



HURA news

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Germ Resistance: The Battle Starts in the Home

In mid-November, Chinese and British scientists reported finding a strain of E. coli that is resistant to a last-resort antibiotic called colistin—and this resistance can be transferred to other bacteria. William Hanage, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health warned about the growing problem of drug-resistant infections.

What is causing the increase in drug-resistant infections?

Hanage says that the increase is caused by antibiotics being used inappropriately. These drugs don't work against things like flu and colds that are caused by viruses, so you shouldn't expect them if you go to see your doctor about typical winter respiratory infections. Also, we should remember that enormous volumes of these drugs are used in agriculture, not only to keep animals healthy but as growth promoters to improve yields. Drug resistance is getting worse because every time we use an antibiotic, whether in humans or animals, we give an advantage to any bacteria that are resistant to it! So this means we have to be careful how we use antibiotics, because they are precious.

The new discovery about colistin is especially worrying, Hanage says, because it is one of the last lines of defense we have against drug-resistant infections. If we can't use colistin, more people will die from infections, because we won't be able to treat them. The gene for resistance can be transferred to other bacteria; he says, it's like downloading a resistance app.

Beware of germs lurking in the kitchen. If we focus on simple ways to fight bacterial resistance, we can start in the home, especially the kitchen.

According to Geraldine C. Wyse, RN, the germiest thing in your home is the kitchen sponge. If you must use one,

she says, throw it in each time you use the dishwasher. Also, put your sink strainer into the dishwasher to kill the germs it incubates.

The advice WebMD.com offers for dealing with the kitchen sponge is to microwave it. However, before you zap a sponge, make sure it contains no metals and make sure the sponge is completely wet, not dry. Scientists who have tested this method reported that simply microwaving sponges for two minutes at high power killed or inactivated over 99 percent of pathogens in sponges that had been soaked in a "witch's brew" of fecal bacteria, viruses, protozoan parasites, and bacterial spores.

The Mayo Clinic's online newsletter advises keeping in mind that antibacterial soap is no more effective at killing germs than regular soap. It says that using antibacterial soap might even lead to the development of bacteria that are resistant to the product's antimicrobial agents—making it harder to kill these germs in the future. It recommends frequent hand-washing as one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness. Work up a real lather and get between your fingers and the back of the hand, too. Hand-washing requires only soap and



Continued to page 3

COMING EVENTS

Friday, January 29

Crimson Men's Hockey vs.

Princeton, 7:30 p.m.

Bright Hockey Rink, Section 6.

All tickets \$10.

Registration deadline:

January 8. Contact Henry

Terwedow at 508-481-1165 or

hterwedo@gmail.com for

additional information.

Separate flyer was mailed

in December.

Being Planned

March 14 (week of)

Reception for HURA members

who are retirees from the

University's libraries

April

Edward M. Kennedy Institute

for the U.S. Senate; tour and

lunch

May or June

Mt. Auburn Cemetery tour

Boston Pops

HURA Annual Meeting

Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 168th production: *That 1770s Show*

February 6 to March 6, 2016

This is not a HURA event.

If you are interested in attending, follow the instructions in the article that follows to obtain tickets.



Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 168th production: *That 1770s Show*

It's 1775, and it's no tea party in

Boston! After spoiled little brat Anne

Heritance demands that her pushover

father Governor Bucky Hampalace

raise taxes yet again, the colonists are

yankee doodle done with British rule.

With the help of the governor's new

gold-digging wife Mae Flower and

hunky fur-trapper Seymour Beavers,

the colonists plot to kidnap the little

brat and send her back to England for

a permanent tea-time-out. However,

when the colonists run into delu-

sional sailor Ahab Bitualliar, who has

followed a mysterious giant fish into

Boston Hahbah, they discover they

may have a bigger fish to fry. Will

sea monster Codzilla exact revenge

on the colonists for murdering his

kin or will he become their catch of

the day? Will fiery seamstress Betsy

Gloss find a way to trim taxes down

to size or will recovering alcoholic

Benjamin Dranklin drown in booze

and tears? Don't tread on these

colonists as they pursue life, liberty,

and happiness.

Tickets: Starting January 12, 2016,

tickets will be available by phone

through the HPT box office. Call

617-495-5205, Monday through

Saturday, noon-5:00 p.m. In the inter-

im, for more information on tickets,

email tickets@hastypudding.org.

Images from the Holiday Luncheon

HURA's popular holiday luncheon at the Oakley Country club drew 165 HURA members and their guests.



Henry and Kathy Terwedow (left and right), with Patrice Donoghue.



Judy Genthner and Ann Flentje, old friends from Gutman Library.



Members of the 'Cliffe Notes' sang before lunch.



Diantha Brown with the snowman mascot.

Marion Crowley

Marion Crowley was born and raised in Massachusetts, but went south to Brown University for her college education. Upon graduation in 1952, she started a job at the Harvard University School of Education, where she became a long-term, valued member of the staff. She retired in December 1995, having served under three deans, while gathering faculty and student friends and institutional memory that reached well beyond the walls of Longfellow Hall.

One of her early assignments at the Ed School was as secretary to Prof. Neal Gross. When he took a sabbatical to write up a research project, he used a grant that permitted him to do this in Paris. The funding included his secretary, Marion—her first opportunity to travel abroad, but by no means her last.

In her free time she learned to sail. She worked as crew across the Atlantic and back on the *Caribbee*, a 95-foot Baltimore privateer built in Essex, Mass. What started as a three-month leave from GSE stretched into a six-month sail and a

lifelong love of the sea. For two three-week stints, she later sailed as paying crew on the ketch *Yankee* with its owner, the renowned American sail-training pioneer, adventurer, lecturer, and author Irving

Johnson and his wife Elekta. They sailed the North Sea, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean, and on various European rivers and canals.

Both at Harvard and at sea, Marion made life-long friends, including many during her long association with HURA.

On November 4, 2015, the HURA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting at Finz Restaurant in Salem, near the sea, to host a special luncheon to honor Marion's long service on the Board and to present a formal citation honoring their friend and colleague "in recognition of her 19 years of extraordinary service to HURA".

Marion now lives in Brooksby Village in Peabody with her 20-pound cat Buddy.



Marion Crowley was honored by her friends on the HURA Board.

Germ Resistance: The Battle Starts in the Home

Continued from page 1

water or an alcohol-based cleanser that doesn't require water. Wash for 20 seconds or while humming two verses of Happy Birthday to you!

And while we are still at the kitchen sink, nurse Wyse recommends using liquid soap not bar soap. Germs can grow on a bar of soap and be transferred to the next person using it.

ConsumerReports.org urges that

you check your fridge's temperature. Some types of disease-causing bacteria can breed and spread rapidly in your refrigerator if the temperature inside isn't cold enough. Use a



refrigerator thermometer to check the temperature regularly. It should be below 40° F (their experts recommend 37° F as ideal) and the freezer

should be no higher than 0° F for optimal food safety.

Read more from Prof. Hanage at the Chan School at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/targeting-drug-resistant-infections/>.

Sources include *T.H. Chan School's online newsletter*; *Geraldine C. Wyse, RN, writing in Boston Seniority magazine v. 39 #9, Oct. 2015*; *WebMD.com*; *MayoClinic.com*; and *ConsumerReports.org*.

NIH Study Reverses Decision on Blood Pressure Levels

For decades, medical experts agreed that the goal should be to keep blood pressure readings below 140/90. Two years ago, a prestigious panel of 17 national experts approved even higher limits, but not over 150/90, for those age 60-plus and those with diabetes or kidney disease. This was to avoid potentially dangerous side effects—such as dizziness and falls—from too much blood pressure medication.

Now the National Institutes of Health (NIH) strongly disagrees and has announced that lower blood pressure greatly reduces cardiovascular complications and deaths in older adults, and this benefit offsets the side effects of medications required to reach these levels. This decision comes from the initial results of a landmark clinical trial sponsored by NIH called the Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT). The intervention in this trial, which carefully adjusts the amount or type of blood pressure medication needed to achieve a target systolic pressure of 120 millimeters of mercury, reduced rates of cardiovascular events, such as heart attack and heart failure, as well as stroke, by almost a third and the risk of death by almost a quarter, as compared with those who maintained the former target systolic pressures of 140 or 150.

HURA, Human Resources, and Benefits Have Moved

Harvard Human Resources and the Benefits Office, formerly on the 6th floor of the Smith Center (Holyoke), have relocated to 114 Mt. Auburn St. HURA did not move with them.

HURA's Harvard mailbox has gone instead to 124 Mt. Auburn St. Mail addressed to the following will reach us. It's just a mailbox, however, so don't expect to find a HURA person there.

Harvard University Retirees Association
124 Mt. Auburn Street, 3rd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02138

Harvard Health Letter Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the *Harvard Health Letter* are available free to longer-service staff and benefits-eligible Harvard retirees. In order to establish your complimentary subscription, send your name and mailing address to HURA Managing Editor Malcolm Hamilton at mch12938@comcast.net.

HURA will send addresses in bulk to the company that handles subscriptions for the Medical School. The mailing address must be the same as the one in PeopleSoft that HURA uses to send other mail to you. If you move, send both your old and your new address to jberk@belvoir.com. Submitting a Change-of-Address form to the benefits office will not affect your *Harvard Health Letter* subscription address.

HarvardKey Update

Some retirees have reported problems getting their HarvardKey—the new system that replaces the Harvard Personal Identification Number (PIN). Don't give up. Harvard wants you to have one.



See the Sept/Nov issue of *HURA News* for details.

The main reason IT staff have seen thus far for problems is that the retiree doesn't have a working PIN and/or does not have an active email address on file. Claim your HarvardKey from the 'New' tab, as opposed to 'Current PIN Holder' tab. IT staff need to be able to send a confirmation code to the email address on file in the system. If it is your old Harvard email address that is no longer working, the process will not succeed. It needs to be replaced by a working home email address, and IT staff can do that for you.

If you get the error message that data is missing on your account, call the HUIT Service Desk at 617-495-7777. If the problem is a missing email address, they can fix that. If it's a bigger data discrepancy (there will be some), it might take a day to fix, but a ticket will be opened and you will be notified when you can proceed. Also, if you get the code "HarvardKey:1009", you should tell IT folks. It helps them pinpoint which data element is missing.

Deceased HURA Members

We announce with sadness that since January 2015, Harvard Human Resources has reported the deaths of the following HURA members: *Theodore E. Aaberg, Stanislaw Baranczak, Jan G. Beckwith, Sally E. Benson, Doris H. Collier, George Cosgrove, Marcia J. Deihl, Pauline E. Glasser, Horace Goodridge, Robert F. Gray, Michael J. Johnson, Eleanor M. Lee, Hugh J. O'Connor, Rin Paik, Edward L. Pattullo, James H. Shaw, and Diane A. Weinstein.*

HARVARDKEY

Poetry and Pastries

On November 9, HURA hosted an afternoon of poetry readings and tea in the living room at Phillips Brooks House. Twenty-five HURA members and their friends attended. And from the feedback we've received, we're encouraged to think about planning other poetry programs in the future.

Two published poets were guest readers.

Moira Linehan is the author of two collections of poetry: *If No Moon* (2007) and *Incarnate Grace* (2015) in which she explores her 2009 breast cancer diagnosis and her approach to life since then. Her debut collection,

If No Moon, chronicles the loss of her husband and was awarded the 2006 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry. In 2008, it was named an Honor Book in Poetry in the 8th annual Massachusetts Book Awards.

Mildred J. Nash is the author of *Beyond Their Dreams* (1989), *A Faithfulness of Birds* (2013), and *Stars for Starters, A Night Sky Poetry Guide* (2014). As a Harvard graduate student, she worked with Elizabeth Bishop and assisted her in reorganizing the Lewis Wharf Library. After Ms. Bishop's death, Ms. Nash wrote and published *Elizabeth Bishop's Library: A Reminiscence*.



Millie Nash and Moira Linehan read their poems.

A SHOWER OF UNKNOWNNS

A shower of unknownns sustains the bloom that certainty may all-too-quickly lose. More than just garden plots need growing room to bear their harvests.

I wonder how you'd view these all-one-sided stories of your final days. You said so little. I didn't interrupt your silence. I was there. You knew I'd stay alert, aware.

I'd pictured two lives cupped so closely that whatever brewed would brim alike. But now I ask, "Was I right, Jim?"

I wonder now *Who am I without you?* "Widowhood," strange play, comes unrehearsed: unasked questions, unquestioned answers—who knows how many lines might be reversed? Too simple's too soon done. Our audience—and all we actors—move behind a scrim where light, at most, reveals its hesitance.

Pandora latched that lid almost too late—what if that thing with feathers had escaped?

From *A Faithfulness of Birds* (Powder Horn Press, 2013)

FERRY

The day's last ferry, slipping out for the mainland, each window on its many decks lit before me, a Frank Lloyd Wright design, clean-lined stained glass, upon the nighttime waters. Barely moving—this ferry, its reflection—and I'm held on shore at a window. In six days I'll walk back into its hungry mouth. In sunlight's glare that ferry's mouth, blacker than the woods tonight behind me.

Beyond the harbor, the ancient boatman's rowing, rowing since the world began, coming toward me in his open dinghy, ferryman for what will be my passing. The island's ferry's passed. Or Charon's already claimed me as his passenger, so slowly do we glide I don't even know I'm on board.

From *Incarnate Grace* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2015).



The Medicare B Fix for 2016

The budget deal signed by President Obama on November 2 reduced the previously announced increase in Medicare B premiums for 2016. Anyone who is in the lowest income bracket but is not protected from any increase at all by the hold-harmless provision of the law will pay Part B premiums of \$121.80 per month in 2016.

To help pay for the resulting shortfall to Medicare, a \$3 surcharge, which is included in the \$121.80 premium, will be added to monthly Part B premiums for the next few years.

Absent this budget agreement, the 2016 premium for Medicare Part B for this group would have increased significantly to \$159.30. Rates for those in higher income brackets may be found on the Medicare website at <https://www.medicare.gov/>. Click on Your Medicare Costs, then on Part B costs. Scroll down to find 2016 figures. Persons in higher income brackets will pay a multiple of the \$121.80 rate.

Pending Social Security COLA Legislation

In response to the lack of a Cost of Living Adjustment this year in Social Security checks, U.S. senators and representatives have both proposed legislation.

Senator Elizabeth Warren has introduced, with seventeen other senators co-sponsoring, the **Seniors and Veterans Emergency (SAVE) Benefits Act**—to give retirees, veterans, and Americans with disabilities a one-time payment of about \$581. That's the equivalent of a 3.9%

increase over the average Social Security benefit—the same percentage salary raise that America's top CEOs received last year. **S.2251** (11/05/2015) has been read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance.

The **SAVE Benefits Act** would fully cover the cost of increased payments by closing corporate compensation loopholes, and it would extend the life of Social Security.

In the House of Representatives, Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R-ME-2) has introduced the **Give Our Seniors and Veterans the COLA They Deserve**, H.R.4071 (11/18/2015). That Bill has been referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and to the Committees on Ways and Means, and Armed Services, which referred it to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

You can follow the progress of both of these pieces of legislation on <https://www.congress.gov/> and sign up to be notified when changes occur.

Taxation of Social Security Benefits

It is well known that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not tax income from Social Security. However, the federal government does tax it. The formula for determining how much of your income is taxed takes into consideration the fact that some of the money employees use to pay their share of the Social Security payroll tax (FICA) is already after-tax.

Up to 85 percent of a recipient's benefits may be subject to the individual income tax, depending upon the recipient's overall income. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that income taxes on Social Security benefits totaled \$51 billion in 2014, an amount that was credited

to the Social Security and Medicare trust funds after tax returns for 2014 were filed. However, those taxes accounted for only 4 percent of the tax revenues received by the trust funds, which got the other 96 percent from payroll taxes.

About half of all Social Security beneficiaries owed some federal income tax on their Social Security benefits in 2014. Because of legislation and changes in the economy, the share of benefits subject to tax has risen over the past several decades.

How Are Taxes on Social Security Benefits Determined?

Under current law, the share of Social Security benefits that is subject to the individual income tax is determined by a three-tiered tax structure:

- Social Security beneficiaries with income equal to or below \$25,000 (for unmarried taxpayers) or \$32,000 (for married couples filing jointly) pay no taxes on their benefits. About half of all recipients were in this tier in 2014.
- Beneficiaries with income that is higher—up to \$34,000 for unmarried filers and \$44,000 for joint filers—pay taxes on up to 50 percent of their benefits, with the percentage increasing from 0 percent to 50 percent as income rises above the first tier level.
- For beneficiaries with incomes in the highest tier, as much as 85 percent of the benefits are taxed as income—also with the percentage increasing as income rises.

CBO estimates that Social Security beneficiaries with incomes under \$40,000, on average, owed less than 0.5 percent of their benefits in income taxes, while those with incomes over \$100,000 owed tax on 21 percent.

Adapted from a blog posted by Joshua Shakin and Kurt Seibert for CBO in February 2015.

HURA Visits Bristol



Bristol's picturesque deep water port attracts vessels of all sizes.



Guide describes Blithewold's history before the tours of its gardens and arboretum.



Ship models and half hulls at the Herreshoff Marine Museum in Bristol, RI.

HURA members and their guests set out on two Yankee buses from the Alewife T Station for Bristol, Rhode Island on October 29. Despite the murky morning start, spirits were high. After a 90-minute ride and crossing the Mt. Hope Bridge over Narragansett Bay, we arrived under bright, sunny skies at Blithewold House to begin our day-long tour of the seaport community of Bristol.

Blithewold is an English-style manor house that was formerly the home of the Van Wickle family. It is surrounded by gardens and an arboretum overlooking the Bay. After exploring the beautiful grounds and the greenhouse, the group set off for the Herreshoff Marine Museum to see the collection of boats and models created by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, which designed and built boats for the U.S. Navy, private yachts, and racers that competed for the America's Cup.

Lunch was at Redlesen's Rotisserie & Grill on Bristol Harbor, featuring Oktoberfest food and beverages. After lunch, the group divided into two for docent-guided tours of Linden Place, the home at various times of the DeWolfs, Colts, and Barrymores. The DeWolf family originally made their money from privateering and the slave trade before suffering financial ruin. Prosperity returned in Victorian times with the Colt family. The actress Ethel Barrymore married into this prominent American family.

Everyone enjoyed the beautiful interiors and the home's collection of furniture and art. In addition to the visit to Linden Place, there was a tour of historic Bristol, which has the oldest, continuous Fourth-of-July celebration in the United States. Following the bus tour of this sailing and shipbuilding community, the day in Bristol ended with a ride through Colt State Park with its dramatic views of Narragansett Bay.

Bev Sullivan

**Harvard University
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