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Cancer Info Day provides health services to community

By Phillip Ramati - pramati@macontel.com

When dealing with cancer, a proactive approach is often the best way to fight.

That was evident Tuesday at The Medical Center of Central Georgia's annual Cancer Info Day, which provided free health screenings and information to nearly 150 people at the Wellness Center off Northside Drive.

People who took part in the screenings had breast, skin and prostate examinations as well as tests for body fat, cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure and bone density.

"We try to have a variety of things," said Cyndey Busbee, the Medical Center's director of marketing.

In addition to the tests, the program also offered lectures about colorectal cancer and skin cancer, and provided a free luncheon for more than 60 cancer survivors.

Ray Hitchcock, of Gray, attended Tuesday's event with his wife, Mae. Both are cancer survivors - Ray had melanoma in 1984, and Mae has been a breast cancer survivor for more than 30 years.

"(The screenings) encourage people to become aware of the possibility of things like cancer and diabetes," he said. "A lot of people don't go to the doctor because it's so expensive. It's a great opportunity to have all of these screenings at one time."

Ray Hitchcock, who also attended last year's event, praised the Wellness Center staff for improvements on last year's program.

"It's even better this year," he said. "They've improved the flow of people. Last year, there were long lines. This year, it's much shorter. Everyone working the booths are very courteous. It seems to be a real, quality program."

Vivian Hallmark, of Macon, isn't a cancer survivor, but she took time to take part in the screenings as a precautionary measure. "I had them check my cholesterol and blood sugar," she said, adding with a laugh, "and a body-fat analysis, if I get up the nerve."

The Cancer Info Day is in its fourth year, but this year's version had a couple of new aspects.

The Medical Center introduced Robin Marshburn, a patient resource navigator at the hospital. Her position was created by a three-year grant, sponsored by the Medical Center, the American Cancer Society and the Central Georgia Cancer Coalition.

Macon is one of three Georgia cities to have a patient resource navigator available. Marshburn's job is to help patients find any necessary resources to treat their conditions.

"It's to lessen the burden of their cancer experience," she said. "I take a proactive approach by going to them and seeing what resources they need."

Marshburn's service is free and helps patients with anything from being a patient advocate to providing nutritional information.

Researchers with the Georgia Cancer Study also were part of Cancer Info Day. Funded by the Georgia Cancer Coalition, researchers from Emory University are collecting genetic data during the next few years from volunteers between the ages of 25 and 74 across the state with no previous cancer history.

Toni Chociemski, the project's coordinator, said the study's goal is to get as many as 140,000 volunteers to participate statewide.

"We're looking at the causes of cancer, so we can look at prevention and treatment," she said.

The study will examine various physical aspects of people without cancer and compare them with cancer patients to try to determine the factors that lead to cancer.

To contact Phillip Ramati, call 744-4334.



Woody Marshall, The Telegraph

Lillie Hagins performs a cholesterol check at The Medical Center of Central Georgia's annual Cancer Info Day, which provided free health screenings and information to nearly 150 people at the Wellness Center off Northside Drive.

TO LEARN MORE

To find out more about cancer, call the American Cancer Society's National Cancer Information Center at (800) 227-2345.

To contact The Medical Center of Central Georgia patient resource navigator Robin Marshburn, call (478) 633-2833. To find out more about the Georgia Cancer Study, call (877) 727-5427.



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