

# ESSENTIALS BY DEBI & JIM BOWMAN

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Total Benefit Services

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### Prescriptions – Generic or Brand Name

As everyone is aware, the debate continues. Current statistics say that 45% (up from 42% in 2001) of all prescriptions in the USA were generic in 2002. What is odd, is this number is close to 25% in the Metroplex.

With the increasing cost of prescriptions and more taken per person, looking at lower cost alternatives may just be the best answer available. Another, is to use the availability of ordering prescriptions through Canada. (See Page 4 of this newsletter for phone numbers and web-site information.)

The definition of a generic drug is that it is therapeutic equivalent to the brand name. With costs averaging 40% less, they become more appealing to many. AND, most health plans offer a lower co-pay for generics. According to the FDA, “The standards for quality are the same for brand name and generic products.”

Generics must deliver the same amount of active ingredient in the same timeframe as the original product. They must have the same quality, strength, purity and stability as brand name drugs. There is no evidence that generic drugs cause any more side effects than brand name equivalents.

Generic drug manufacturers are subject to the same regulations, standards, approvals and inspections as brand name manufacturers. IN FACT, 50% of all generics are manufactured by the brand name company.

Generic drug manufacturers do not have to demonstrate the clinical trials that have already been used for the brand name drug. This is called a bioequivalent medication.

**Here are just a few examples of generics available:** Fluoxetine, generic for Prozac, saves around \$50. Lisinopril, generic for hypertension medications Zestril and Prinivil. Metformin, generic for diabetes drug Glucophage.

Don't be fooled by advertising, and the celebrities who promote them. Better to take a skeptical view, since ads make it sound as if it is just right for you. But is it? Will it interact with other medications, are there adverse side effects and are there alternatives? These are just a few of the concerns you should have.

When your physician writes a prescription for you, it makes sense to ask if using a generic (or if there are other lower cost alternative medications) is ok for you. It's your body and expense, so the choice is yours.

### Health Insurance for Foreign Travel

Is your child going to be overseas for school? Or work? Does work take you to other countries? Planning a vacation outside the USA?

We have foreign travel health insurance plans for any duration of time. This will cover illness and accidents while traveling abroad. Contact us for rates and plan details.

We also offer health insurance for residents of foreign countries traveling to the USA.

# Life Insurance

Did you purchase a non-variable (investment type) Universal Life or Whole Life cash value life insurance in the past 20 years? Is it still in force?

If you answered yes to these 2 questions, it is very important to have someone review your policy. The interest assumptions used to place these fixed interest cash value policies may no longer be valid considering current economic interest rate climate.

When interest rates were higher, the cost of the plan used these interest rates. Now with interest rates at an all-time low, in many cases at guaranteed interest rates, these plans may expire after the guaranteed time frame built into them. You may be required to put in additional premium (over the amount originally quoted to you) just to keep the policy in force. Some plans will not permit this and will just expire. You would then be left with a worthless policy and zero cash value.

There is a very good chance they will not last until the original maturity date (usually age 95 or 100). It is recommended that these policies be reviewed so that you understand what your policy and your options.

Current policies are issued with much lower interest rate assumptions. AND there are some other alternative plans that may be more cost effective.

# Business Opportunities

Each day we are asked about job opportunities. With job lay-offs, lack of corporate hiring and the sluggish economy, jobs are hard to find.

However, many self-employment sales opportunities exist for those who have the energy and drive to do something different. For some, this will mean changing what they do after their regular job. For others, it means having more time to put into a new career. Some of these require licensing, one does not.

Now may be the time to consider a career change, a part-time business or just to investigate available opportunities in self-employment. There is a saying that goes: changing what you do is nothing more than doing something different in your spare time.

# DONATE BLOOD

Carter Blood Care has a program called Four Seasons blood donor. This means you donate during each season of the year. Current usage is over 400 people a day need blood. Most need more than 1 pint. To meet the transfusion needs, the DFW area takes 800 volunteers per day to donate blood. Can you be counted as one of these?

Although the current economy makes giving gifts difficult, a gift of blood costs nothing. Giving the gift of life requires 30 minutes of your time. It is never too late to donate. Contact Carter Blood Care at: Richardson 972-437-4483, Plano 972-612-2098, Lewisville 972-219-1666, Irving 972-259-4303, HEB 817-283-4787, Arlington 817-274-0812, Dallas 214-351-8111 or 214-823-4483, Fort Worth 817-335-4935 or 817-263-5810, Grand Prairie 972-988-6051 and Mesquite, 972-270-2185.

**As a bonus, Carter Blood Care gives a complimentary Cholesterol screening Beats having to pay for one!!**

# TRANS FATTY ACIDS

Reports show Trans Fatty Acids are worse for your health than saturated fats. They increase your risk of heart attack by raising "bad" LDL cholesterol and lowering levels of protective HDL cholesterol. This effects the ratio of good to bad cholesterol in a negative way and consumption needs to be minimized. Trans fatty acids are present in high-fat dairy products, hydrogenated vegetable oils, such as cakes, pies and cookies, fries, and all deep-fried foods.

Of course, proper diet and exercise raise good cholesterol and improves the ratio.

## PrePaid Legal Plans

We are now offering a low cost way to provide legal protection for you family or business. Rather than searching for an attorney, one call to PPL and you get a referral. Imagine, being able to ask questions, have documents reviewed and even have your will prepaid without having to pay each time.

Instead, for approximately \$25 a month, you would now have access to legal representation. That's just \$300 per year (which can be just 1 hour of attorney billed time). The plan can include 24 hour coverage. This can be advantageous in traffic ticket situations. Cost \$1 per month.

Everyone of us needs a will. If you have anything you wish to pass to your heirs, you need a will. Those with minor children, need one. KEEP this in mind, if you do not have a will, the State of Texas will distribute your assets, according to Texas's intestate laws, which may or may not be the way you want it. The cost to you may be more than not having a will.

For the cost of joining, your personalized will is prepared free of charge, with just an additional cost of \$20 for your spouse's. This alone makes this plan a good deal. Come join over 120,000 Texans who have made the decision to get the legal representation they need without having your own personal attorney.

**Without a will**, the probate court will have to set up a conservatorship to manage your children's share of your property. A judge decides who manages the assets. When the child turns 18, he/she gets their share, whether they can handle it or not. **With a will**, you decide who manages the child's assets, and when and how they receive their share when they become legal age adults.

## Women – Did You Know

There are over 62 million American women in the workforce, and another 20 million expected to be added in the next decade. Over 7 million women are the primary wage earner in their family.

Ironically, this same group is underinsured for disability! Odd, considering the following statistics.

Women are 3 times more likely than men to lose income as a result of disability. Less than 1/2 of all working women have disability coverage. 90% of women will be solely responsible for their financial decisions at some point in their lifetime. Let us prepare a personalized quote for you.

## Now is the time

With the war in Iraq underway, and the stock markets seemingly at their lows, now is an excellent time to considered indexed annuities.

When you consider the insurance companies are providing up to 10% bonus just for transferring money to them, this alone is good. With a guarantee of principal and plenty of upside potential, there is no safer way to invest without risk.

Where else can you earn 10% just for changing accounts? This money is yours to keep no matter how the market performs. A feature of an indexed annuity is that your principal can NEVER DECREASE !!

Interest credit for most plans is based on the change in the S&P 500 (or another select market index) based on on each anniversary of the plan. The next few years appear to be quite promising for growth. Once interest is credited to your account, this amount is the new base and can never go below this amount.

This means should the markets decrease (and history shows that there will be down market years), your principal NEVER goes down over the contract period. You get to keep 100% of all interest credited to your account.

If you can find a safer way than this to take advantage of market gains without risk, let us know!

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## Total Benefit Services

### Web-Sites of Interest

Medicare – [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid – [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov)  
Social Security Administration – [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)  
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP's) – [www.texcarepartnership.com](http://www.texcarepartnership.com)

### Canadian Prescriptions

We have been made aware of 3 different on-line Canadian prescription drug plans. This may be the place to purchase your prescriptions at a cost less than buying in the US either at the pharmacy or by mail. Savings vary by drug and so you must go on-line or call toll-free to see if it works for you.

[www.crossborderpharmacy.com](http://www.crossborderpharmacy.com) or 1-888-626-0696  
[www.tcds.com](http://www.tcds.com) or 1-888-372-2252  
[www.thecanadianconnection.net](http://www.thecanadianconnection.net) or 1-800-498-8425

What you need to know and how to order information is listed. This is a good option for those without a prescription drug plan, such as those on Medicare, those with riders for certain conditions or for those who do not have any drug benefit at all.

We would appreciate any feedback on these plans should you decide to use them. We can share your experience with others.

### Spring 2003 Class Schedule

May 14 7-8pm                      Seminar on the importance of having a will.  
Site to be determined.

**Please RSVP to us** at 972-578-5095

This newsletter intends to offer factual and up-to-date information on the subjects discussed, but should not be regarded as a complete analysis of these subjects. Professional advisors should be consulted before implementing any option presented. It is meant for informational use only.