

## CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT

### FOOT CARE MANAGEMENT: AN IMPORTANT 'STEP' IN PROPER DIABETES CARE

by Rick Spencer, Obici Healthcare Foundation Program Resource Officer

By practicing prevention, Vernon Woodson, a diabetic for 12 years, has successfully avoided serious foot care challenges.

"Diabetics are prone to having foot problems such as wounds, foreign bodies, deformities (e.g., bunions) and infections. They may not even know it, because over time, they (diabetics) all will develop neuropathy to some degree," said Charles J. Hastings, DPM, FACFAS, owner and physician at McKenzie-Hastings Institute for Foot & Ankle Surgery.

"Neuropathy of the lower extremities typically plays a major role in the diabetic complications we see."

"One theory on how diabetics get neuropathy is from chronically high sugar levels and resultant nerve swelling. Through osmosis, elevated sugar levels cause nerves to swell. Sometimes the nerves swell so severely that they essentially choke off the smallest blood vessels that feed the smallest nerves."

"Persons suffering from an advanced form of neuropathy cannot let pain be their guide. Diabetics with untreated wounds or infections may result in loss of toes, feet, legs or worse. In patients with neuropathy, surgery sometimes can be performed without the need for anesthesia," Dr. Hastings said.

"If you cannot feel me doing surgery on you, how would you be able to feel something simple like a splinter or ingrown toenail? You won't until the symptoms are further up your leg to where you have a little more feeling, and then you seek help. By then, it may be too late," he added.

Practicing preventive foot care techniques used by Mr. Woodson and other diabetics, such as conducting daily foot inspections, is essential for diabetes. [See the back page of this newsletter for a detailed listing of preventive foot care techniques.]

*"Diabetics are apt to have foot problems."*

Other preventive and disease management methods involve "making smart food decisions and continue doing activities you love. I don't like to tell my patients to 'diet and exercise', because many patients have no idea what that means.

"Diabetics are apt to have foot problems; therefore, a foot care specialist should be part of each patient's healthcare team," said David Lieb, MD, Eastern Virginia Medical School Strelitz Diabetes Center of Western Tidewater Medical Director.

The Diabetes Center at Sentara Obici Hospital is funded by the Obici Healthcare Foundation.

The Diabetes Center offers vouchers to its uninsured patients in need of diabetic foot care examinations or treatment. Referrals are made to the McKenzie-Hastings Institute for Foot & Ankle Surgery.

For more information, call the Diabetes Center at 757-446-5908 to schedule an appointment at the Suffolk location. Call Dr. Hastings with any foot or ankle issues at 757-638-1823.



*Dr. Charles J. Hastings explains the need for diabetic foot care to Vernon Woodson, a patient who has had diabetes for 12 years.*

# Community Health Center Opens in Franklin by Angela Futrell, Southeastern Virginia Health System Executive Director

Access to basic healthcare services in the City of Franklin just got a whole lot better.

The Southeastern Virginia Health System (SEVHS) recently opened a federally qualified health center at 1357 Armory Drive in Franklin, in the Armory Plaza. The facility is projected to serve nearly 2,000 patients per year.

SEVHS was the recipient of grants from the Obici Healthcare Foundation and Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). This federal agency deemed Franklin as a Medically Underserved Area, a Dental Health Professions Shortage Area and a Mental Health Shortage Area.

This new access point will increase health awareness and address issues concerning access to care for the residents of Franklin and surrounding areas.

The addition of a federally qualified health center will provide comprehensive primary health care, case management, mental health services, outreach and pharmacy assistance services to assist with these disparities.

Within this service area, diabetes represents 13.2% of the population, 33% are obese and 31% of adults are not physically active.

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The need for a community health center in Franklin is critical with 58% of the residents living below 200% of the federal poverty level and 92% of this patient population not being served by a health center.

The office will see the insured as well as the uninsured patients. Discounted fees are available to those who meet eligibility requirements.

Call 757-304-5570 to schedule an appointment.



*Phlebotomist Eboney Joyner shares the result of a patient's blood glucose level with Jane Lilley, RN, MSN, FNP/BC. Eboney and Jane are on staff at the Franklin Community Health Center, which is operated by the Southeastern Virginia Health System. The health center opened for business in March 2016.*

## WALK CAREFULLY: HELPFUL HINTS FOR DIABETICS TO KEEP HEALTHY FEET

The following suggestions are ways that diabetics can practice preventive foot care:

- **Conduct daily foot inspection.** Check between the toes, bottom of the feet, back of the heels, and circumferentially around the legs. Watch for red, hot and swollen areas.
- **Perform daily inspection of white cotton socks.** Drainage of any color may indicate a wound or pre-wound.
- **Schedule quarterly to annually lower extremity evaluations** with a specialist that has a special interest in diabetic limb preservation and salvage.
- **Call your specialist immediately** if you believe something may be evolving. 50% of all diabetic foot infections have no local or systemic signs/symptoms of infection.
- **Protect feet from hot and cold.** Exposure to excessive levels of hot and cold water or pavement temperatures, for example, can cause damage without knowing it.
- **Ask your physician to authorize Medicare coverage** if special shoes are needed.

