

Insurance Choice Options for FY06

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out the year, you submit a claim for those expenses and are reimbursed with tax-free dollars from your account or for health care expenses only use the Flex Convenience Card to pay with tax-free dollars from your account.

- The UT FLEX Medical Expense Reimbursement Account (MERA) reimburses you for qualified out-of-pocket health care expenses for medical, dental, vision, hearing and pharmaceutical expenses including certain eligible over-the-counter medications.
- The UT FLEX Day Care Account reimburses you for qualified dependent day care expenses you incur in order to allow you and, if married, your spouse to work or to attend school full-time. When you use these accounts, you reduce your taxable income, so you will pay less in income taxes.
- You must re-enroll for UT FLEX during this Annual Enrollment period if you want to be enrolled for plan year 2005-2006.
- If you elected the Flex Convenience® Card, do not discard it. If you re-enroll for plan year 2005-2006, the card will be “reloaded” with your new UT FLEX contribution amount for the new plan year.

Relaxed IRS Rules Allow Grace Period for Medical Expense Reimbursement

The IRS has modified the “use-it-or-lose-it” rule for flexible spending accounts. The result of the change is the creation of a grace period of 2.5 months beyond the end

of the immediately prior plan year for participants to incur eligible expenses against their unused medical account contributions. If you are currently enrolled in the MERA, you can file a claim for reimbursement only from your remaining FY2005 plan year account for eligible expenses incurred through Nov. 15. This should result in a significant reduction in plan forfeitures.

- Current participants should consider the effect of carryover MERA expenses during the grace period before making elections during annual enrollment for the next plan year.
- The grace period does not apply for the Day Care Reimbursement Account.

NOTE: The UT FLEX Card cannot be used for any expenses incurred during the grace period if you want to be reimbursed from your current FY2005 account. After Aug. 31, 2005, the UT FLEX Card can be used only for FY2006.

Remaining Health Insurance Meetings

- Operations Center Building second floor Rio Grande Room — noon, Friday, July 15
- Harris County Psychiatric Center Auditorium — noon, Wednesday, July 20
- LBJ Hospital East Wing — noon, Wednesday, July 20
- University Center Tower, Room 1505C — noon, Tuesday, July 26
- Retiree session: Operations Center Building, second floor Rio Grande Room — 11 a.m., Friday, July 22

Class Registration & Late Registration Schedules

- **Dental Postgraduates**
now through Aug. 19
Late registration — Aug. 20-26
- **Dental Hygiene** — Students with no holds already have had their registration processed. Those with holds will need to clear them and then call (713) 500-3335 and request to be registered.
- **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**
Medical Clinical
Research
Nursing

Health Information Sciences School of Public Health

By first letter of last name, initially; then open registration for the categories above is July 16-Aug. 26. Late registration is Aug. 27-Sept. 2.

- A-D (past)
- E-J — July 15
- K-Z (past)

Access the Class Schedule Online at:
<http://registrar.uth.tmc.edu/>

National Student Conference Meets Here, Features Former Surgeon General

M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D., former Surgeon General of the United States, will deliver the keynote address during the American Medical Student Association's Achieving Diversity in Dentistry and Medicine 2005 Primary Care Leadership Training Program. Elder's presentation, a Dental Branch Centennial Event celebrating diversity, will be 10 a.m., Wednesday, July 27, in the Dental Branch auditorium. Her speech is open to all Health Science Center employees and students and will be followed by a question and answer session.

Other speakers include Charles Terrell, Ed.D., vice president for diversity and policy and programs with the Association of American Medical Colleges. His presentation, “Advancing Diversity in Medicine — Never Compromise the Dream,” will begin at 1:30 p.m. in DB 207. Richard Haught, D.D.S., president of

the American Dental Association, will speak at 3 p.m. on “Improving Access to Oral Health Care: A Challenge We Must Face as a Society.”

All health science center employees and students are invited to these presentations, as well as to that of Tawara Goode, director of Georgetown University Medical Center's internationally known National Center for Cultural Competence. Goode will speak at 10 a.m., Monday, July 25, on “Achieving Cultural and Linguistic Competence: Implications for Medical and Dental Students.”

The University of Texas Health Science Center student hosts for the conference are Alice Luan, a fourth-year dental student and Rowena Reyes, a fourth-year medical student. Visit <http://www.db.uth.tmc.edu/> for full program information: Contact: Paula O'Neill at Paula.N.ONeill@uth.tmc.edu. ★



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DEADLINES

Submit information to be considered for publication in *The Leader* by the 15th of the month one month prior to the desired time of publication. Requests for feature articles require a longer lead time and will receive strategic consideration. Send electronic information in Word format (no PDFs or posters) and digital photos as unedited, high-resolution images at 300 dpi or better. E-mail to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu. Include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address. Mail hard copy to *The Leader*, c/o Pamela Lewis, Office of Public Affairs, University Center Tower, 1200, or fax to (713) 500-3037. For information regarding *The Leader*, call Pamela Lewis at (713) 500-3040.

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CALENDAR

JULY 15 – AUGUST 14

Please submit calendar items for the **August 15 issue** of *The Leader*, which covers **August 15- Sept. 14**, to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu, by **July 17**.

★ **July 21** — “**Legal Issues in Complementary and Integrative Medicine**” is the subject of Michael H. Cohen, J.D., assistant professor of Medicine and director of Legal Programs, Harvard Medical School Osher Institute, **noon**, UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center Hickey Auditorium, sponsored by the Integrative Medicine Program, directed by Lorenzo Cohen, Ph.D., adjunct associate professor of behavioral sciences at the UT School of Public Health at Houston. Free and open to the public. Contact: Lisa Gower, (713) 563-8953, lgower@mdanderson.org.

★ **July 27** — **2005 Achieving Diversity in Dentistry and Medicine Leadership Training Program** features former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn

Elders as keynote speaker, **10 a.m.**, Dental Branch.

★ **July 27** — Lt. Col. Robert Morecook, Ph.D., the executive officer of the Houston Medical Response Group of the Texas Medical Rangers, will speak on **Public Health Service Opportunities with the Texas Medical Rangers**, the Medical Reserve Corps of the Texas State Guard, **noon**, School of Public Health, Room 102A. For more information on the Rangers, visit <http://swc2.hccs.edu/texasmedicalrangers/>.

★ **July 28** — “**Stem Cells in the Mammalian Skeleton**” is the topic of Paul J. Simmons, Ph.D., program head, Stem Cell Research, Peter MacCallum, Cancer Institute, Melbourne, Australia, during the IMM Seminar Series, **11 a.m.**, Institute of Biosciences and Technology Building, 2121 W. Holcombe, 11th Floor Boardroom. Contact: Ruby. T.McFarland@uth.tmc.edu, (713) 500-2461.

New Certification at School of Public Health

A new 16-hour program leading to a graduate certificate in public health is now available through the UT School of Public Health. Application deadlines are Aug. 1 for the fall semester; Nov. 1 for the spring semester and May 1 for summer 2006. Those who seek formal training in public health are encouraged to apply. The program of study consists of five courses covering the core disciplines of public health. Classes will be offered at Houston, the four regional campuses, at the UTSPH Regional Office in Austin, and as online courses.

The certificate is suitable for:

- Those who work in public health, but who lack formal public health training;
- Future students who intend to apply these courses toward their public health degree

program at the School of Public Health;

- Those delivering health care who need knowledge and skills in the core public health disciplines, but do not need the full master's of public health curriculum;
- Exceptional students currently enrolled in affiliated undergraduate degree programs.

Certificate students may apply for the MPH or other degree programs at the school. If they are admitted, courses taken as a certificate student during the previous five years and in which they received a grade of A or B will count toward completion of their MPH degree program.

Visit <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/cert/> for applicant criteria, curriculum and course requirements. ★

UT Health News You Can Use

Diabetics with High Blood Pressure Benefit from Older, Cheaper Pills

In people with diabetes, traditional diuretics work as well as newer medications — ACE-inhibitors and calcium channel blockers — in protecting against heart attack and improving survival, and may offer more protection against heart failure, according to results from the largest hypertension clinical trial ever conducted.

The latest findings from the “Antihypertensive and Lipid-Lowering Treatment to Prevent Heart Attack Trial” or ALLHAT, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, are published in the June 27 issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

The multi-center ALLHAT study is conducted under a National Institutes of Health contract with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Barry R. Davis, M.D., Ph.D., professor of biostatistics in the UT School of Public Health is the principal investigator and a co-author of the *Archives of Internal Medicine* article. ALLHAT Project Manager Sara Pressel, a faculty associate at the UT School of Public Health, also is a co-author.

Study results showed that people 55 or older with type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure have a reduced risk of heart failure and stroke if they take diuretics to control their blood pressure.

“These findings confirm ALLHAT's original conclusion that diuretics — rather than newer, more expensive drugs — should be the preferred first therapy for high blood pressure,” Davis said. “We might be able to save 40,000 to 50,000 serious illnesses per year, including heart failures and strokes, if people with high blood pressure incorporate a diuretic into their regimen.”

About 73 percent of adults with diabetes have high blood pressure — for diabetics, defined as greater than or equal to 130/80 mm Hg or use of prescription medications for hypertension. Both diabetes and high blood pressure are major risk factors for coronary heart disease, and the combination puts people at particularly high risk for developing heart disease and renal disease.

— **David R. Bates**