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News

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****UTHSCD hosts "Lifehabits Symposium"**

DALLAS--"Lifehabits," a symposium focusing on health awareness will be held April 25-29 at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. The program, free and open to the public, will include daily noon presentations by leading experts in a variety of health care fields.

Faculty members will discuss the wellness concept by exploring different aspects of well-being. Heart disease, exercise, stress management and nutrition are featured topics of discussion.

Dr. Norman Kaplan, professor of Internal Medicine and host of Channel 13's "Here's to Your Health," will speak April 25 on "How to Decrease Your Risks for Heart Disease."

Kaplan says healthier life habits are a good starting point for heart disease prevention. He suggests that diet and exercise are both areas we can control. Weight should be kept within 10 pounds of what is considered "ideal," and physical activity should be increased. He also suggests that alcohol in moderation and low doses of aspirin may be good preventative measures. The alcohol may lower blood pressure and reduce stress; the aspirin dilates blood vessels and decreases the risk of blood clots.

Kaplan believes that if we are to become a healthier society we must start by educating our youth. He recommends kids be counseled on how to handle peer pressure and that age limits for purchasing substances like cigarettes and alcohol be more strictly enforced. He also advocates heavier restrictions for advertisers.

"We are, in large measure, responsible for our own health," Kaplan says. "If we are aware of the consequences, we can stop our own unhealthy practices and, if they are not offered in too drastic or abrupt a manner, we can adopt healthier habits."

Dr. Elliott Snyder, assistant professor of Psychiatry, April 26 will define "stress," discuss its impact on health and introduce modes of management. Stress management is a "multi-faceted endeavor" that includes common sense approaches like not abusing drugs and alcohol and other learned techniques.

"One of my favorite techniques is meditation," Snyder says, "because you are utilizing the body's own natural resources." One of its advantages over biofeedback, another popular stress-reduction method, he continues, is the cost. There are no tapes to purchase, no external equipment necessary. A practitioner of Transcendental Meditation for the past 12 years, Snyder says he will teach participants Benson's Relaxation Technique, an offshoot of TM.

"You can learn Benson's (named after the Harvard cardiologist who invented it) technique in five minutes, while the actual learning of TM is a 10-hour procedure," he explains.

Another aspect of good health, nutrition, will be examined April 27 by Marilyn B. Haschke, M.S., R.D., associate professor and chairman, Nutrition and Dietetics in the School of Allied Health Sciences; CeCe Eckert, instructor, Nutrition and Dietetics and Kathy King Helm, a nutrition consultant and guest speaker.

"The object of nutrition wellness is to promote good nutrition practices through information," says Eckert, noting that fad diets, junk food and vitamin supplementation affect one's total nutrition. And while nutrition is but one component of health, she notes the grave results of poor nutrition.

(over)

"Lifehabits" continued

"Major diet-related health hazards in our country are the combination of over-consumption and undernourishment," Eckert observes. "The U.S. Senate Select Committee on Human Needs has stated that five of 10 of the leading causes of death are linked to diet."

Dr. Jere Mitchell, professor of Internal Medicine and Physiology and director of the Harry S. Moss Heart Center, will speak April 28 on "Exercise and the Heart." He will describe the way the heart acutely responds and clinically adapts to dynamic exercise such as running and swimming and static exercise such as weight lifting.

While there is no conclusive scientific evidence that exercise prevents heart disease or increases longevity, Mitchell, a widely recognized expert in exercise physiology for more than 20 years, says exercise usually makes people feel better.

"You can make a good case that exercise improves the quality of life without having to make any false claims that it increases the quantity of life," he says.

The role of exercise training in the prevention of heart disease remains a controversial issue among medical professionals. Studies have yielded conflicting evidence in part because laboratory experiments with humans are inconclusive due to the difficulty and expense of controlling all cardiovascular risk factors over long periods of time.

Says Mitchell: "It is difficult if not impossible to isolate the exercise factor and its effects on human health."

On the final day of the symposium, University Activities Director and Wellness Committee Chairman of UTHSCD Gregg Miles will discuss future plans for an employee/student "Wellness Program" on campus.

Smoking cessation programs will be offered April 25-28 from 5-6:30 p.m. in Gooch Auditorium conducted by a volunteer of the American Cancer Society. Advance registration is required for these programs. Also, free blood pressure checks will be available throughout the symposium.

Climaxing the five-day symposium April 29 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. will be "Health Games" -- fun, competitive, team relay events. Each team participating in "Health Games" will consist of students, faculty, staff or housestaff from the health science center, Parkland Memorial Hospital, Children's Medical Center and Veteran's Administration Medical Center.

The University Cafeteria will also participate in the "Lifehabits Symposium." To increase consumer awareness, the cafeteria will label foods to show calorie, carbohydrate and fat content.

The symposium is sponsored by the University Activities Office and the Wellness Committee with handout materials available to those who attend. A special award will be given to each individual who attends all five noon lectures.

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