

Last updated: Friday, January 14, 2005

Weather for Meriden



Heavy Rain
Time: 10:00 am
Temp: 47 F
RealFeel Temp: 31 F
Humidity: 86 %
Winds: N at 18.42 mph

powered by AccuWeather.com
Your source for the Best Weather on the Web

Home News Features Opinion Columnists Milestones Sports Classifieds Public Notices Obituaries Business Directory
About Us | Contact Us | To Subscribe | Archives | Write the Editor | Newsstand/Single Copy Sales

Top Jobs

[More Top Jobs](#)

Classifieds

- [JOBS](#)
- [CARS](#)
- [HOMES](#)
- [PERSONALS](#)
- [ALL ADS](#)

[Search Classifieds](#)

Special Sections

[Medical Directory](#)

[Business Directory](#)

Photo Gallery

[View our photo gallery.](#)

[Click here to order photo reprints](#)

[record-journal.com](#)

Vent

For an opportunity to express your opinion on any topic click [here](#).

Quick Poll

Johnson visits dialysis center; congresswoman hears about need for better medical coverage

By Jeffery Kurz, Record-Journal staff

MERIDEN — The Rev. Leo J. Daily has been on dialysis for a little more than two years. Daily, of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Yalesville, goes to the Central Connecticut Dialysis Center on Research Parkway three times a week. Each dialysis session runs about 3 ½ hours.

On Wednesday afternoon, U.S. Rep. Nancy Johnson, R-New Britain, asked Daily if the sessions left him feeling "pretty good."

"Oh, yeah," replied Daily. "I'm 91 years old."

Johnson was visiting the center at the invitation of medical staff and representatives of organizations throughout the state who wanted to call attention to problems associated with kidney disease and legislation that would update Medicare coverage.

Medicare does not cover the full cost of dialysis. Daily told Johnson it accounted for 80 percent of his care, with 16 percent covered by insurance he receives through the archdiocese.

The legislation also aims to modernize Medicare payments to dialysis providers, which are not automatically updated each year. Providers say that has left them underfunded.

"Part of the problem is that all Medicare programs have an annual update, except for our program," said Chris Ceccarelli, northeast region legislative advisor for the American Nephrology Nurses' Association.

"So we're always behind the curve in meeting costs," Ceccarelli said. "The biggest thing is trying to influence Representative Johnson."

Kidney failure is on the rise. The number of people with kidney failure is expected to quadruple over the next 20 years. The increase is connected



Margaret O'Connell of Wallingford talks with U.S. Rep. Nancy L. Johnson, R-New Britain, at the Connecticut Dialysis Center on Research Parkway in Meriden Wednesday. (Chris French / Record-Journal)

The Web

[Search The Web](#)

[Web Directory](#)
[Yellow Pages](#)
[White Pages](#)
[Meet Someone](#)
[My Page](#)
[City Guide](#)
[Lottery Results](#)
[Weather](#)
[Movie Listings](#)
[Maps/Directions](#)
[Horoscope](#)
[Greeting Cards](#)

For your New Year's resolution, what is your top priority this year?

Exercise
Quit smoking
Weight loss
Patience
Enjoy life
Work harder

to the increase in diabetes, which in turn is connected to the epidemic of obesity across the country, said Dr. Dale Rowett, medical director of the Central Connecticut Dialysis Center.

About 400,000 Americans have kidney failure and stay alive by dialysis. About three-quarters of them rely on Medicare to pay for treatment. In Connecticut, about 3,000 residents are on dialysis. Black and Hispanic Americans have a higher incidence of kidney disease.

Among patients Johnson visited Wednesday afternoon was Margaret O'Connell, a Wallingford resident who has been on dialysis for three years. Or, as she put it, "too long."

While O'Connell praised the staff at the Meriden dialysis center, she said there were many days in which she would rather not face the treatment. "But the doctor said to me one day, it's either the treatment or die," O'Connell said. "So you get ready and go out the door."

After meeting with patients, Johnson spent more than an hour talking with staff and others associated with providing care about the issues targeted by the legislation. Those included annually updating the Medicare payment system, educational programs and encouraging home dialysis.

Talk also centered on preparing patients for dialysis. Johnson was told there is no coverage for what is called pre-dialysis.

"Most of the calls we receive are patients who say 'I just found out,'" said Kimberly K. Hathaway, chief executive of the National Kidney Foundation of Connecticut. "They don't have the information, they don't have the education and we don't have the funds to give them the information they need. We find we have to spend more money on them later."

"So you think that there's a lot of savings to be had by covering pre-dialysis?" Johnson asked.

"Most definitely," Rowett said.

Johnson, chairwoman of the House Ways and Means health subcommittee, said whole sections of the Medicare system were "terribly stressed."

"The problem with Medicare is that if you've got a system that's not working it's always expensive to change," she said. "So, the whole system is basically broken."

"We have a lot of problems right now," she said. "Luckily, yours is relatively small."

Afterward, Hathaway said she appreciated the chance to have her concerns heard. "It's a big opportunity, and it's made a difference before," she said.

jkurz@record-journal.com

Community Connections

[Clubs](#)
[Government](#)
[Schools](#)
[Churches](#)
[All connections](#)

Our Publications

[Record Journal](#)
[Westerly Sun](#)
[Berlin Citizen](#)
[Plainville Citizen](#)
[Southington Citizen](#)
[Tiempo](#)
[Town Times](#)

(203) 317-2213