“A Pound of Prevention: Wellness at Work”

Health Fair – April 12, 2000
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A free health fair is being offered by the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations, Healthy U and the MSU Health Team on Wednesday, April 12, at the Wharton Center. The event takes place from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., which should allow participants to attend before, during or after lunch. Registration is not required.

Information on many kinds of health-related topics will be available. Interesting exhibits and demonstrations will include balance tests, blood pressure screenings, percent body fat assessments, bone density screenings, glaucoma and vision screenings and posture analysis. Information will also be available on acupuncture, aromatherapy, back injury prevention, biofeedback, diabetes, exercise physiology, hypnotherapy and reflexology.

Redeem the coupons you received in March for two guides published by the Mayo Clinic. “Mayo Clinic: Stretching Your Health Care Dollar,” offers practical tips to help you cut your health care costs without compromising the quality of your care. The second guide, the “Mayo Clinic: Personal Health Planner,” will help you better prepare for appointments with your provider by explaining how to make lists and keep up-to-date records. It will also help you decide when to see your provider.

All attendees will be able to enter a drawing for fabulous door prizes, including bicycles, full body massage gift certificates, a Michigan Athletic Club membership and even a treadmill! Many other outstanding prizes will be offered. Please contact the Healthy U Office at 353-2596 if you have questions. [Note: According to IRS regulations, all employee prizes and awards, with limited exceptions, are subject to all applicable payroll taxes and withholding.]

—Information from Source: April 2000 issue

Taking Control of Asthma—Reports

The “Taking Control of Asthma” conference was offered on February 29 to the MSU community. It was sponsored by several organizations, including the American Lung Association, Ingham Regional Medical Center, Mid-Michigan Asthma Coalition, MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations, Physicians Health Plan and Sparrow Health System.

The following short reports are offered by members of the Health and Safety Committee who attended the conference.

The Link to Allergies
By Kris Miller

In the “Taking Control of Asthma” seminar, speakers Dr. John Morlock and Dr. Clyde Flory described asthma as an inflammation of the airways which causes decreased airflow. It can be a cough, sneeze or difficult breathing.

Asthma does not have a single, particular cause. Certain

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individuals are genetically inclined to develop asthma. Allergies also have a strong association to asthma and can trigger an asthma reaction. Keeping a person’s environment free of allergy producing materials helps decrease the potential for an asthma reaction. Materials that are known to frequently cause allergic reactions are: animals, particularly cats; old houses, old carpet, cool mist vaporizers, fish tanks, moldy areas.

The number of people with asthma is on the rise. If treated, though, asthma can be reasonably controlled. It cannot, however, be cured. It is important to have a close, interactive relationship between the doctor and patient for optimum treatment and care. If left untreated, asthma can lead to airway scarring and, possibly, uncontrollable asthma.

Avoiding the attack
By Jeanette Robertson

As a young child, I had asthma. My oldest son still battles the chronic disease, so I was motivated to attend the workshop on childhood asthma when it was offered at the “Taking Control of Asthma” conference.

I found the presentation to be very informative.

The speaker, a doctor from Sparrow Hospital, made several suggestions about how to work with young people who have the disease:

- give the patient tools for self-management
- start a written individualized daily plan
- discuss long-term benefits with control
- develop an asthmatic action plan for an asthmatic child

The problem of supplying an asthmatic child with medicine during school hours was also discussed. Students often need medication and should be allowed to carry and self-administer their medications with parental and school supervision.

The presentation focused on several additional items that must be considered when in the presence of an asthmatic child:

- Avoid tobacco smoke.
- Teach the patient relevant environmental control and avoidance strategies.
- Discuss how environmental factors can make the patient’s asthma worse.
- Concentrate on “do-able” things.
- Address misconceptions.

Above all, parents and caregivers of asthmatic children need to ask questions of the medical professionals. With the proper help, we can all breathe a little easier.

Seek Treatment Early
By Dianna Frank

Because my husband has asthma, I was eager to attend the recent asthma conference.

I found out that pets can have a huge influence in triggering asthma. Dr. Clyde Flory, M.D. listed the main asthma-inducing culprits: 1) horses, 2) cat dander, 3) dust mites, 4) mold spores.

Asthma can cause many symptoms. It sometimes appears as severe coughing that lasts for more than a week. It can cause shortness of breath, wheezing, and tightness in the chest. Not all sufferers experience wheezing. Sometimes they are struck by coughing episodes after exercise or during the night.

A number of methods have been devised to try to keep asthma under control: use air conditioners, clean or replace furnace and air filters, try keeping pets out of the bedroom. Sufferers of asthma also rely on inhalers and nebulizers.

The presentation confirmed for me that a person with asthma can still lead a regular life, as full and complete as someone without asthma.

However, you must see a doctor as soon as possible if you think you have asthma. Asthma can cause serious, long-lasting damage if not found and treated early.
Preventing Illness:
An Important Step in
Becoming a Good
Health Care Consumer

It's happening again. Your breathing is labored; your body is fatigued. It is becoming difficult to speak through the wheezing and coughing. Why is this happening now? Then, you remember. You forgot to take your asthma medication—for the second time this year. Now it’s imperative that you get yourself to the emergency room to get help for this frightening asthma attack. As your friend drives you to the hospital, you tell yourself you’ll never repeat this mistake.

With our busy lifestyles, it is sometimes hard to remember to take our prescription drugs on schedule, get in a daily walk or run and to wear our seatbelts every time we ride in a motor vehicle. Taking just a few extra minutes to prevent illness or injuries can be well worth the effort. Emergency care is available when we need it and for that we are grateful. But there are times when we could have avoided an urgent visit to a hospital and higher health care expenses by thinking ahead.

Healthy U is concerned about the health and well-being of all employees and their families. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to help you stay at your optimum level of health:

• Exercise every day for at least 30 minutes.
• Avoid tobacco products.
• Wash your hands often to prevent infection.
• Ask your health care provider about which cancer screening test you need.
• Be aware of possible drug interactions and let your health care provider know what you are taking.
• Install carbon monoxide and smoke detectors in your home. Keep your floors free of cords and wires that could cause a fall.
• Drink alcohol in moderation.
• Always wear a seatbelt and never drink alcohol and drive.
• Always wear a helmet when you ride a bicycle or motorcycle.
• Keep immunizations current.
• Nurture social ties with friends and family to prevent feelings of isolation.
• Know your blood pressure and take appropriate measures if it is high.
• Maintain a healthy weight

This information is brought to you by Healthy U and the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations.

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Communicating With Your Health Care Provider

From researching their health care coverage options to searching the World Wide Web for information about their symptoms, patients are becoming educated consumers of health care. It is becoming common for patients to share articles about a treatment or possible diagnosis with their health care provider.

Since time with the provider during an office visit is short, it makes sense to use the time wisely by coming prepared with information and questions. Because it’s so easy to forget all that we want to say, it is helpful to bring a list of concerns. The list should be focused, with several major concerns followed by some minor ones.

Below are some questions that may help:

- What is your prime concern?
- Does anything make it feel better?
- How long has it been occurring?
- Do family members have the same complaints?
- How do you feel when it occurs?
- Is it occurring along with other symptoms.
- How often does it happen?
- Do you experience the symptoms all of the time or just sporadically?
- What activities seem to produce the symptoms?
- Is there a particular time of day when you notice it the most?
- What exacerbates it?

It’s also important for patients to write down what the health care provider tells them; to listen carefully and repeat back what was said; and to follow instructions. If tests are ordered, ask how much they will cost; what the risks are; and what is involved. Make a conscious effort to keep the channels of communication open between you and your provider and let them know that you are taking an active role in your health care.

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