



Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

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Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

checkup



Focus on
Obesity

A PUBLICATION FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF BVMI

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Dear Friend...

A shocking fact: almost 69% of American adults are overweight or obese. This figure also holds true for BVMI's patients.

Our patients are particularly vulnerable to weight gain. They don't have much money. They often don't have access to healthy, affordable foods. They have few opportunities for physical activity and are stressed, anxious and depressed.

Half of BVMI's obese/overweight patients have been diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes and are being followed by our diabetes team. The other half – many of whom also have high blood pressure or high cholesterol – would benefit from the same kind of focused patient education and monitoring to help them achieve healthy weight.

BVMI's Diabetes and Women's Health programs are well-established and effective, so we'll soon turn our efforts to addressing obesity. In our new home, we'll have space to conduct group education sessions. We're seeking grants to build the program. But we'll need your help too! It costs more to care for people who are overweight or obese, but ultimately saves lives and money. Stay tuned for updates as we develop this new and exciting program!

Amanda Missey, Executive Director
amissey@bvmi.net



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WINTER 2016

Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

BVMI'S NUTRITION SUPERHEROES



Key members of BVMI's nutrition team (L-R): Patient Navigator Vicky Fliman, RN; Certified Diabetes Educator Holly Homa, RN; and volunteer Marcia Eisen, Registered Dietician. Food models to demonstrate proper portions were purchased with grant funding.

Losing is A Win for BVMI Patient

Working long hours, eating on the run, and not having enough time for exercise: That's a dangerous trio when it comes to your health.

"Pablo" was taking that gamble every day when he first came to BVMI. Emigrating from Peru 30 years ago, he has successfully worked in landscape construction in the US. But he found it harder to succeed when it came to losing weight.

Hearing about BVMI from a friend, Pablo became our patient at age 53, weighing 215 pounds. Dr. Salvatore Laraia encouraged him to exercise more, to cut down on simple carbohydrates and eat foods with less sugar and more fiber and nutrients. Dr. Laraia also encouraged him to lower his intake of fatty foods.

Change wasn't easy. Pablo had very little time to cook for himself. The types of restaurant and convenience foods he ate, coupled with a lack of exercise, made it hard to lose weight. But he persevered. By the time he met with BVMI's Patient Navigator Vicky Fliman, RN, in February of 2015, Pablo had dropped 21 pounds, to a healthier 194. He was proud of his progress, but with a diagnosis of pre-diabetes, he needed to stay motivated.

Speaking with Pablo in his primary language, Spanish, Vicky made suggestions for ways that he could eat well at restaurants he frequented. She also offered ideas for preparing quick and healthy meals at home.

"It's important to understand and respect the cultural food habits of

our patients," said Vicky. "Simple, gradual changes can be made. For example, if you eat rice and beans more than once a day, try making that second meal lighter on the rice and heavier on fresh vegetables."

What about the expense of healthier eating? Vicky explained that healthy food doesn't have to cost more. "I make it a point to know what's currently in the local markets," she said. "You can stretch your food dollars by what I call 'eating from the earth,' which means finding nutritious fruits and vegetables that are a good price because they are in season."

Pablo's journey to better health may not be over — it never is for any of us — but he's come a long way down that road so far.

FOCUS ON OBESITY

Rx for Weight Loss at BVMI



Dr. Josef Machac

Obesity is a problem Dr. Josef Machac knows much about; he's tracked the issue for years. He plans to do something about it, too, with an obesity treatment program at BVMI.

"Obesity is often an underlying cause of hypertension and diabetes — and cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, circulatory or orthopedic problems," said Dr. Machac, a BVMI volunteer from Mount Sinai Hospital. "About 80% of the care provided at BVMI is somehow connected to obesity."

"Our patients are busy, often juggling multiple jobs while caring for their families," he added. "To lose weight successfully, they need help beyond one-on-one primary care."

BVMI's volunteer medical team has been working on the program's design. The ideal program would include patient and staff education, Spanish language interpreters, physical activity coaches, psychological counseling, and careful monitoring and tracking.

Launching an obesity treatment program doesn't happen overnight, but it is within BVMI's reach. "With our move to a larger facility, generosity from donors, and part-time medical volunteers and staff, we can help patients take the weight off, keep it off, and become healthier in both body and mind," said Dr. Machac.

Did You Know?

HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

CORONARY HEART DISEASE ■ HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
STROKE ■ TYPE 2 DIABETES ■ HIGH CHOLESTEROL
METABOLIC SYNDROME ■ CANCER ■ OSTEOARTHRITIS
SLEEP APNEA ■ REPRODUCTIVE PROBLEMS ■ GALLSTONES

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BVMI: Healthcare for the Uninsured