

# A Breath of Fresh Air

A newsletter for Reliant Medical Group COPD patients and their families

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*Edited by Margalit Lai, RN, MS, Lead COPD Program Care Manager*

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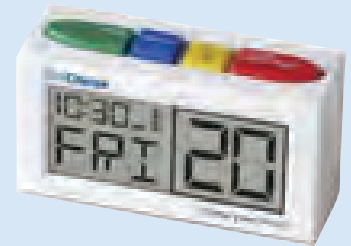
## Greetings

I hope you have all been enjoying our mild winter. There is, of course, no guarantee it will last all the way till spring, but we'll take it for as long as it lasts. Even the monster storm that hit most of the East Coast had the decency to not leave us too much snow before departing. So here we are once again starting a New Year and this should always mean new beginnings. In the COPD Program our new beginning means we have a wonderful new nurse joining us who will take care of Pamela Howell's patients. Her name is Kelly Wilder and she will introduce herself in this issue.

## Some help in taking those pills on time

As usual, we try to share useful information with you that will, hopefully, make your life a little easier and help you feel better. So here is one such idea. I hear quite often from many of you that it's hard for you to remember to take your pills or use your inhalers. There are now medication alarms you can set to remind yourself to take your medications. One is called the Medcenter Talking Alarm Clock and Medication Reminder and can be purchased at Amazon and other online stores.

This particular device costs about \$34.00. There are also devices that include a pill box that needs to be filled once a week and includes a talking alarm – these are a little more expensive. My suggestion is that you or your children (or grandchildren) go online and search for “a talking pill box.” There are many options and hopefully you will find the one that is best for you.



## Making those prescriptions a little more affordable

I know the issue of medication affordability is always on your minds. Unfortunately, we have a very complicated system that keeps changing so a simple question about the price of a particular drug is not easy to answer. It turns out though that there is a website that you might find helpful, [www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com). This website can help you find the lowest price for a prescription drug. Right now in February, no one is in the “donut hole” so you are only paying a co-pay which is usually reasonable but when you do get in the donut hole, this website could be a very useful tool for you. Some of you, though, have to deal at the beginning of the year with a deductible. That means that until you pay your deductible, which can run anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, your medicines and tests will not be covered. In other words, you have to pay for them out of pocket until you have paid off your deductible. Don't hesitate to ask your kids or grandkids for help or call Kelly or me if you have a question on this.

## Meet Kelly Wilder, RN – Our Wonderful New COPD Care Manager



“As a relatively new member of the team here at the Reliant Pulmonary clinic, I am excited to have the opportunity to join the COPD Disease Management Program. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you face-to-face in the treatment room for edu-

cational opportunities, routine care and occasionally restorative care. I look forward to meeting more of you and partnering in your health care.

Much of my previous experience as a nurse has prepared me for this new role as COPD Care Manager. I worked for a community hospital in Pennsylvania where I gained a vast array of experience in many areas of patient care including cardiac complications, neurological diseases, various orthopedic issues, general surgery, and, of course, pulmonary disease processes. The knowledge and skills I gained while working with many seasoned nurses gave me a strong foundation in patient care.

On a personal note, I am a single mom of five children ranging in ages from 22 years old down to 12 years old. When they were all younger and we were living in Pennsylvania, we were a homeschooling family living alongside Mennonite and Amish families. We developed some lifelong friendships within this community and were able to have a front row seat at a simpler way of life. As we transplanted ourselves back here to Massachusetts, we brought with us the fond memories of Pennsylvania to be paired with the excitement of living around family once again.

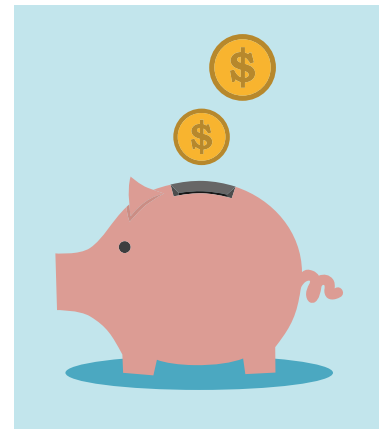
As I wrap up my introduction, I would like to leave you with this. As the patient, you are the one who knows your body the best. Don't be afraid to speak up with your questions, ideas and concerns. You can be your strongest advocate.”

*Kelly Wilder, RN*  
*COPD Care Manager*  
*Division of Pulmonology*



### Taking advantage of similar medications

At the beginning of the year many of you also find out that a medication you have been on is no longer covered by your insurance, or has a much higher co-pay. The reason for that is that the insurance companies negotiate new prices once a year with the drug companies. When you encounter such a problem, please call Kelly or I and we'll see if there is a similar medication that is now covered by your insurance at a price that is compatible with what you paid last year.



## On quitting the habit...

Although the vast majority of you have quit smoking, some of you still struggle. So today, I would like to share with you good advice from other COPD folks who have been successful. It was not easy for any of them, but they did it anyway and are all very happy about it so hopefully they can inspire you to succeed too.

★ **Brenda Dragon** struggled for many years to quit smoking. Even repeated hospitalizations and severe episodes of not being able to catch her breath did not help her quit. Finally, Brenda's breathing got so bad that for several days she did not think she would make it. While in the hospital, of course, she did not smoke and this time was smart enough (or desperate enough) not to resume smoking afterward. Four months later, Brenda cannot believe how well she has been doing. She got so well, she can hardly believe it herself. She is not wheezing anymore and is able to walk a lot more than before without feeling like she is going to fall down. Brenda hopes that the smokers among you will be motivated by her story to quit without having to "go through hell," as she put it.

★ **Geraldine Robinson** wanted to share with those of you who are still struggling to quit smoking her success story. Geraldine felt that not having any cigarettes at all at home did not really prevent the temptation the way it does for some people, but rather caused her extreme anxiety. The idea that there was no cigarette available to her actually increased her desire to smoke. So, per her father-in-law's sugges-



tion, she kept a pack of cigarettes on top of her fridge. Knowing that the cigarettes were there for her if she needed them prevented the anxiety but the fact that it required some effort and thought to get to them prevented her from actually reaching out and getting a cigarette. Those few minutes made all the difference. They gave her the pause she needed to think whether she really wanted to smoke or maybe she would be better off skipping that cigarette. That was 16 years ago and Geraldine has not smoked since!

And finally, if these inspirational stories have not helped you, here is a good advice from Kevin Martin, MD. Dr. Martin attended a conference of pulmonologists and their advice was for patients who are on the patch and still have occasional cravings to take a Nicorette lozenge or gum instead of a cigarette. That provides the nicotine rush that one craves but without falling back into the habit of smoking.

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***Never say: "I did not want to bother you" ... "I thought I would get better" ... "I had an appointment with you already scheduled." Please just call when you need us!***



## Patient Contributions

➔ **Charlie Scioscia's** best friend moved to Texas and decided, for safety reasons, to leave his fancy New England Patriots jacket in Massachusetts and so he offered it to Charlie. Charlie was very happy, of course, but, unfortunately, he could not fit into the jacket. That served as the final straw for Charlie who already knew for a long time that he needed to lose weight. Charlie stated he wanted to be able to wear the jacket at the next Super Bowl in February and that he was confident the Patriots would win again. That idea worked as a wonderful motivator. Charlie started taking daily walks, at first by himself and then with friends who decided to join him. He started paying attention to his portion size and eating healthy. Eating healthy, of course, does not mean eating tasteless food. However, it does mean not frying your food (especially deep frying) and eating some fruit and vegetables with each meal, which can make a big difference. Of course, cutting down on junk food does not hurt either. Charlie says he is feeling much better and has a lot more energy. I hope this is an encouraging story for those of you who are still struggling to lose weight. Well, as we all know by now, the Patriots lost in the postseason but I'll let you know in the next *Breath of Fresh Air* if Charlie fit inside the jacket so we'll hopefully have at least one winner!



***Do not regret getting old. It is a privilege denied to many.***



## Here's how to reach us

*By phone:*

Margalit Lai: (508) 368-3936

Kelly Wilder: (508) 368-3935

*Our email address:*

[margalit.lai@reliantmedicalgroup.org](mailto:margalit.lai@reliantmedicalgroup.org)

[kelly.wilder@reliantmedicalgroup.org](mailto:kelly.wilder@reliantmedicalgroup.org)

*Our "old fashioned" address:*

WMC Suite 390, 123 Summer Street, Worcester, MA 01608

*Online you can check us out at:*

[www.reliantmedicalgroup.org/copd](http://www.reliantmedicalgroup.org/copd)

