

# Mercury visible in pre-dawn sky

You might be able to spot Mercury in the pre-dawn sky on Jan. 15 if you have an unobstructed horizon. First locate Antares and Mars which are now twelve degrees apart in the southeast. Draw a line from Antares through Mars and continue in the same direction toward the horizon. Mercury will be along that line but only a few degrees above the horizon. By the end of the month Mercury will be brighter and higher at dawn and better placed for viewing.

The moon will be approaching the bright star Spica (SPY ca), in Virgo, on the morning of the 17th. On the following morning the moon will be four degrees below Spica.

Last Quarter Moon is at 4:17 p.m. on Jan. 18. The moon is beginning the last quarter of its orbit around the earth.

Venus is at inferior conjunction with the sun on the 18th. It is located between the earth and the sun and is not visible. The planet continues to move rapidly and will be visible in the pre-dawn sky within a week.

**EARLY MORNING** skygazers will see a very nice alignment between the moon, a star and two planets on the 21st. The crescent moon will be located in Scorpius, Ten degrees to the east (left) of the moon will be Antares. Draw a line from the moon through Antares and you will come to Mars. Continue the line past Mars and you will encounter Mercury.

At 3 a.m. on the 22nd the moon will be 0.3 degrees below Antares. This is a very close conjunction (grouping). Don't worry about an actual collision ever occurring. The two objects may look like they are very close together, but billions of miles separate them. Much the same alignment from Antares to Mars and Mercury will be visible about five hours later at sunrise, except the moon will be four degrees to the east of Antares.

On the morning of the 23rd the moon will be four degrees below Mars. Once again draw a line from Antares, past Mars, past Mercury and you will encounter Venus. Saturn will be officially in the morning sky as well. It will be located below the line that passes from Mercury to Venus but Saturn will be too close to the horizon to be seen. Wait until next week to try for Saturn.

**NEW MOON** occurs at 2:20 p.m. on Jan. 26. The moon is located between the earth and the sun and is not visible. In fact, the moon is located exactly between the earth and the sun and will eclipse (cover) the sun. The bad news is: The eclipse will not be visible from the Detroit area. The shadow of the moon will touch the earth along a line running from South America to Antarctica. Only those along that line will be able to see the eclipse.

Look for the beautiful two-day old crescent moon after sunset on the 28th. The moon will be above the west and southwest horizon. Notice how the unlighted portion of the moon seems to glow with a soft light of its own. This is caused by "Earthshine." Sunlight strikes the earth, is reflected up to the moon and re-

flected from the moon back to our eyes.

Mercury will be at its greatest elongation (apparent angle) from the sun on the morning of the 31st.

An excellent aid for learning constellations and keeping up to date with the sky is the monthly "Sky Calendar." A one year subscription is \$6. It is available from Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 48824.

# Medicare patients are notified

gerontology

A. Jolayne  
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Q. My brother is in a nursing home. His Medicare coverage ran out but he didn't know until two weeks following the discontinuance. Who is responsible for his bill?

A. By law, Medicare certified nursing homes are required to in-

form the resident and/or their family prior to the discontinuance of Medicare coverage. The resident and their family or legal responsible party is considered not to have known of this discontinuance until notification is received. Usually a telephone call precedes written notification. This should occur several days before the Medicare benefits are to be discontinued. If the notification procedure is not done within a timely fashion the resident or responsible party is not responsible for payment to the home. The resident or responsible party can initiate procedures regarding the waiver of liability. The nursing

home and the carrier of the home's Medicare policies should be informed. If the nursing home has been lax in its responsibilities the resident is not responsible for charges incurred. You must however, be able to prove that the nursing home did not comply with the Medicare rules.

Q. Please explain how hospice works at home.

A. The hospice philosophy is that death is a part of life. The purpose of hospice is to provide an alternative to the conventional treatment for the terminally ill. Pain control is of primary concern and the hos-

pice helps patients to live the final stages of their life with dignity, self-respect and control. Pain control is of primary concern and the patient's family is taught how to keep their loved one comfortable while remaining at home.

Hospice provides a variety of services to help the patient live at home. Those services include: regular visits by a Registered Nurse, physician social work and home health aide services, volunteer care, physical and occupational therapy, religious care, emergency/acute care inpatient services and bereavement care.

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