

Health Notes

By Audeen Wagner



STROKE Many people know a little about strokes, but few of us know enough about prevention and treatment. Vernonia Family Medicine is endeavoring to bring information to their patients that will help save lives and prevent serious after

effects of strokes.

What is a stroke, anyway? It is described as brain damage caused by a lack of blood flow to part of the brain. The brain requires a constant supply of energy, provided by the oxygen and nutrients that are in the blood stream. If blood flow is restricted or cut off at any point between the heart and the brain, portions of the brain become deprived of oxygen.

Symptoms. The most important feature of stroke symptoms is that they are unexpected and develop suddenly. The most common symptom is a sudden weakness or numbness of one side of the face, arm or leg. Other indicators might be: sudden visual disturbance in one eye; slurred or loss of speech; sudden dizziness; and severe headaches. Symptoms may develop over a very few minutes, or hours.

The most important thing to know is that, when experiencing any of these symptoms, it is imperative to seek immediate medical assistance. "Don't even take time to call the clinic," said Judy Hargis, Physicians Assistant at Vernonia Clinic. There are new treatments available, most notably a new drug called t-PA. This drug is a 'clot-buster' and is very effective in

preventing severe stroke damage, but it must be administered very soon after diagnosis to be effective. "Go directly to the hospital Emergency Room or call 9-1-1. Do NOT drive yourself," Judy emphasized.

Risk Factors. These include: Age, strokes occur at any age, but those over 65 are at greatest risk; Family history of stroke; High blood pressure; Atherosclerosis (narrowed artery channels); Heart disease; Diabetes; Smoking; and High Cholesterol. Of course, we can do nothing about aging and family history, but, fortunately, a healthy lifestyle can help minimize some risk factors. Quitting smoking, controlling high blood pressure through diet or medication, eating a low-fat, healthy diet, and becoming physically active can greatly decrease the risk of having a stroke.

Knowledge is Power! Stroke is the third leading cause of death, and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States. Every 45 seconds, someone in America has a stroke; every three minutes, someone dies of one. Educating yourself about strokes may be a lifesaver for you or a loved one.

PROGRAM AT SENIOR CENTER On February 25, a free presentation will be held at the Vernonia Senior Center, between 10:30 and 11:30. The subject will be "Fall Prevention" and will be led by Judy Hargis, P.A., and Kristine Samuelson, Physical Therapist. People of all ages will benefit from this meeting, and the public is invited. Save the date!

MAMMOVAN: The next Mammovan visit to Vernonia will be February 25. Call 503-429-9191 to make an appointment.

Living and Eating for a Health Heart seminar will discuss exercise and heart-friendly food options

Tuality Healthcare is offering a free seminar on Living and Eating for a Healthy Heart on Saturday, February 21 from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

It takes more than an apple a day to keep the cardiologist away. It takes a commitment to exercise. Come spend a morning reviewing the benefits of physical activity on your cardiovascular system, mental health, and physical appear-

ance (not to mention the size of your clothes!). Naji Hamdan, M.D., will offer a fun and fundamental approach to exercise, providing tips that even he has used personally for good results.

Also enjoy some heart-friendly food options presented by Mark Macuk, a chef with New Seasons Market, who will whip up a few healthy entrees, a side dish, and a dessert.

Tuality dietician Julia Lapp will join him to provide tips on how to simplify recipes to make them easier to prepare, and to talk about making smart food choices. Participants will be able to sample their wonderful culinary creations.

Those who arrive early may get free health screenings, for blood pressure and body composition, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

No registration is required. The seminar will be held at the Tuality Health Education Center, 334 SE 8th Ave., Hillsboro.

Scholarships available now

The Oregon Health Forum will award \$500 scholarships to two high school seniors from Oregon and/or Southwest Washington whose efforts have improved awareness about physical, mental or public health issues in their communities.

The application deadline is March 9, 2004. Scholarships will be awarded in June, 2004.

To apply, submit the following to Oregon Health Forum, 325 NW 21st, Suite 104, Portland, Oregon 97209:

- A cover sheet with name, address, phone number and e-mail address.

- An essay of no more than 500 words explaining how your efforts contributed to improving awareness of health care in your community. Also discuss your goals for a career in health care and how your work or volunteer experience influenced or contributed to that goal.

- A letter of recommendation from an individual who is familiar with your activities related to your career goals.

For more details, check out the Oregon Health Forum website at <www.healthforum.org> or call 503-226-7870.

Learn how to prevent domestic violence

A six week workshop on Domestic Violence Prevention will be held in St. Helens, starting February 9. Sponsored by the Columbia County Women's Resource Center will be from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The workshop will include the effect of domestic violence on victims, on the community and on children, how to identify battering personalities, how to identify healthy relationships, safety planning and self care.

For further information, call Columbia County Women's Resource Center at 503-397-7110.

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James Baldwin
American writer (1924 - 1987)

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