

VISITING HOURS:

Learn To Recognize Heart Disease Warning Signs

BY WILL HURLEY, MD
Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.

When someone goes into cardiac arrest, it's a race against the clock to save his or her life. Each day about 700 Americans die before they reach the hospital. During American Heart Month in February, it's important to learn to recognize the warning signs of heart disease.

WHY ARE WARNING SIGNS OF HEART DISEASE IMPORTANT?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Coronary artery disease becomes increasingly common in men over age 40 and in women after menopause. Ignoring warning signs of heart disease can be fatal.

Heart attacks can occur without warning, but often there are symptoms of heart disease years before the attack. Some common warning signs are chest pain with exertion or activity, shortness of breath, swelling in the legs and feet, leg pain with walking, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. If you



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have any of these symptoms, speak with your health care provider about them. If you follow your provider's advice, you may be able to prevent a major heart attack.

CHEST PAIN (ANGINA)

Angina is a temporary pain, tightness, or pressure in your chest that occurs if your heart muscles are not getting enough oxygen. The pain may travel to your throat or jaw, around your back, or to your left shoulder or arm. It is possible to have a heart attack with no warning, but many people have angina for some time first.

Angina that occurs when you exercise and disappears with rest is called stable angina. Angina that is new or comes on unexpectedly or when you are resting is called unstable angina. Unstable angina is much more serious than stable angina and may mean that without immediate medical attention a heart attack will soon occur.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Shortness of breath is the most common warning sign of heart failure. Heart failure doesn't usually mean your heart has stopped. Generally it means that your heart is having trouble pumping enough blood around your body. This causes fluid to build up in and around your lungs. The fluid makes breathing difficult.

Heart failure can usually be treated. If it is not treated, it will get steadily worse. If you begin to get breathless going upstairs or after less and less exercise, or if you need more pillows to breathe comfortably in bed, you need to see your health care provider as soon as possible.

SWELLING (EDEMA) IN THE LEGS AND FEET

Millions of Americans have leg swelling from causes other than heart disease. However, the collection of fluid in your legs can be a warning sign of heart problems. This is especially true if you have other symptoms, such as

shortness of breath. You may have swelling in your abdomen, too. Tell your health care provider if you notice fluid collecting in your legs, ankles, or feet.

Pain in the legs with walking (claudication) Pain that occurs in the calf muscles when you walk can be a sign of heart and blood vessel disease. This type of pain happens only with activity and stops a minute or two after you stop the activity. It occurs when your muscles are not getting enough oxygen because of blocked arteries. Blockages in the leg arteries may mean there are blockages in the heart (coronary) arteries as well.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

High blood pressure and high blood cholesterol are both warning signs of possible heart problems in the future. You usually can't tell if you have either high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol without measuring your blood pressure or testing your blood. Both measurements may be done routinely at health check-ups. A blood pressure

machine may be available in your local pharmacy. Both blood pressure and cholesterol screening may be offered in your community from time to time. High blood pressure and high blood cholesterol can be treated by your health care provider.

RISK FACTORS

It's also important to know your risk factors. These include items such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, smoking, diabetes and family history. Your health care provider can help you sort out your risk factors and find ways to live a healthier lifestyle.

SUMMARY

If you have any of these warning symptoms, you should see your health care provider, so he or she can help you determine if you have heart disease.

This weekly column is produced by the public relations office at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital to promote healthy lifestyles and provide useful medical information to our community.

With Death, Comes The Gift Of Life

BY VAL FARMER

Let's walk for a few minutes on sacred ground.

I have witnessed the final few months of life of a man whom I grew to love as a friend. His radiation treatment for cancer had resulted in a cure for the disease but left another fatal problem - the inability of his bone marrow to produce white blood cells. He was kept alive by blood transfusions but after a while his body began to reject the transfusions.

He had time to say his good-byes. His children, grandchildren and friends from far and near came to his home and ultimately to his bedside to recount memories, enjoy his humor and share his faith in a life after death.

What sweet times those were. He and his family exchanged an overwhelming outpouring of love and support. To him and to his family, his long walk into the valley of the shadow of death was kind and merciful.

He had time to do many things he wanted to do. Despite his frail condition, he and his family were able to attend a special screening of Avatar at a local theater. There were other events too sacred and meaningful to recount.

He had been given a gift. *Life is precious. Relationships are precious. Time is precious.* What if this were you? What if it were me? What if you or I were given a similar gift of knowing that our days on earth were truly limited. Each minute, each day, each week, each month counts.

Goals are the key. What is the key to a quality life when death is foreseeable? It is purpose. It is wonderfully concentrated energy, focus and sustained effort toward meaningful goals. It is ridding the self of trivia, the unimportant, the foolish endeavors of a world that desperately disguises us from our own mortality.

The gift is liberating. The chaff is easily discernible from the wheat and readily discarded. There is no time for chaff.

The gift is defining. The anguished soul gets to know oneself intimately. Who am I? What do I really want? What contribution to life can I make with my remaining days? What is undone that needs to be done? What haven't I done that I always wanted to do? What has been missing from my life? The "why's" become important: Why this? Why that?

The gift brings life. He was dramatically alive - vitally and vibrantly alive. He was fully and painfully aware of the awesomeness of his power - the power to



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choose, to act and make happen what he wanted to have happen. Within certain limits.

Within certain limits. That is life too. His wife would smile wryly at some of the things on his wish list. He had to play with the cards he was dealt. His declining health and abilities needed to be factored in and necessary adjustments made.

Lost possibilities have to be mourned, discarded and replaced with realistic ones. But what can still be done is truly magnificent - to make the best of what is possible. It is what people can do with what they've got left that is important. The world becomes smaller but still very interesting and rewarding.

It is a time to simplify. To concentrate on fewer goals - to give up worthy endeavors in favor of a few that are decided priorities. Personal striving has to match what is possible. Like it or not, energy and vigor will begin to fade. That time will come.

Compensate for losses. The next step is to use whatever it takes to compensate for the changes in lifestyle. Canes, walkers, a wheel chair, hearing aids, computers, dictaphones, and ultimately hospice nursing care may all serve their purpose. They are resources. Resources matter if they are used to help a person attain their personal objectives. Modes of treatment can be

viewed as resources also.

Coping is a matter of being smart enough to outfit the body and still get out of life what you want. Depression sets in when people lose track of their goals or find the pathway to their goals blocked. Hope comes with having attainable goals and overcoming any obstacles in their path. Hope comes in faith that life and relationships extend beyond this life.

No comparisons. One pitfall is to compare your life with healthy people who do not have physical limitations or uncertain futures. Or to compare oneself with the way you used to be. Life becomes uniquely personal. It is your goals, your limitation, your way of compensating and your life. What other people do doesn't matter. To dwell on comparisons is to invite unhappiness into your life.

To use the precious gift - the gift of time - people have to be highly selective in their personal goals. They have to simplify, accept limitations and compensate for them. They can be happy. Believe it.

This special friend shared some sacred moments with me and my wife. His resilient spirit reminded us of a gift we all have. We all are mortal. Our days are numbered too. Time is precious. Now only if we could live like it.

For more information on death and loss, visit Val Farmer's web-site at valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist with MeritCare in Fargo, North Dakota. He specializes in rural mental health and family business consultation.

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SCHOLASTICS

Grimme Joins SDSMT Order of the Engineer

Shane Grimme, a South Dakota School of Mines and Technology student from Yankton, joined the Order of the Engineer during a recent induction ceremony on campus. Grimme is majoring in mechanical engineering at the School of Mines, an engineering and science university located in Rapid City, S.D.

The Order of the Engineer is an organization that seeks to promote professionalism and ethics among engineers and graduates of accredited engineering programs. It is a fellowship of engineers trained in science and technology. It is dedicated to the practice, teaching and administration of the profession.

A total of 141 students joined the Order during the ceremony.

Saint Mary's College Dean's List

NOTRE DAME, Ind. - Gina Althoff of Yankton has been named to the Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind., Dean's List for the Fall 2009 semester. A student must achieve a grade point average of at least 3.4 on a 4.0 scale to earn academic honors at Saint Mary's.

Schuch Receives White Coat At SDSU

Michelle Schuch, a 2006 graduate of Bon Homme High School and a pharmacy major, recently received her White Coat during South Dakota State University's annual White Coat Ceremony. The celebration takes place every January after first year pharmacy students have completed one semester of the



Schuch

professional program.

The White Coat is presented to future pharmacists as a symbol of commitment and dedication to the pharmacy profession, and to place the service of others above self-interest.

Schuch is on course to get her Bachelor's Degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences in May 2011 and receive her Doctor of Pharmacy in May 2013.

Schuch is still competing in Track and Field for the Jackrabbits, and is currently ranked third in the weight throw and eighth in the shot put in the indoor Summit League rankings.

Free Online AP Classes Available For S.D. High School Students

The Learning Power program helps South Dakota high school students who want to challenge themselves academically and get a leg up on college.

Learning Power Director, Dr. Jim Parry, says, "It's exciting to offer a learning opportunity to all students, but in particular to students in small, rural high schools, who have this opportunity for the very first time. It is equally signifi-

cant that students may earn college credit if they score well on the AP exam." In 2009, 54% of all AP exams taken by Learning Power students received a score of 3 or higher enabling students to receive college credit.

Learning Power makes online Advanced Placement classes in math, science, and English available to all South Dakota high school students, including home-school and private school students. The program also has a cash incentive for students who score a 3 or higher on the College Board end-of-course exams. The South Dakota Virtual School, in collaboration with Northern State University's E-learning Center and the SD Department of Education, provides these online AP courses to students.

Learning Power is funded by the National Math and Science Initiative.

Registration for the fall 2010 semester for AP Classes through Learning Power begins on March 15th and closes on May 21st. Contact your student's high school counselor or principal. Find information on the South Dakota Virtual School Web site, <http://sdvs.k12.sd.us/>.

Mr. & Mrs. Kline

LaLonnie & Dwain Kline of Hancock, WI, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Wednesday, March 3.

A card shower is requested by their children, Dean, Tod & Sue. Greetings can be mailed to the couple at: 2799 7th Ave., Hancock, WI 54943.



March 3rd, 1960 - March 3rd, 2010
50th Anniversary

MOMS, DON'T WORRY. IF THOSE CHEST PAINS ARE JUST INDIGESTION,

EVERYONE WILL BE GLAD TO EAT OUT LATER.

No matter how busy you are taking care of your family, don't ever ignore the signs of a heart attack. Drop everything, dial 911 and go straight to the Avera Sacred Heart emergency department. Women experience different symptoms than men. Visit Minervas during February to learn more, see the Avera Sacred Heart display and register for prizes. No purchase necessary.



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