas sparkle
in your outlook through the year
So your days will still seem special
though the holidays aren't near.

Let the warmth of Yuletide wishes
cheer your heart in all you do,
And there won't be many moments
when you'll get to feeling blue.

Be aware that the One who gave us
the first bright Christmas star
Will lend His care and guidance
no matter where you are.

Stay close to friends and loved ones,
show the world your brightest smiles,
And you'll start a chain reaction
that is felt for miles and miles.

Welcome big and small surprises
with an eager open heart,
So the spirit of adventure
will grace every day you start.

Make a gift of time and talent
to all those who need it so
And you'll be a Christmas present
to almost everyone you know.

Never let your faith diminish,
keep your hopes and spirits high
So you'll find new joy in living
as each week and month goes by.

For the peace of mind we cherish
will be yours along the way
If you keep a bit of Christmas
in your heart from day to day!

- Doris Faulhaber

IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER

By Melissa Baughman, RN ET

“So, why bother?” Is that a question you have ever asked yourself as the monthly get-together approaches, or when only a few people show up for a meeting, or when it comes time to plan something a little more complicated than arranging for a speaker and refreshments? The thought has crossed my mind, on occasion, as I think about the myriad of support groups that are already out there. Do we really need this one? In pondering these questions and taking an honest look at the work the local chapter does, I have come to the conclusion that ,YES, it is an important group.

As I search for the reasons why, the first one that comes to my mind is a selfish one. If I had not come to a local chapter meeting, if everyone had not been so friendly, and if I had not been made aware of the need, I would not have become an ET nurse myself. It was the local chapter which inspired me to go to school and devote my work toward you.

The second reason for the local chapter is because of the very important work I have seen in the visitor program. Time and time again, it has been the ostomy visitor who has been a key factor in turning a patient’s attitude around about ostomy surgery. We in the medical profession can explain over and over again to a patient that he or she can live a normal, fulfilled life after ostomy surgery, but for a great many people the concept is not quite as believable until they witness it themselves. To see a visitor dressed in regular clothes, to hear a visitor talk about the normal, everyday activities they do, and to observe a visitor demonstrate an easy-going attitude toward their ostomy—all of this can be a tremendous lift to many facing this surgery. I have often gone into a patient’s room after a visitor has left to find that the patient is smiling when he/she was not smiling before. Even those who protest and say they “don’t know what to ask, but you can stay for a while if you want” often will keep the visitor in their room for a long time. I can give suggestions to a patient, but I cannot always answer those nitty-gritty questions myself. I can guess, but I don’t fully comprehend all of the emotional aspects a surgery like this can create. I can reassure them that they will adjust and that their life is not over, but it is not the same as when it comes from someone who has “been there.”

The third reason for the local chapter is for the general support it provides for those who have gone through the surgery. All of you are unique as individuals and yet you carry the surgery as a common bond. No one else can quite understand what you have been through, so you come together in support of each other.

So the next time you think, “why bother going to another meeting” — ask yourself, “where would I be without the information, friendship and encouragement from the ostomy chapter meetings?” Maybe you are the one that can bring this good feeling to a fellow ostomate.



Visitor Training is coming soon.....

On Saturday, February 12, the Houston Chapter will have their biannual Visitors Training at the American Cancer Society building at 6301 Richmond Ave. This will train new visitors and will renew for another two years those visitors who previously have been trained. We will use the new training video that was produced by the Fort Worth Chapter of UOA. Training will take place from 9 AM to 12 noon. For more information call Ed Wood 281-493-5015 or Dorothy Andrews 713-789-4049.

- ✓ Don't accidentally lean against an oven door, barbecue grill or fireplace....your pouch will melt quickly.
- ✓ Things could be worse. Suppose your errors were counted and published every day like those of a baseball player!

Volunteers, God Bless Them

Many will be shocked to find
When the day of judgment nears
That there's a special place in heaven
Set aside for volunteers.
Furnished with big recliners,
Satin couches and footstools,
Where there's no committee chairmen,
No group leaders or car pools.
No eager team that needs a coach,
No bazaar and no bake sale.
There will be nothing to staple,
Not one thing to fold or mail.
Telephone lists will be outlawed,
But a finger snap will bring
Cool drinks and gourmet dinners
And treats fit for a king.
You ask, "Who'll serve these privileged few
And work for all they're worth?"
Why, all those who reaped the benefits
And not once volunteered on Earth.
- Author Unknown