

Community Medical Clinic of Aiken County

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Expanding services offered

Aiken Regional donates echo and ultrasound machines

February is American Heart Month and the Community Medical Clinic is celebrating it through the donation of new equipment. Aiken Regional through Dr. Greg Eaves, cardiologist and clinic board member, donated their old echocardiogram and ultrasound, and Dr. Eaves' office donated a treadmill stress test.

This is great news for the patients they serve as the clinic will be able to expand the services offered. Instead of having to send patients to specialist where they would have to pay for those tests, they will be able to get them done at the clinic at no cost.

"I think it's going to help with access to care and help us answer some questions we otherwise wouldn't be able to discover. Having the ability to do echocardiograms and ultrasounds of

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Jamie Mothkovich, the clinic's executive director, Dr. Greg Eaves, and Nurse Practitioner Elizabeth Seal stand with the donated equipment.

Patient shares experience with heart health

This month is American Heart Month. The purpose of this is to raise awareness on the importance of a healthy heart and to encourage healthy habits that help reduce the risk of heart disease.

To help spread this awareness, a patient at the Community Medical Clinic will share his experience with Congestive Heart Failure.

Ronnie was diagnosed with Congestive Heart Failure last year. He had a lot of fluid build up and while he was in the hospital, he had an echocardiogram test done which was used to diagnose him with the condition. He was prescribed Entresto and then started to make some diet changes. He recently had an appointment with a cardiolo-

gist and was told he is doing well and that his heart is pumping pretty good for someone with Congestive Heart Failure. Because of that his next appointment is scheduled for a year out.

"I changed my diet, I take the medication like I'm supposed to, I check my blood

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Heart Disease

Welcome to Libby's Corner - a new addition which Nurse Practitioner Elizabeth Seal has been invited to share health tips with our readers.

February is American Heart Month, and I am going to talk about heart disease. This month, the clinic is celebrating new diagnostic tools thanks to Dr. Eaves and Aiken Regional Medical Centers. The older equipment was donated, and Dr. Eaves and his team will be donating their time to do echocardiograms and treadmill testing.

What is heart disease? Heart disease is caused by damage to all or part of the heart, damage to the coronary arteries, or a poor supply of nutrients and oxygen to the organ. Some types of heart disease, such as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, are genetic. These, alongside congenital heart defects, can occur before a person is born.

We all know someone who has a bad heart, in my case we lost my father to his last heart attack when he was only 57. He lived a full life; but he worked too much, ate too much, smoked cigarettes and drank. It doesn't matter that he changed his ways after a while - he paid the price for the mistakes he

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Machines

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the heart here is going to be a huge help in managing people who have congestive heart failure and making a diagnoses of congestive heart failure,” Eaves said. “We can also use the same machine to do limited ultrasounds of their abdomen, gall-bladder, liver and so forth. And understand if there is any pathology there that needs to be explored further.”

This much needed equipment is a blessing, and all it took was just asking for it.

“What I did was just ask. The hospital was getting new equipment and I asked the Aiken hospital ‘have y’all thought about potentially donating the old machine?’ And they were kind enough to donate the echo machine. Then in our cardiology office, the Aiken Physician Alliance (APA), they were getting a new treadmill. And I said ‘well what are you going to do with the old one? What do you think about donating it to the clinic?’ And they said ‘OK. We’ll do that.’ So I just asked. And these folks were kind enough to do that,” Eaves said.

A number of techs at Eaves’ office and the hospital have volunteered to donate their time to administer these tests.

“Again I just asked. And it’s so awesome that there are so many folks that want to help. And you just mention it and they stand up ‘yeah I want to help.’ I’ve just been completely blown away by that. We’re going to have a lot of volunteers coming

through to help with echos and ultrasounds and we’ll be able to do stress tests down here. So I’m really excited about 2022,” Eaves said.

As this month is American Heart Month, preventing heart attacks and strokes is something the clinic wants to focus on. Heart attack remains the number one cause of death for both men and women in this country.

“So much of it is preventable. And the two biggest ways we can prevent heart attacks and prevent strokes is with lifestyle modifications - helping people understand what a health diet is, how important it is to get your weight down and not smoke and exercise regularly. And on the other side is screening. Making sure people get screened for high blood pressure, diabetes, having a cholesterol screening. All of those things are modifiable risk factors for heart attack and stroke,” Eaves said. “So too many times we’re reactive in our medical care. A lot of that is because people are not going to see physicians or providers for screenings. You feel healthy. You don’t think your blood pressure is high or blood sugar is high until you have a problem. So we need to get the message out that we need to be proactive. Everybody needs to take responsibility for their own health. You need to be making sure you’re having these things screened. You need to make sure you’re exercising and you’re doing the right things for your own health because beyond heart disease, most of the problems that does treat every day are due to lifestyle choices.”

Heart

From Pg. 1

pressure, check my weight and everything. It’s a routine now. I have to do it to stay healthy. I tell everybody trying to stay healthy is work,” Ronnie said.

When reflecting on American Heart Month, he said there are three things you need to do to keep your heart healthy.

“Number one is prayer. I give God the glory. If it wasn’t for Him, I wouldn’t even be here. Second is diet. Change your diet especially when you get to my age. I’m 55. The things you used to eat, you can’t eat like that anymore. You have to watch your sodium, your cholesterol, your carbohydrates and your sugar. Even though your body has to have a certain amount of that in you, you can’t overdo it. Number three take your medication and get on some natural supplements - vitamins, magnesium, and things like that. Vitamin D and Vitamin B3 are very important because they keep your immune system strong,” Ronnie said.

He talked about his old lifestyle and what he thinks led to being diagnosed with this condition.

“I believe it was the way I was living. The way I was eating, not keeping up with my blood pressure and blood sugar levels, not realizing I’m not 25 anymore. I tell young people to start taking care of yourself now. Once you turn 45 and older, it’s going to tell on you. Exercise you know. It’s going to tell on you,” Ronnie said. “Just take care of your heart. You do those three things I just said and your heart is going to be fine.”

Corner

From Pg. 1

made when he was younger. His father died at age 50 of the same problems.

Today, my siblings are all in our 60s and yet no one has had a heart attack. All of us modified our risk factors and the most significant one I think is that we are all physically active. We also all eat healthy with plenty of vegetables. As Dad’s health worsened, we began to make those changes and reduced our risk for heart disease.

The key risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and smoking. Some other risk factors include diabetes, overweight and obesity, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use. These risk factors work together to create poor health.

About half of people in the U.S. (47%) have at least one of these three risk factors. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the U.S. Aiken County is in the Stroke

Belt, where deaths to cardiovascular disease are higher than the rest of the county.

It is important to know the warning signs for a heart attack so you can take advantage of the new technology that can save your life. EMS can stabilize you and get you to a hospital where cardiologists can insert stents or perform bypass surgery. Or you can see a provider who will help sort out what might be something less serious.

The American Heart Association recommends seeking medical care for the following warning signs.

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes – or it may go away and then return.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This can occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other possible signs include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

In 2013, The American Heart Association

came out with a list of 7 key health factors to indicate ideal cardiovascular health. They include:

- A blood pressure below 120/80 mm Hg
- 60+ minutes/day of vigorous physical activity for children, 75+ minutes for adults
- Healthy levels of cholesterol below 170 mg/dl
- Healthy diet
- Healthy weight
- Quitting or never starting smoking
- Blood sugar below 100 mg/dl

I plan on looking at those key health factors each month and discussing how you can make these changes. Some of these changes will work together. If you have a healthy diet, you will be at a good weight and you may not need as many medications. Remember change is something that takes practice and is best done in small little steps. It is never too late to change, the small improvements you make today will not only make you healthier and avoid heart disease, but it also keeps your brain healthy and reduces your risk for cancer. Stay tuned to next month and feel free to let me know what more I can share with you regarding health by emailing cmcaiken@gmail.com.