Doctors’ Day
March 30
Every year as winter thaws into a warm spring, America honors its physicians with National Doctors’ Day, a special observance first celebrated in 1933 by a wife of a Georgia doctor who wanted to honor her husband. Eudora Brown Almond set aside March 30, 1933 to honor her husband, Dr. Charles Almond, and from that first observance the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution in 1958 commemorating Doctors’ Day. In 1990, legislation was formally introduced in the U.S. House and Senate to establish a national Doctors’ Day. Both houses of Congress overwhelmingly approved the proposal on Oct. 30, 1990, and President George H.W. Bush signed the bill into law, officially designating March 30 as “National Doctors’ Day.”

This late March day has now become a special day to celebrate the contributions of physicians who serve our country by caring for its citizens. Today’s doctors utilize the tools of modern technology, including surgical lasers and robots, and high-powered magnetic imaging devices and networked data streams.

Modern medicine as we know it arguably began in the 19th Century as doctors came to benefit from the use of developing sciences, such as chemistry. It was during this era when physicians began to incorporate other disciplines to help heal and treat patients, including psychiatry, the beginnings of genetics and immunology. Then came reliable prescription drugs. Penicillin began to heal sicknesses, and modern surgery with new tools and technology began to come of age.

The great history of medicine stretches back thousands of year. The Egyptians of 5,000 years ago credited their health care system, as they knew it, for making their people some of the healthiest in their world then. It was the Egyptians who performed some of the first recorded surgeries, including root canals. Doctors of that era long, long ago worked to master supernatural texts as well as being trained in anatomy and diagnosis.

Greece is considered the birthplace of medical ethics. It is in Greece where the famed “physician” Hippocrates wrote a collection of early medical works from which came the Hippocratic Oath for physicians, which is still in use today. By the 9th Century in the Middle East, doctors started practicing in what we would consider hospitals today. Doctors of this era were already using forms of forceps, surgical needles, scalpels and the surgical spoon.

It is from these historical foundations that the modern doctor practices today. The future of medicine can seem limitless. Some believe the future of medicine will be tailored to each patient’s individual genome. Other experts predict with ever advancing technologies that some physicians will see patients from the other end of a screen or robotic device. Other physicians would say that—no matter the technology—the personal touch between doctor and patient is essential and will endure.

On this National Doctors’ Day, we honor the good work and care that physicians in our community and around the nation do in tending to the sick and healing patients of all ages and backgrounds. Whether in shiny glass medical complexes or large hospital campuses, or the family doctor office next door, we salute all those doctors who toil in their profession to make the world a healthier place.
Happy Doctors’ Day

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Everyday in the life of a doctor is worthy of GRATITUDE

You have touched us all, and accompanied our families in sickness and in health, from hopeful beginnings to difficult endings. You have our heartfelt thanks for your dedication to medicine, and to the health of our community.

Valley Baptist Medical Center
BROWNSVILLE

1040 W. Jefferson • Brownsville, Texas • 956.698.5400
ValleyBaptist.net
Recently my husband suffered a terrible accident which left him with serious injuries. As he recovered from such a traumatic event our family doctor Dr. Humberto De La Vega tended to him.

Due to the nature of his condition other doctors also treated him as well each a specialist in his field yet it was clear from the start that Dr. De La Vega stood out. He was always at our side through very dark days and nights always with words of encouragement.

He gave us at this most difficult time not only his knowledge but most importantly his compassion and support through endless nights of unrest and worry.

We are very grateful to this wonderful doctor who to this day continues to provide us with such stability.

May God bless him always. Sincerely, -Rosie Williams

Humberto De La Vega, M.D. Family Practitioner

Yearly eye exams can reveal more than just vision trouble

More evidence points to the importance of routine eye exams, not only to pinpoint potential conditions of the eye, but also to serve as windows to diseases that affect the entire body. Now more than ever it is essential to make and keep annual eye exams, as they can help to reveal the first signs of serious ailments.

Doctors from around the world say dozens of diseases Ñ from certain cancers to arthritis to high blood pressure Ñ can show symptoms in the eye. Under the watchful and knowing gaze of an eye care professional, individuals can get early diagnosis and begin treatment promptly.

According to Dr. Roy Chuck, chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center, there are many systemic diseases that can be seen in the eye. In addition to the conditions mentioned, jaundice can indicate liver disease while retinal detachment and bleeding in new blood vessels may indicate hypertension.

By looking at the color of the cornea, some doctors can tell if a patient has elevated levels of cholesterol. Many people have had their eye doctors be the first healthcare professional to detect the presence of their diabetes.

If an ophthalmologist suspects an underlying medical condition, he or she will likely refer men and women to their primary care doctors for a more thorough examination.

Going to the eye doctor can do more than ensure your vision is sharp. It’s a life-saving decision for many people who have major health conditions diagnosed through the eyes.
Recientemente mi marido sufrió un terrible accidente que lo dejó con lesiones graves. Mientras se recuperaba de un evento tan traumático nuestro médico de cabecera Dr. Humberto De La Vega se encargó de atenderlo. Debido a la naturaleza de su condición los otros médicos, especialistas en diferentes campos, también lo atendían con dedicación, sin embargo, estaba claro desde el principio que el Dr. De La Vega fue quien más se destacó. Siempre estaba a nuestro lado, a través de los días y noches oscuras, siempre con palabras de aliento. Él nos dio en los momentos más difíciles, no sólo sus conocimientos, sino que lo más importante su compasión y apoyo a través de interminables noches de inquietud y preocupación. Estamos muy agradecidos con este maravilloso doctor que hasta el día de hoy sigue proporcionandonos dicha estabilidad.
Recommended immunizations for those age 50+

Routine immunizations can keep people safe and healthy. Certain vaccinations can prevent diseases from producing symptoms, while others can lessen the duration of an illness or make conditions less severe.

Vaccination schedules become a way of life for parents to young children. But vaccinations aren’t just for kids, and adults should keep tabs on their immunization histories to ensure they’re up-to-date with vaccinations for their particular age group and lifestyle.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that the elderly are more likely to die of a vaccine-preventable disease than other age groups. The immune system begins to decline as we age, so the body can benefit from the disease-fighting boost provided by vaccinations. Individuals at any age should discuss immunizations with their doctors, but it’s a particularly important conversation for those age 50 and older.

Vaccine schedules and recommendations may vary depending on where a person lives, but the following immunization recommendations are offered courtesy of the CDC.

- **INFLUENZA**: An annual flu shot can help prevent the nearly 36,000 deaths that occur due to flu each year in the United States. The flu vaccine is designed to combat the current strain of flu, so it is recommended anytime between September to March, which is the prime flu season. People age 50 and older should opt for the injection rather than the nasal form of the vaccine.

- **TDAP**: This vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis and is especially necessary for people who have close contact with young infants. Pertussis, or whooping cough, can be passed on to youngsters and make them very ill. If you’ve never received a Tdap vaccine, the CDC suggests getting it at least once. Individual tetanus boosters should be received every 10 years.

- **PNEUMOCOCCAL**: Pneumococcal disease is an infection caused by the pneumococcus bacteria. It can cause pneumonia, blood infection, ear infections, and even bacterial meningitis. This vaccine is given to adults age 65 and older or to younger adults at their physicians’ discretion.

- **HEPATITIS A**: Individuals with medical, occupational or lifestyle conditions, such as healthcare workers or people with chronic liver disease, may need a two-dose series of the hepatitis A vaccine.

Adults who are avid travelers to various parts of the world that may bring them in contact with animals or people who do not receive the same course of immunizations may need additional vaccines. Speak with a doctor about which immunizations are recommended before travel.
Dr. Antonio M. Diaz, Jr., became my primary care physician about 50 years ago when both he and I were “young whippersnappers.”

He has seen me “through thick and thin,” doing both routine care and emergency care for me ever since, and I recently celebrated my “piano keys birthday”—88.

In large part due to Dr. Diaz’ good care I am still here, doing well and enjoying life with my wife, my three children, and my seven grandchildren.

A thousand thanks/ Mil gracias, Dr. Diaz.

Sincerely yours,

-Robert B. Buchanan
The opportunity to travel is one of the best perks of retirement. Even men and women who are only semi-retired have more freedom to travel than those who are still working full-time.

But while men and women over 50 may have more time to travel, they also must take more precautions when traveling, thanks in large part to medical conditions. Many men and women over 50 have medical conditions that may require they take medication and/or visit their physicians somewhat regularly. But those who want to travel need not let their health prevent them from seeing the world. The following are a few travel tips for men and women with medical conditions.

• **SPEAK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER BEFORE ANY TRIPS.** Whether you are about to embark on an overseas adventure or just spend a couple of weeks visiting your grandchildren, speak to your healthcare provider in advance of your trip. Healthcare providers may recommend certain vaccinations to men and women traveling abroad, and providers also can explain coverage and what to do in case of a medical emergency while away from home.

• **REFILL YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS.** Men and women who must take medication should refill their prescriptions before traveling away from home. Doing so ensures you will have enough medication to last your trip. When filling a prescription, explain to your pharmacist and/or physician that you are about to travel and tell them where you will be going. They may recommend you avoid certain foods native to your destination, or they may give you the green light to indulge in the local cuisine.

• **CARRY A LIST OF YOUR MEDICATIONS AND MEDICAL CONDITIONS WITH YOU WHEN TRAVELING.** Before traveling, make a detailed list of the medications you take and why you take them. The list should include dosage and the names, both generic and brand name, of the medications you take. Include any past medical conditions, such as a heart attack, you have had as well. Carry this list with you when traveling. In case of emergency, the list will alert responding medical professionals to any current or past medical conditions you have so they can better treat you.

• **KEEP MEDICATIONS IN THEIR ORIGINAL CONTAINERS.** Some men and women find it easier to remember to take their medications if they transfer pills from their original containers into pill organizers. Such devices can be very convenient at home, but they can create problems when traveling through customs or even on domestic flights. Pills can always be transferred to organizers upon your arrival at your destination; just make sure they are placed back into their original containers before you return home.

• **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER ON FLIGHTS.** Airplane cabins can be very dry, which can exacerbate dry mouth that results from taking medication. When boarding a flight, speak to the flight attendant and explain that you need some extra water so you can stay hydrated and avoid irritating dry mouth that may result from your medication. If you must take medication while on your flight, don’t be afraid to ask the flight attendant for a fresh glass of water and even a light snack if you need to eat something with your medicine.
Prescription and over-the-counter medications can save lives and help people of all ages manage certain conditions. When used correctly and under the guidance of a physician, medications are largely safe. It’s when medicines are used off-label, shared or taken in error that reactions and injury can occur.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and their Healthy Children Organization warns that more than 7,000 children visit hospital emergency rooms every year for problems related to medication errors. Children are not the only ones in danger. Adults can make mistakes with their medications as well. For example, seniors who may be managing several different types of medications can inadvertently cause dangerous drug interactions by mixing the wrong pills.

Pharmacists work diligently to help prevent medication errors. However, the general public can also do their part. The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy offer these medication safety tips.

- **WHEN A NEW MEDICATION** is prescribed, ask the doctor to explain more about it, including its intended purpose and any common side effects to be expected.

- **MAKE SURE YOUR DOCTOR KNOWS** about all the medications you are taking, including non-prescription products, herbal remedies, dietary supplements, and vitamins. Some medications do not mix with seemingly innocent ingredients. Keep a running list of any medicines you take so you can easily and accurately share this information with your physician.

- **QUESTION ANYTHING** that you do not understand. Check the prescription for dosing information. For refills, make sure the refill information conforms to the original prescription strength.

- **FILL ALL PRESCRIPTIONS** at the same pharmacy and develop a rapport with the pharmacist so that potential drug interactions will be flagged. Pharmacists are well versed in medications and may be able to inform you as to the safety or risk involved in taking an over-the-counter product at the same time that you are on a prescription.

- **USE THE RIGHT DOSING TOOLS.** A spoon from the kitchen is not accurate for measuring out a teaspoon of medication.

Medicines play important roles in personal health. When used correctly, medications are assets, but caution should always be taken to ensure safe usage and storage of any medications.
Few families are fortunate enough to say they have not been impacted by Alzheimer’s disease. A progressive, degenerative disease of the brain, Alzheimer’s impairs thinking and memory, accounting for 50 to 80 percent of dementia cases according to the Alzheimer’s Association.

Though many people’s experiences with Alzheimer’s disease involves an elderly relative, the disease is not exclusive to the elderly. Up to 5 percent of people with the disease have early-onset Alzheimer’s, which most often appears when someone is in their 40s and 50s.

1. MEMORY LOSS THAT DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE.

Memory loss is one of the most common signs of Alzheimer’s. This is especially so if men and women forget things that happened very recently, which can negatively impact their daily lives. Additional signs include forgetting important dates and events; asking for the same information over and over again; or relying on memory aides such as reminder notes or even family members for things individuals could once remember on their own.

2. DIFFICULTY PLANNING.

Some people might start to exhibit difficulty following a plan or working with numbers, be it following a recipe or paying the monthly bills. Concentration is often difficult for those exhibiting symptoms of Alzheimer’s.

3. DIFFICULTY COMPLETING FAMILIAR TASKS.

Daily tasks such as driving to work or remembering the rules of a familiar game will prove difficult for people with Alzheimer’s.

4. DISORIENTATION WITH REGARDS TO TIME AND OR PLACE.

Nearly everyone has had momentary lapses where they forget what time it is or what day it is. But such lapses are not momentary for people with Alzheimer’s, who might even get lost on their own street and not remember how to get home.

5. TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING IMAGES AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Some people with Alzheimer’s have difficulty reading, judging distance or determining color or contrast. For example, a person with Alzheimer’s might walk past a mirror and not realize he or she is the person in the mirror.

6. NEW PROBLEMS WITH WORDS IN SPEAKING OR WRITING.

People with Alzheimer’s might experience trouble holding or joining a conversation. An example is stopping in the middle of a conversation and having no idea how to continue. They might also struggle with vocabulary, often having trouble finding the right word to express what they’re thinking.

7. MISPLACING THINGS.

People with Alzheimer’s might put things in unusual places and then experience difficulty retracing their steps to find those items. This tends to occur more frequently over time, and they often accuse others of stealing items they simply can’t find.

8. DECREASED OR POOR JUDGEMENT.

Poor judgement, such as not visiting the doctor or mishandling finances, is another warning sign for Alzheimer’s. These poor decisions can extend to personal grooming, which men and women with Alzheimer’s might neglect.

9. WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIETY.

Men and women with Alzheimer’s might start to withdraw from society, removing themselves from social activities, projects at work or hobbies. Avid sports fans might no longer be able to follow their favorite team, while social butterflies might grow reclusive.

10. CHANGES IN MOOD AND PERSONALITY.

People with Alzheimer’s might experience mood swings for no apparent reason and can become anxious, confused, depressed, fearful, or suspicious. Acting out of character might also be indicative of Alzheimer’s.
The Brownsville Herald and El Nuevo Heraldo staff would like to recognize our community physicians for the role they play in caring for the sick, their contribution to researching & advancing medicine and promoting good health.

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EMPATHETIC
HUMANE
CARING
COMPASSIONATE
KIND
SYMPATHETIC
FRIENDLY
INSIGHTFUL
CAPACITY FOR TRUST
AMIABLE
We proudly support our doctors and thank them for their commitment and compassion.

Happy Doctor’s Day!

Todd Shenkenberg, M.D.
Medical Oncologist
Harlingen and Brownsville Office

Mark L. Harrison, M.D.
Radiation Oncologist
Harlingen Office

Jose L. Maymi, M.D.
Urologist
Brownsville Office

Dr. Laura Cisneros
Medical Oncologist
Harlingen Office

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