



IN THIS EDITION:

- Spotlight on Services:
Nursing Staff
-
- The Facts: Inflated hospital
Prices
-
- Heart Healthy Recipe
-
- Tips for a Fun Spring
-
- New Medicare Wellness
Info
-
- Stroke and Exercise
-
- Laughter is the Best
Medicine!
-
- The Busy Persons Guide to
Reducing Stress

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The Facts: INFLATED HOSPITAL PRICES-DON'T GET CAUGHT!

Raye Bellinger, MD Cardiologist

The Affordable Care Act has brought about dramatic changes to costs for most patients. In the past, health insurance deductibles were in the range of \$100-\$1000 per year. With sweeping changes in legislation, deductibles may range as high as \$12,000 per year with an average of about \$5000 per year per family. What this means to each family is that each year you must pay the first \$5000 before your insurance "kicks in" to cover additional expenses. For those patients who have employer based insurance, more insurances are moving towards 80/20 plans which means the insurance pays 80% and the patient pays 20% of charges (with no upper limit). Shopping for the best price for healthcare has now become mandatory.

Hospital price inflation is at an all-time high and these fees are well beyond what would be considered reasonable by most healthcare experts. When asked about hospital pricing, Glenn Melnick, a Professor of Health Economics at the University of Southern California replies: "How do hospitals set prices? They set prices to maximize revenue, and they raise prices as much as they can — all the research supports that."



AVERAGE PRICING FOR TESTING IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION

	Hospital Price	Market Price
Echocardiogram	\$ 2,616.00	\$ 244.96
Stress Echocardiogram	\$ 3,672.00	\$ 386.34
Nuclear Exercise Test	\$ 17,898.00	\$ 926.30
Carotid Doppler Test	\$ 1,753.00	\$ 206.03
Kidney Artery Ultrasound	\$ 1,536.00	\$ 299.28
Abdominal Ultrasound	\$ 1,344.00	\$ 391.89

To make matters worse, hospital-based groups (Sutter Medical Group, Mercy Medical Group, UC Davis Medical Group) are forced to use the same hospital charges for testing outside the hospital.

A patient in our practice needed an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart) and a nuclear exercise test (blood flow imaging using radioactive material) to help diagnose the presence of significant blockages in the heart. His insurance pays 80% of charges and he is responsible for 20% of charges. He was scheduled at our office but felt that he might get a better deal at the hospital. However, he made that simple mistake of assuming rather than asking what the hospital price (charge) would be. The hospital charged him \$3,220 for the echocardiogram and \$17,688 for the nuclear stress test. The total charge was \$20,908 and his share of cost was \$4,181. Had he done the testing at our office, his share of cost would be \$234!

DON'T BE A VICTIM OF HOSPITAL PRICE INFLATION....ASK ABOUT MARKET PRICING!

Medicare: ANNUAL WELLNESS VISITS

MATTHEW WATSON, MD Internal Medicine

Medicare is now offering Medicare beneficiaries a new benefit, the Annual Wellness Visit. You and your doctor will now have time to review your medical and family history, review your risk factors for future health problems, and most importantly make a personalized prevention plan to keep you healthy in the future. Medicare waives co-payments for this visit as long as the discussion does not include any new medical problems. If you are a Medicare beneficiary and you have not had your free Medicare Annual Wellness Visit in the past year, call your primary care provider's office to schedule a visit.

Tips for a fun Spring...

GRACE GRAHAM, Cardiopulmonary Technician

DID YOU KNOW?

1. **PLANT SEEDS:** Start a vegetable garden. Peas, root vegetable and leafy greens are all planted early in the spring and all are healthy treats.
2. **BIRD WATCHING:** Many migratory birds return to their summer areas during the spring.
3. **GO HIKING:** Local trees and plants will begin to grow leaves and flowers. Good exercise and entertainment for an afternoon.
4. **FLY A KITE:** Spring brings windy days that are perfect for kite flying.



Spotlight on Services: Nursing Staff

DEBBIE SHIELDS, Administrative Assistant

This month's spotlight on staff will focus on the LVN's at Sacramento Heart. An LVN or Licensed Vocational Nurse is not the same as a Registered Nurse (RN) but play a critical role in assisting the doctors with day to day management of patients and their care. We have five LVN's working here with three in the Cardiology Department and two working in the Internal Medicine Department.

Some of the tasks that the LVN's do on a daily basis include reviewing lab work, facilitating prescription refills, which can be either by phone or electronic requests, taking triage phone calls from patients and working with the doctors and Medical Assistants to follow up with patients regarding medication and test results. The LVN's also assist the doctors in completing applications for disability benefits or ordering home health items such as oxygen tanks or CPAP machines for sleep apnea. The LVN's spend time educating their patients about their Coumadin prescription, blood tests, general prescription monitoring and other health habits. The LVN's form a critical bond between patients and their care here at Sacramento Heart.

The Busy Persons Guide to Reducing Stress

HEATHER RICH, Diagnostic Imaging Manager/Cardiac Sonographer

Be completely in one task. Instead of being in the stressful task-switching mode, take your next task, let everything else go, and just be in the moment with this one task. Let go of the feeling that you need to quickly rush through it, to get to the next task. There will always be a next task so let those other tasks come later. Just be in this one task, like it's your entire universe.

See your ideals, and let go of control. Fear is causing you to be stressed, not external factors like your job or family problems. Those external things are just a part of life, but they become stressful when you fear failure. Let go of control. Be okay with chaos and uncertainty, and trust that things will work out. You'll fear less and be less stressed.

Accept people and smile. We get upset at other people because they don't meet our ideals of how they should act. Instead, try accepting them for who they are, and recognizing that, like you, they're imperfect and seeking happiness and struggling with finding happiness. They're doing their best. Accept them, smile, and enjoy your time with this person.

Take a brief walk. When things are getting stressful, take two-three minutes to take a walk and clear your mind. A short walk does wonders.

Do short mindfulness practices. You don't have to meditate for 30 minutes to get the benefits of mindfulness. You can do a quick body scan (see how your body is feeling right now) in 10 seconds. You can pay attention to your breath for 30 seconds. You can watch your thoughts, fears, ideals for a minute. You can walk mindfully, paying attention to your body, your feet, your breath, your surroundings, as you walk in little bits throughout your day.

Stroke and Exercise

MEGAN AVILLA, Exercise Physiologist MSc

Brain injury is hard to recover from and can be debilitating to the person who has experienced it. A stroke, also known as a cerebrovascular accident, is a common form of brain injury especially in those with cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure. Stroke results in a loss in brain function due to a decrease of the brain blood supply. According to the American Heart Association, about 700,000 people in the United States suffer from stroke every year. The rate of stroke is estimated to rise with the increase in the elderly population and the greater prevalence for heart disease.

Traditionally, exercise and physical activity were discontinued within several months following stroke because it was believed that most, if not all, motor function occurred during this time. This viewpoint has changed with new emerging research showing the long term benefits of exercise on the human brain and the change in morphology – or plasticity. Plasticity is the central nervous system's ability to adapt, reorganize and repair the neural and vascular pathways in response to external stimuli. There are two types of experiences that are most influential on plasticity in the adult brain: (1) an enriching environment such as music and (2) exercise. Exercise helps the brain *maintain* old connections, reform new ones, and restore lost ones by

helping with the growth of new neurons, capillary growth, increase in the number of synapses between neurons, increase in length and number of dendrites, increase in the number of neurotransmitter receptors and growth factors.

The next issue will further discuss the types of exercise recommended for those who have suffered stroke



Laughter is the best medicine!
KALEIGH NEWLAND, Billing Rep.



Shrimp Scampi Pasta



Ingredients

Kosher salt
16 ounces spaghetti
1 lb peeled and deveined medium shrimp, tails removed
Freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
Pinch red pepper flakes, optional
1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth

Directions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the spaghetti and cook according to package directions for al dente.

Toss the shrimp with 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt and some pepper. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp, spread into a single layer and cook without stirring, until just turning pink around the edges, about 2 minutes. Stir the shrimp, add the tomatoes, garlic and pepper flakes and continue to cook until the tomatoes have softened and the garlic has toasted, about 1 minute. Add the sauté to the pasta, toss, and serve. Top with fresh chopped chives, grated cheese, and additional salt and pepper to taste.

Susan Van Kirk, CT Technologist