A higher profile for ‘gut check’ awareness

New campaign focuses on colorectal cancers: screening, education

The word “colonoscopy” conjures such dread in most people that The University of Kansas Cancer Center chose not to use the term in its first major colorectal cancer awareness campaign.

The face of the campaign is also outside the norm. Illustrating that colorectal cancer can strike at any age, rectal cancer survivor Ashley Havlena, 27, appears in print ads pointing to a belly scar not much longer than her index finger. About 90 percent of colorectal cancer patients are older than 50, though numbers are on the rise for those under 40.

The campaign – Is It Time for a Gut Check? – incorporates clever wordplay like “Trust your gut” and “It takes guts” to promote lifesaving screenings for prevention and early detection. Launched last week to coincide with Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the campaign includes a variety of initiatives:

• A “gut kit” of educational materials on risk factors, symptoms, role of heredity, importance of screenings and more went out to 100 top Kansas City area companies and chambers of commerce. The kit includes Havlena’s survival story.
• A “gut page” (kucancercenter.org/gutcheck) offers the gut kit materials, sticker templates, a high-fiber recipe, quiz, news about the cancer center’s latest colorectal cancer research, Havlena’s inspiring story and more.
• The print ad featuring Havlena runs in area publications throughout March.
• Gut kits also went to the cancer center’s community locations and the call center to involve those staff in the campaign.
• The Physician Relations team is spreading the word about screenings to community physicians this month.

National screening guidelines recommend a routine colorectal cancer screening every 10 years starting at age 50 – or as determined by a physician, based on specific risk factors. Colorectal cancers are among the most highly treatable cancers if detected early, when the tumor is still small and hasn’t spread.

“Colonoscopies save lives – I just can’t stress that enough,” said Joaquina Baranda, MD, a gastrointestinal oncology specialist at the cancer center. “An estimated 80 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented every year if people followed the national screening guidelines.”

By the Numbers: Colorectal cancer

Although colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, mortality rates are falling, thanks in part to better early detection.

132,700

Estimated new U.S. colorectal cancer cases this year
Events

► Self-identity in illness – A life-changing diagnosis jars how we see ourselves. Take an in-depth look at the emotional process of receiving such a diagnosis, the trauma that follows, what we can do to help ourselves recover and ways in which we can find renewed strength. The class is 5:30-7 p.m., Monday, March 16, at Turning Point: The Center for Hope and Healing in Leawood. Call 913-574-0900 to register.

► Hearty nutrition – Learn the three simple steps toward a heart-healthy diet, as well as the power of a well-portioned plate, tips on label reading, as well as specific recommendations for each food group. The session is noon-1 p.m. Wednesday, March, 18, at The University of Kansas Hospital’s heart center. Call 913-574-0900 to register.

► Anti-inflammatory superfoods – Join a cooking expert for a nutritional wellness cooking class designed to inspire you to cook with health-supportive superfoods. Learn delicious and nutritious ways to eat more anti-inflammatory superfoods, such as greens like kale and whole grains like quinoa. The class is 6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, at Whole Foods Market Cooking Studio in Overland Park. Call 913-574-0900 to register. Must register 48 hours in advance.

► Mind-body balance – Chronic illness affects your mind and body. Whether you face physical pain or emotional distress, learn to tolerate and regulate symptoms to live a more healthy and effective life. The class is 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, March 25, at Turning Point: The Center for Hope and Healing in Leawood. Call 913-574-0900 to register.

► Blood drives – The Community Blood Center’s monthly blood drives at the main campus are 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday, March 25, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday, March 26. Both drives are in the Student Center’s Francisco Lounge. Walk-ins are welcome.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT
MyChart: Online access to care team

More than 34,000 people have signed up for MyChart, an online tool that lets them see portions of their medical records and communicate securely with their care teams at The University of Kansas Hospital and The University of Kansas Physicians.

Consider Marianne O’Connell. The patient listed the ways she is “enamored” with MyChart’s time-saving features:
- She loves seeing all her lab results online and being able to chart them without keeping her own notes.
- She loves getting her test results quickly and avoiding the long wait for a snail-mail letter.
- She loves hearing back from her providers quickly when she has questions.
- She loves avoiding phone tag!
- She also likes being able to look up future appointments.
- And she finds MyChart a handy way to find a list of her existing medications.

Arlene Rodriguez also appreciates the speed of MyChart. “When I send a prescription request through MyChart, I get an email from my pharmacy in a very short time saying the prescription is ready to pick up,” she said.

She also gets faster answers to questions for her care team. “The nurse sees my message and can quickly check with the doctor and let me know what to do or when to come in. No phone tag!”

If you’re registered for MyChart, log in at MyChart.kumc.edu or calling the MyChart Support Line at 913-588-4040. After you sign up, check out the MyChart smartphone app, too. Find a list of your medications, send a message or look up a future appointment while you’re on the go.

All interactions via the MyChart system are private and secure. Only you – and those you authorize – can see and interact with your private medical information.

EXPOSURE
Former Chiefs huddle up for patients

Fifteen former Chiefs players, known as Chiefs Ambassadors, visited patients March 4 at The University of Kansas Hospital. In Pediatrics, 15-year-old Joe Tillery received an autographed jersey after meeting with Ken Kremer (from left), KC Wolf, Walter White and Shawn Barber, among others.
In the News
A recap of recent articles, TV segments and other media coverage of the region’s leading academic medical center

► Brush with death is important reminder – The Kansas City Star, March 3. A 45-year-old Leawood woman collapsed from sudden cardiac arrest at a restaurant. She was saved by the restaurant manager who knew CPR. Ashley Simmons, MD, cardiologist at The University of Kansas Hospital, said people need to pay close attention to symptoms. “A lot of people brush things like shortness of breath and chest pain aside,” she said. “Women in general need to be reminded to take care of themselves.”

► Cancer breakthrough after years of decline – KMBC 9 News, March 2. A farmer in Salina, Kan., was able to escort his daughter to a Valentine’s Day dance thanks to a medical breakthrough at The University of Kansas Hospital. Anesthesiology’s Dawood Sayed, MD, explained how the STAR procedure uses heat and radio waves to deactivate cancer cells against the patient’s spine. A medical cement then is injected into the void left behind by the procedure to stabilize the spine. The patient can go home within several hours of the procedure.

► Air travel supports distant healthcare – Lawrence Journal-World, March 1. The newspaper reviewed the University of Kansas Medical Center’s use of teledmedicine and university airplanes to treat patients in rural communities. Last fiscal year, eight physicians flew to rural outpost clinics 85 times and saw about 1,300 patients. One physician typically sees 12 to 25 patients in a daylong visit. “Well, my goodness, here we are out here in nowhere, and we got care from KU Medical Center,” remarked David Emig, a retired sheep farmer near Goodland, who is being treated for cancer.

► Recruiting more Latino MDs – Fox 4 News, Feb. 26. The number of Latino physicians lags the growth of U.S. Latino population. A new report finds one of every 1,000 Latinos is a physician compared to three out of 1,000 non-Hispanic whites. Maria Alonso Luaces at the University of Kansas School of Medicine discussed a range of efforts underway, including outreach to high schools. “Many times providing them with the opportunity to interact with a medical student who comes from a similar background … is priceless for them,” she said.

News Briefs

This year’s event, which was Feb. 26 at The Gallery Event Space in Kansas City’s Power & Light District, was another success, with proceeds benefiting support programs at the Adelaide C. Ward Women’s Heart Health Center and Turning Point: The Center for Hope and Healing.

More than 400 guests laughed, learned and possibly cried a bit as they listened to storytellers speak from their hearts about their health experiences. They also enjoyed an evening of food, fun and friendships next door at the Kill Devil Club.

Sherry Kuehl, for instance, told about her family’s history of stroke and how she strives to keep her blood pressure low – despite confrontations. In “Don’t Make Me Stroke Out,” Kuehl entertained the audience as she told about an encounter with another parent during the dreaded “Parent Patrol” at her children’s school.

And Lynn Rundle shared his personal story of his wife’s battle with heart disease. She survived Hodgkin’s lymphoma in her teens, receiving massive amounts of radiation. Years later, that radiation had caused severe heart damage: She died a year ago. In “I Feel Like Going On,” he explained his commitment to raise awareness of heart disease among cancer survivors.

To read the full text of all the speakers’ stories, visit girlsnightinkc.com.

New musculoskeletal research consortium

The University of Kansas Medical Center has formed a research consortium with two area institutions to focus on musculoskeletal disorders and diseases.

The consortium, the first initiative of its kind in Kansas City, also involves scientists at the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences (KCU) and the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC).

The partnership’s goal: build medical research teams that focus on specific diseases of muscle and bone, accelerating the process of turning discoveries into treatments while also improving research education opportunities for students.

“We are pleased to partner with UMKC and KCU to collaborate on musculoskeletal research,” said Richard Barohn, MD, vice chancellor for research at our medical center and a member of the consortium’s executive committee.

“We are confident our faculty and researchers, who are dedicated to finding cures for these debilitating diseases, can make even greater strides by working together,” he said.

This is the first formal agreement for joint research between the three universities’ health sciences schools, though more collaboration is expected.

Furry therapy

Therapy dogs Layla and Meeko provided stress-busting therapy for nursing student Merrill Marine and other students, faculty and staff at the University of Kansas Medical Center. The Feb. 25-26 visit from Loving Paws Animal Therapy was sponsored by the medical center’s Office of Student Life and Counseling and Educational Support Services.
Our People

► Honoring generous blood donors – Every month, dozens of staff and physicians at our academic medical center generously donate blood to the Community Blood Center’s blood drives.

Like many frequent donors, Lois Winningham, financial analyst in the Center for Transplantation, gives blood because of the direct impact it has on patients.

Some of the biggest donors say they give because they know their donations support patient care. After all, the Community Blood Center is the primary supplier of blood for patients at The University of Kansas Hospital.

“Donating blood is such an easy thing to do, and you can be sure that when your blood is used, it can directly impact a patient’s chances of survival,” said Lois Winningham, a 51-unit lifetime donor and financial analyst in the hospital’s Center for Transplantation. “What else can we do that so obviously helps others in their time of need?”

“Donating blood is easy and simple, and yet a donation can have a profoundly positive impact on the lives of people who need it,” said David Vranicar, Finance vice chancellor at the medical center and a 32-unit donor. “I appreciate the opportunity to help others in this way and am grateful that other donors and Administration, has been donating since she was 16 – more than 50 units so far. “Someday it could be my child, husband or grandchild who would die without it.”

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“Donating blood is such an easy thing to do, and you can be sure that when your blood is used, it can directly impact a patient’s chances of survival,” said Greg Unruh, MD, a 41-unit donor who gives in honor of his father – himself a multigallon donor during his lifetime.

“He always said it costs nothing to donate and it might save someone’s life,” Unruh said. “When or if we might need it, we hope someone else cared enough to donate.”

Judy Brohammer, executive assistant in the School of Medicine Dean’s Office Finance and Administration, has been donating since she was 16 – more than 50 units so far. “Someday it could be my child, husband or grandchild who would die without the gift of life-giving blood from someone we don’t know,” she said.

“If I asked you personally, would you say no to my face?” she asked. “Don’t say no just because you can’t see the desperate mother, the frightened spouse or frantic friend. Your body will make more. Please offer this life-giving gift to someone in the world who could die without it.”

Collectively, staff and physicians from our academic medical center donated more than 500 units of blood last year.

► ‘Child Advocate’ honors – Robert Moser, MD, was named “Child Advocate of the Year” in the government official category, a new award from the Kansas Action for Children and the Partnership for Early Success. Moser joined The University of Kansas Hospital Dec. 1 as executive director of the Kansas Heart and Stroke Collaborative. He also is professor in public health practice for the University of Kansas School of Medicine.

It was his efforts as secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), from January 2011 to December 2014, that earned him the new award.

“During his time at the KDHE, he undertook important work to improve outcomes for young Kansas children,” Kansas Action for Children’s Shannon Cotsoradis said after the Feb. 25 awards ceremony.

Under his leadership, KDHE launched its first public awareness campaign to reduce infant mortality. KDHE also made changes to improve the Medicaid enrollment process for new mothers. He also served on the Governor’s Task Force on Childhood Poverty.

Moser was one of four to win a Child Advocate of the Year award. Others were honored in the healthcare, education and business categories. The winners were recognized for their “exemplary commitment to improving the lives of Kansas children.”

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Suddenly, the course of your life unexpectedly changes. You or someone you love is diagnosed with a serious illness – and you need help coping with the new normal.

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8900 State Line Road, Suite 240, Leawood, KS 66206 – turningpointkc.org - 913-574-0900

The University of Kansas Hospital