

Posted on Mon, Feb. 20, 2006

Program pinpoints risks, builds habits to head off cardiovascular disease

By Jennifer L. Boen
jboen@news-sentinel.com



By Steve Linsenmayer of The News-Sentinel

Dan Dienelt, 59, on the treadmill at Spiece Fitness Center. Dienelt is taking part in the INTERxVENT program to reduce and manage risk factors leading to heart disease and diabetes.



Eastlund: Director of INTERxVENT at Dupont Hospital

A national program that offers a multi-faceted approach to reducing heart disease, stroke and diabetes through one-on-one mentoring is under way at Dupont Hospital

With one in three Americans already dealing with cardiovascular disease, Dr. Marvin Eastlund said the new INTERxVENT program is crucial to the physical and economic health of the community.

"I don't think we've got the ability to support every American at the level of demand we will need for health care in the coming years," said Eastlund, who is Dupont's medical director for INTERxVENT since it began in December.

This year, cardiovascular disease, or CVD, will kill one American every 35 seconds and cost this nation in direct and indirect costs an estimated \$403.1 billion, according to the American Heart Association.

Eastlund, a retired ob-gyn who practiced in Fort Wayne for 27 years, remembers the concerns he had about women who put on weight

and developed high blood pressure and other medical conditions that put them at risk for heart disease. Now vice president and physician liaison for Dupont Hospital, which has a staff of 575 doctors, Eastlund hears the same concerns from other doctors: obesity; high blood pressure; pre-diabetes and diabetes; high cholesterol; smoking; lack of exercise; stress. All are risk

factors for CVD.

As he got older, Eastlund found himself facing some of the same health concerns about which he warned his patients. "I had slipped into type II diabetes. I thought, 'I'd better learn what I could do.'" It was a physician-heal-thyself moment. Then, Eastlund found INTERxVENT. The program was developed by Dr. Neil F. Gordon, medical director of the Center for Disease Prevention & Management at St. Joseph's/Chandler(CQ) Health Systems in Savannah, Ga.

Gordon will be in Fort Wayne on Wednesday to discuss INTERxVENT and its effectiveness in reducing risks for CVD.

INTERxVENT participants first complete a CVD risk assessment. The assessment is reviewed by the mentor, or coach, who communicates with the primary care physician. The primary physician is the one to order medical tests or prescribe medication.

Providing encouragement and accountability, the INTERxVENT mentor's job is to augment physician care, not to replace it, said Bobbie Goltz, a trained INTERxVENT mentor, along with Eastlund. Goltz is director of Dupont Resource Center, a division of the hospital. The center is also the Fort Wayne INTERxVENT site.

Participant and mentor meet weekly for the first three months. A mentor can be a nurse, dietitian, exercise science specialist or physician. The participant keeps daily food and exercise diaries. The mentor and participant discuss the record. The mentor provides nutritional counseling and coordinates the individualized management plan. The 15- to 20-minute sessions include lessons on pertinent topics. Participants have homework geared to their specific needs.

After the first 12 weeks, sessions are biweekly for two months, then monthly for the remainder of the year.

Keeping him accountable

It's the accountability component that INTERxVENT participant Dan Dienelt says is working for him. "I've been on a million weight loss programs," said Dienelt, 59, a Fort Wayne insurance agent. A football player in high school and college, "I kept on eating like I did in my younger years, and I soon doubled in size."

He dieted and joined a fitness club, exercising at least five days a week. But his weight had not decreased and Dienelt started having problems with his blood sugar." At one point he was considering gastric bypass surgery.

In December, a physician-client told Dienelt about INTERxVENT. He signed up and now meets weekly with his mentor, Eastlund. Dienelt checks his blood sugar four times a day, which enables him to better track which foods cause his sugar to rise and how exercise helps lower it. Eastlund reports regularly to Dienelt's primary care doctor.

"At the end of a year, he'll have a working knowledge of what he can live with and what works for him," Eastlund said.

Dienelt's blood sugars have improved. His short-term goal is to lose 30 pounds, although he knows he needs to lose more. "They don't put pressure on you to do this by a certain date," Dienelt said.

"The word cheating is not part of the vocabulary" with INTERxVENT, said Goltz, who sometimes meets with Dienelt if Eastlund is out of town.

Stress management is also an important component of the program. Both Eastlund and Dienelt have learned how stress affects their blood sugars, they said.

Like many men, Dienelt said he wasn't fond of getting weighed in a room full of people and hearing lectures on food choices. "But I knew I had to make changes in my life. Being almost 60 years old and heavy and with this blood sugar thing going on, I knew I was at risk for heart problems."

Even with his extensive medical knowledge, Eastlund said, "I'm finding that I'm looking at eating from a different perspective."

Cost for the one-year program is \$495. Goltz and Eastlund say the fee is less than many weight-loss programs. Some insurance companies are now evaluating the cost-effectiveness of medically-managed programs such as INTERxVENT, recognizing disease prevention is less costly than treatment, Goltz said.

How's your heart?

What: *The Beat Goes On ... Assessing Your Risk for Heart Disease, featuring Dr. Neil Gordon, founder of the INTERxVENT program*

When: 6-7:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Kachmann Auditorium in the medical office building adjacent to Lutheran Hospital, 7950 W. Jefferson Blvd.

For whom: the general public; nurses, physicians, dietitians and other health-care providers.

Cost: free

Other info: Nurses can earn continuing ed hours; call Kim Wiley at 416-3009 for more information.

By the numbers

The cost of cardiovascular disease, estimated for 2006

Direct costs:

*\$75.2 billion – coronary heart disease

*\$72.9 billion – other heart diseases such as cardiomyopathy and heart arrhythmias

*\$37.3 billion – stroke

*\$47.5 billion – high blood pressure

*\$26.8 billion – heart failure

Indirect costs:

*\$35.6 billion – lost productivity/morbidity (lost earnings in 2006 from people unable to work due to CVD).

*\$109.9 billion – lost productivity/mortality (lost future earnings of person who will die in 2006).

Note: Due to rounding and overlap, total does not add up to \$403.1 billion, the 2006 estimated total direct/indirect costs of CVD.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; National Center for Health Statistics; American Heart Association