

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Women: Now the new face of heart disease and stroke

The Editor

Heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death and disability in Canada. While, these diseases represent a serious health concern for both men and women, traditionally they have been viewed as diseases that impact men. However, the truth is women are more likely to die of heart attack or stroke than men. In fact, stroke kills 45 per cent more women than men and women are 16 per cent more likely to die after a heart attack.

While there are a number of reasons as to why women have become the new face of heart disease and stroke, lack of awareness remains a key challenge. Only one in eight women is aware that these diseases represent their biggest health concern. This statistic is the reason why the Heart Truth Campaign was launched by the Heart and Stroke Foundation nationally. The goal of this campaign is to encourage women to learn more about their risks and about what they can do to protect their health. That's my goal too. And, it's the reason why I recently agreed to work with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia to pro-

mote these important messages.

The truth is that even though heart disease and stroke are different diseases, many of the basic causes and risk factors are the same. Your family medical history can tell you a great deal about your risk and so can knowing your health profile. For example, regularly checking on your blood pressure and monitoring your cholesterol levels provide important pieces of information that can mean the difference between being healthy and being susceptible. Paying attention to your stress level, monitoring how you are feeling, and regular medical check ups are essential to a healthy future. Equally important are the ways you manage your risk factors. Regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, quitting smoking, and reducing your exposure to second hand smoke can help reduce your risk significantly.

Unfortunately, and despite our best efforts, heart attacks and strokes do occur. If this happens to you, knowing the signs and signals and taking action is your best chance for survival – and for a positive recovery. While no situation is the same,

there are some common themes that create problems for women who are experiencing a heart attack. For example, although women experience similar symptoms of a heart attack as men, women are less likely to believe they are having a heart attack and often put off seeking treatment. Women also typically experience heart attack symptoms that are less definite than men. For example, chest discomfort rather than pain is common in women experiencing a heart attack. This can create confusion and lead a patient to incorrectly assume her discomfort will go away with rest. The choice to wait may lead to negative and often fatal consequences. Every minute counts.

The five warning signs of a heart attack are one or more of the following:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain in the arm, neck, jaw, shoulder or back
- Nausea, indigestion or vomiting
- Sweating and/or cool, clammy skin
- Difficulty breathing
- Fear or anxiety

Sudden discomfort or pain in these areas that does not go away with rest may signal a heart attack. It can feel like burning, squeezing, heaviness, tightness or pressure.

The five warning signs of stroke include:

- Sudden: Weakness or numbness
- Sudden: Loss of muscle strength in face, arm or leg
- Sudden: Trouble speaking
- Sudden: Vision problems
- Sudden: Severe headache
- Sudden: Dizziness

If you are experiencing these symptoms, don't wait. Get medical help right away.

Knowledge is an essential ingredient to becoming and remaining healthy. Visit the Heart Truth website at www.hearttruth.ca and commit to learning more, to spreading the message, and to taking action. Your health may depend on it.

Dr. Catherine Kells, Head, Division of Cardiology, Capital Health District Health Authority

FROM THE EDITOR

Some development action is sorely needed in Victoria County.

Un-impeded by an RDA or a development officer Municipal Council has waffled ineffectually on sustainable development for far too long.

A municipal economic development committee has not been convened since the fall of 2009 and the cutting edge of our connected community is quickly becoming dulled by time and indecision.

The County has been adrift on the development front since the Province lured away Ross MacDonald.

Not belonging to a Regional Development Agency nor having a development officer has caused the County to miss out on programs and expertise which would have been of great benefit to the development of the Municipality's assets.

2009 saw three important documents written to help the municipality chart its course for the next few years.

First there was *Shaping Our Future*, the County's second strategic plan in 12 years, and one that no-one, elected official

or concerned citizen, has remarked on, but which states explicitly that success depends on action.

Second was the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)* which was to guide the Municipal agenda as part of a county-wide commitment towards improved sustainability. The plan was a requirement to receive the Municipality's portion of the gas tax.

Third was an economic development strategy, *Possibilities*, based on a two day think tank convened by the Municipality. Its purpose was to be the first step in the County taking a leadership role in the region's economic development.

Every document emphasizes the need for a development officer and the links, connections and expertise provided by belonging to a Regional Development Agency.

Improving web presence is one thing but you need to have the supporting organizational background, the strategic development infrastructure in place to be the most connected municipality in North America.

Letters to the Editor Policy

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Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"

The Trip Home



It was the end of a very long day. To borrow a phrase we had begun "the long and winding road home." The alarm jarred us awake at 0300 and a quick brushing of

the teeth, combing of hair (my wife's, not mine) and we grabbed the shuttle to the airport. What America calls screening and I call mass confusion saw us pushed and prodded through the various high tech but I suspect, mostly ineffectual machines and we were left on the other side, drained but underway.

It was all of 05:30.

There was an initial jaunt to LaGuardia, the armpit airport of America and another wait made nervous by the fact that yet another machine refused to give us boarding passes. Nervous trips to a pleasant but harried counter person did not help. She kept offering various, but mostly unconvincing reasons, why we could not get boarding passes. I knew the reasons offered were bogus because a lovely lady who had befriended me much like a pound puppy had hers, obtained from the same machine at the same time.

The TV screens began to fill with flights to Europe being cancelled as the skies over Europe were being filled with ash from the volcanic eruption. The longer I paced and fretted for a boarding pass, I more I felt my own eruption coming on.

However, in the end all my worry-wart behavior was for naught and we boarded the painted cigar and rumbled off to Halifax. Never did brown, crusty ground look so good. Nothing truer was ever said than the best part of a trip was "getting home." By now my brain was fried harder than an airport egg.

I tolerate flying, not enjoy flying. I no longer read the paper upside down or listen to the engines every time they change their pitch but relaxed is not a state I reach. I am kind of like the dog in a thunder storm. I don't like it but I can't do anything about it and like the storm it too shall pass.

By now we had reached Canada Customs in their intimidating black uniforms.

The quietly probing young lady asked me a series of questions that I'm sure bored us both to the point of numbness. A quick stamp of the passport a "Welcome home" and we went through the labyrinths to find the baggage carousel. Halifax is not Newark but it still big enough to cause a little angst looking for stuff.

Our American friends had outdone themselves and the bags were silently waiting for us when we dragged our sorry bodies to the bowels of the Halifax airport.

Except mine was not there! Now in the grand scheme of things dirty underwear and socks would not be a great loss but still there is something very upsetting about losing "your stuff."

All of a sudden like a Sharp Shinned Hawk at your feeder, a new uniformed person arrived. As far as I could tell this was the Staff sergeant in charge of elevator baggage carousels.

"What does your bag look like, Sir?" was the stiff command. "well, I replied weakly (it had been a long day), a lot like these fifty others, black." She was not happy as I'm sure modern emphasis on black had immeasurably complicated her day.

At this point she disappeared along the winding track looking for my "black" bag. Why carousels are built using the Swamp Road as a blueprint, I'm not sure, but it is not my place to question why.

It was at this point that through no effort of mine disaster was narrowly averted. "Sir, SIR! get down!" came the anxious bark of the Staff Sergeant. "WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?"

I looked to my wife for support but she seemed to be standing in frozen horror. Trying to be a helpful bear, I had, inadvertently and dumbly, and obviously without thinking, jumped up on the baggage track. Everyone around me froze like Emperor penguins in a winter storm.

Most fortunately for me the track and I were not moving and I scrambled down like a scolded kid before anything worse could ensue. People silently filed past me, their condemning looks reducing me to insignificance.

I blame it on the long day.

And air travel!

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