CAR Diac REHAB
And invaluable service at TCRHCC

L
ing in Sipaulovi Village on Second Mesa his whole life, Leonard Talaswaima’s (63) story is all too common. He didn’t think much about his heart health until a significant medical event changed all that – he had a heart attack.

His life first changed when he was rushed to the emergency room at Winslow Memorial Hospital ten years ago, feeling terrible with extreme thirst. His blood sugar level was too high and he was diagnosed with diabetes. He spent three days in the hospital receiving treatment.

Two years later (2002), Talaswaima was participating in an important Hopi ceremony. He felt ill with what he thought was extreme heartburn, but felt he had to continue the ceremony. He didn’t know the symptoms of a heart attack or how serious his situation was. He was having a mild heart attack. He landed in the University of Arizona Medical Center in Tucson where a stent was placed in a blocked artery that delivers blood to the heart. (A stent is explained on page 2.) Talaswaima finally realized that he was in a serious situation with his heart.

This event would eventually lead to a journey to better health and an awareness of fitness and better dietary habits, but not before more serious trouble. Talaswaima would take medication for his heart, but he felt his life was greatly affected. He knew he had to be more active but was afraid about further heart trouble. He kept working but was always afraid of exerting himself too much. He would have check-ups every three months with Dr. Randall Coffey at TCRHCC every three months. He would also learn to change his eating habits.

Talaswaima grew up in the Hopi tradition – a lifestyle of farming and looking after one’s health. The Hopi have a long cultural history of health awareness, walking and running. Talaswaima was a runner when he was young. He served three years in the Army beginning in 1967 at age 21 and spent a year in Viet Nam. His military service included rigorous physical activity.

Returning home, Talaswaima married and raised five children in an active family lifestyle, encouraging physical fitness as a family, participating in 5K and 10K runs throughout Northern Arizona.

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(See symptoms of a heart attack on page 2.)

In May 2009, tests revealed advancing problems in the heart and Talaswaima was again sent to U. of A. Medical Center where he underwent triple bypass surgery. (See page 2.) He was in the hospital for a week then began an extensive recovery period that would last over six months.

In August he was referred to the TCRHCC Cardiac Rehabilitation Program – the first of its kind in all of IHS. “It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I’m

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very fortunate the cardiac rehab is right here in Tuba City,” remarked Talaswaima. He committed himself to recovering and getting fit and healthy in order to live a long life.

Talaswaima would participate in rehab administered by the Cardiac Rehab team three times per week for 12 weeks. Since he had a driving learner’s permit, Talaswaima’s youngest son got a lot of driving practice taking his dad on the 60 mile round trip from Second Mesa.

The team tests a patient’s abilities in a carefully monitored approach. In designing and implementing an exercise program for each individual patient the stresses on the body are carefully monitored.

“I told them I used to be a runner, so the goal we set was to run again.”

During the course of his program, Talaswaima would jog on the treadmill.

Talaswaima praises the Cardiac Rehab team for their work with him and their dedication.

“I feel good now, and much more motivated – motivated to continue.”

The rehab program took place from August to December.

When at home, Talaswaima utilized the Hopi Wellness Center, just five miles from his home.

When he’s in Tuba City he utilizes the TC Wellness Center. He exercises at home as well.

Talaswaima credits his wife Rhonda for helping him to keep him on a healthy track, along with the nutrition education and counseling he received at TCRHCC.

“I had fallen into not taking care of myself and not paying attention to my diet for a long time, so I had to re-learn so much such as what healthy portions looked like,” said Talaswaima. “Now I read a lot of labels, we eat more fruit and vegetables, and I now realize water is the best. Water is life. I drink a lot of water instead of unhealthy drinks."

“We’ve adopted a much more healthy lifestyle as a family. You can’t throw everything away – everything craves a steak dinner once in a while, but as a treat, certainly not all the time.”

Talaswaima decided to retire to spend more time with his family and do things he enjoys and return to some of the more traditional ways. He’s looking forward to more farming – planting corn, beans and melons in the spring. He said he will not pay attention to my diet for a long time, so I had to re-learn so much such as what healthy portions looked like,” said Talaswaima. “Now I read a lot of labels, we eat more fruit and vegetables, and I now realize water is the best. Water is life. I drink a lot of water instead of unhealthy drinks.”

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“It is important to recognize the signs of a heart attack and to act immediately by calling 911. A person’s chances of surviving a heart attack are increased if emergency treatment is given to the victim as soon as possible.”

A heart attack occurs when a clot blocks a blood vessel that delivers blood and nutrients to a part of the heart muscle and a portion begins to die.

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Bypass Surgery: Coronary artery bypass surgery, also coronary artery bypass graft surgery, also simply called bypass surgery is a surgical procedure performed to relieve angina and reduce the risk of death from coronary artery disease. Arteries or veins from elsewhere in the patient’s body are grafted to the coronary arteries to bypass athero-sclerotic narrowings and improve the blood supply to the coronary circulation supplying heart muscle.

Stent: A stent is a wire metal mesh tube used to prop open an artery during angioplasty. The stent is collapsed to a small diameter and put over a balloon catheter. It’s then moved into the area of an arterial blockage. When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands, lying in place and holds the artery open. The stent stays in the artery permanently, improves blood flow to the heart muscle and relieves symptoms (usually chest pain).

Arterial Disease – Atherosclerosis is the condition in which an artery wall thickens as the result of a build-up of fatty materials such as cholesterol. It is a syndrome affecting arterial blood vessels, a chronic inflammatory response in the walls of arteries. It is commonly referred to as a hardening or furring of the arteries.

Plaque is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances found in the blood. (See cholesterol on page 4.)

Strokes is caused by the same plaque or clots in blood vessels but it is when blood supply is cut off to a portion of the brain. May cause paralysis, damage to any organ or body function, or death.

Cardiac Rehab Team: (left to right) Tennon Gilmore, PT; Melissa Lytell, PT; Leonard Talaswaima; Aaron Jones, PT; and Joette Walters, RN.
HEALTH PROMOTION/DISEASE PREVENTION

What is PreDiabetes?

Have you ever been told your blood sugar level is borderline? Could you have PreDiabetes?

Prediabetes, sometimes called “borderline diabetes” occurs when the body does not respond properly to the hormone insulin and therefore cannot keep blood glucose (sugar) levels within a normal range. Blood sugar is higher than normal, but not high enough to be diabetes. Some of the food we eat turns into blood glucose, or sugar, during the normal process of digesting our food. The bloodstream transports glucose to all cells in your body to be used for energy. Normally, the pancreas produces insulin, which allows the sugar in the blood to enter the body's cells. When your body's tissues are not responding properly to the insulin, it becomes difficult for cells to get glucose from the blood for energy. This is called insulin resistance. When this happens, the cell cannot use the glucose, which then remains in the blood. The buildup of sugar in the blood causes abnormally high levels of blood sugar. Over time, if not treated, prediabetes may get worse and lead to type-2 diabetes and other serious complications.

Symptoms

Prediabetes is most often a silent condition with no symptoms. However, certain risk factors, such as obesity or lack of exercise, may put you at a higher risk of developing prediabetes. If you have any of the risk factors for prediabetes, which are similar to the risk of type-2 diabetes, ask your health care provider whether you should be tested.

What happens?

Being diagnosed with prediabetes is a warning sign that you are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Although you may still be healthy, moderate and persistent elevated blood sugar levels greatly increase your risk for getting diabetes and/or heart and blood vessel (cardiovascular) disease.

You can help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes by doing all of the following:

- Get your blood sugar level tested
- Limit the amount of fat you eat
- Limit sweets
- Lose some weight (if overweight)
- Get regular exercise

These are healthy habits you can initiate and help to lower your risk of getting diabetes or any other complications. Are you interested in improving your overall health, lose some weight, feel better, and learn new ways of balancing your life? The TCRRHCC Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) offers Lifestyle Balance Classes designed to help you meet your personal health and wellness goals. For more information on how you can prevent or delay the onset of diabetes, see or contact DPP at (928) 283-1429/1426.

If you have Internet access, go to the following web address to read an article on Preventing Diabetes: Small Changes Have Big Payoff:


What was the purpose of the project and what was your role?

I had to work on many projects and one of the most difficult was in my Contemporary Developments in Global Healthcare class. We had to study the effects of globalization on healthcare. One challenging project required the selection of a pandemic and a country, study the healthcare laws of the country, and develop an action plan that addressed the socioeconomic factors to obtain provisions that addressed or help alleviate the pandemic.

How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?

The current trend in healthcare is focused on continuous quality improvement and patient safety. Institutions in healthcare quality are now applying business management models for the implementation of quality improvement projects. I feel that I can make a positive contribution to my organization and field by applying these concepts.

Describe any research project you’ve worked on. What was the purpose of the project and what was your role?

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What skills do you bring to TCRHCC? How will you help others in his or her work areas?

I am dedicated to motivating and promoting individuals who are interested in career advancement. A good work ethic can help you achieve your goals.

Do you plan to continue with your studies after taking a break?

I would love to seek a doctorate degree however my main focus is my children. They are still young and they are a priority in my life and my husband’s. Any parent knows that our greatest accomplishment is not what we achieve but what our children do.

What do you NOW do in your spare time?

My family and I are avid horseback riders and big fans of rodeo. My spare time will likely be spent making sandwiches or barbecuing at junior rodeos. There are also plenty of books I would like to read.

Contact Community Relations with your staff and community news.

(928) 283-2993

T.J. Riggs with her children, (left to right), Cooper (4), Shannon (13), and Stade (9).
What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat made by your body. Cholesterol (kuh-LES-ter-all) travels through your body in your blood vessels. Your body needs some cholesterol to stay healthy.

There are 2 types.
- LDL (bad) cholesterol sticks to the walls of your blood vessels. Too much hurts your body.
- HDL (good) cholesterol protects your body. It helps keep LDL (bad) cholesterol from building up in your blood vessels.

Too much cholesterol causes problems.
Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. If you eat too many fatty foods, your body gets too much cholesterol. This extra cholesterol sticks to the walls of the blood vessels that go to your heart and brain.

Over time, the blood vessels can get blocked. This can cause a heart attack or a stroke (brain attack).

What do the cholesterol numbers mean?
Your health care provider checks your cholesterol with a blood test. The numbers that are healthy for you depend on your risk factors. Ask your provider when you should have your cholesterol checked.

Your LDL Goal – Lower is better.
- Under 100 is best.
- Under 130 is good.
- 130 - 159 is almost too high.
- 160 or over is unhealthy.

Your LDL Goal – Lower is better.
- Over 60 is best.
- Over 40 is good.
- Under 40 is unhealthy.

What can you do?
Take small steps. You can lower your bad cholesterol and raise your good cholesterol.
- Be at a healthy weight.
- Eat low-fat, low-calorie foods.
- Be active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Stop smoking.
- Limit alcohol.

Ask your provider or dietician about more ways to keep your cholesterol levels healthy.

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