

INSTITUTE FOR PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE & ADVOCACY



Kathey Avery, RN, BSN

Avery Health - Education and Consulting brings extensive experience and knowledge to help individuals and groups achieve positive health outcomes and implement equity.

Kathey Avery, founder and owner of Avery Health - Education and Consulting, has more than 35 years of experience in healthcare and community activism. She is dedicated to raising awareness about, and helping in the prevention of, chronic diseases and preventable cancers through patient and public education and personal accountability.

Contact Kathey Avery today at 828-768-2369 to schedule a talk or workshop. For more details, please visit www.AveryHEC.com

The Institute for Preventive Healthcare & Advocacy

The mission of the **Institute for Preventive Healthcare & Advocacy** is to promote optimum health for all residents of Buncombe County and surrounding areas by addressing the social determinants of health and the inequities in access to affordable and preventive healthcare.

www.ifpha.org

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Prevention is Essential

BY KATHEY AVERY RN, BSN, CN

September is Ovarian & Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, and National Sickle Cell Awareness Month.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness

With my best friend succumbing to ovarian cancer, it is dear to my heart that every-one woman knows what to look for.

Ovarian cancer is a rare, but highly lethal disease. Most women are diagnosed at stage 3 or 4 when it is more difficult to treat. Ovarian cancer is often called the “silent” killer because many times there are no symptoms until the disease has progressed to an advanced stage.

One important risk factor for ovarian cancer: a family history of breast or ovarian cancer. First-degree relatives showed increased risk, with a stronger association among African Americans.

Some early symptoms may include:

- An unusual feeling of quickly feeling full when eating or discomfort in the pelvic region

- Unexplainable indigestion, gas, or bloating that is not relieved with over-the-counter antacids
 - Pain during sexual intercourse
 - Abnormal bleeding
 - Swelling and pain of the abdomen
 - A frequent need to urinate
- As the cancer grows, symptoms may include:
- Pressure or pain in the abdomen, pelvis, back, or legs
 - A swollen or bloated abdomen
 - Nausea, indigestion, gas, constipation, or diarrhea
 - Fatigue
 - Weight Loss
- Contact your physician if you have any of these symptoms.



Prostate Cancer Awareness

Common Risk Factors for Prostate Cancer

Race: Studies show that African American men are approximately 60 percent more likely to develop prostate cancer in their lifetime than Caucasian or Hispanic men.

Age: The risk of developing prostate cancer increases with age.

Family History: Men with an immediate blood relative, such as a father or brother, who has or had prostate cancer, are twice as likely to develop the disease. If there is another family member diagnosed with the disease, the chances of getting prostate cancer increase.

Diet: A diet high in saturated fat, as well as obesity, increases the risk of prostate cancer.

High Testosterone Levels: Men who use testosterone therapy are more likely to develop prostate cancer, as an increase in testosterone stimulates the growth of the prostate gland.

Symptoms of Prostate Cancer

- Burning or pain during urination
- Difficulty urinating, or trouble starting and stopping while urinating
- More frequent urges to urinate at night
- Loss of bladder control
- Decreased flow or velocity of urine stream
- Blood in urine (hematuria)

Don't hesitate to contact your physician if you have any of these symptoms.

Sickle Cell Awareness

Red blood cells are usually round and flexible. In sickle cell anemia, some red blood cells look like sickles used to cut wheat. These unusually shaped cells give the disease its name.

Causes

Sickle cell anemia is caused by a change in the gene that tells the body to make hemoglobin, the iron-rich compound in red blood cells. The hemoglobin associated with sickle cell anemia causes red blood cells to become rigid, sticky, and misshapen.

For a child to have sickle cell anemia, both parents must carry one copy of the

sickle cell gene and pass both copies to the child. If only one parent passes the sickle cell gene to the child, that child will have the sickle cell trait. With one typical hemoglobin gene and one sickle cell gene, people with the sickle cell trait make both typical hemoglobin and sickle cell hemoglobin.

Their blood might contain some sickle cells, but they generally don't have symptoms. Because they are carriers of the disease, they can pass the gene to their children.

Prevention starts with knowing your body. Contact your physician if you have any concerns.

Source: Mayo Clinic, mayoclinic.org.

Committed to Your Health

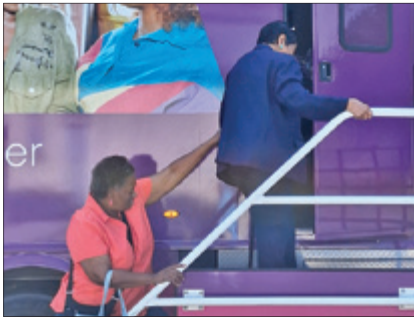
As a registered community nurse, I believe that prevention requires participation by individuals in good health, so miracles hopefully will not be needed. With healthcare costs rising and resources shrinking, prevention is no longer optional, it is essential.

This month, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Novant Health for bringing their mobile mammogram unit from Winston-Salem to our western North Carolina communities. This vital service was made possible through



funding from the NC Department of Health and Human Services Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program.

I must also thank my dedicated IFPHA team, retired oncologist Dr. Michael Messina, Novant Community Engagement Specialist Ellen Richardson, and the “Daughters of Zion” for generously opening the doors of the Friendship Community Center to host this important event. Together, we created a space where women could access life-saving screenings close to home.



Karen Darity (left) and her mother Edith Darity traveled from Brevard, NC to get their mammograms.

The impact was deeply moving. One participant expressed her gratitude for Novant's commitment to serving all people by noting the comfort and trust she felt with a culturally diverse care team. Because IFPHA included a Spanish-speaking interpreter, we ensured that no one was left behind.

Another young woman, in tears, shared that she had gone years without a mammogram due to lack of insurance, despite losing her mother to breast cancer at a young age. For her, this opportunity was more than a screening, it was hope.

At IFPHA, we are committed to continuing these screenings, expanding access, and raising awareness about breast health and prevention. But this work requires community participation.

When individuals take steps toward prevention, and when we, as a community, support each other's health, we reduce the need for “miracles” and instead build healthier, longer lives together.