



February 2014

HEADLINES

Anxiety linked to heart disease and stroke



Monarch psychiatrist shares ways to avoid stressors and environmental triggers

February is American Heart Health Month, and on the heels of the observance is a new study released by the American Heart Association (AHA) connecting stroke and heart disease to high levels of anxiety.

The study is the first in which researchers linked anxiety and stroke independent of other factors such as depression. Anxiety disorders are one of the most prevalent mental health problems, and symptoms include feeling unusually worried, stressed, nervous or tense. According to the AHA, anxiety also increases the risk of heart disease – and heart disease patients who have anxiety are twice as likely at risk of dying from any cause compared to those without anxiety.

“Anxiety increases the heart rate which may increase blood pressure, which then can lead to increased risk of stroke and/or heart disease,”

explained Dr. Sharyn Comeau, one of Monarch’s psychiatrists.

People with high anxiety levels are also more likely to smoke and be physically inactive, possibly explaining part of the anxiety-stroke link. Higher stress hormone levels, heart rate or blood pressure could also be factors. Stroke is the fourth highest killer and a leading cause of disability in the United States.

Over a 22-year period, researchers studied a nationally representative group of 6,019 people 25-74 years old in the first National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Study participants completed a series of tests, including medical examinations and psychological questionnaires to gauge anxiety and depression levels. People in the highest third of anxiety symptoms had a 33 percent higher stroke risk than those with the lowest levels.

“Constant stress will decrease serotonin, which will cause anxiety problems, and when anxiety isn’t treated you become depressed. It’s a vicious cycle,” explained Comeau, who agreed reducing anxiety is a must, but said it is often hard in our fast-paced society.

Plus, our society’s constant need to be plugged in adds stressful environmental triggers. “With the use of technology there are no longer boundaries between work and home life, so people are on their computers and phones, working longer hours whether they realize it or not. There’s no time where work ends and relaxation begins,” Comeau explained.

Comeau shared ways to avoid anxiety and stress generated by daily life, including decreasing caffeine in the afternoon, having a similar routine and bed time every night, refraining from using email after a certain hour, decreasing the amount of stimuli before going to bed, and exercising regularly. She also recommended carving out time to “do nothing” which allows the brain to rest.

“We’re so motivated to succeed we don’t realize by stopping and being still we could actually become more creative,” she explained.

North Carolina's Medicaid managed care services (MCO) propose consolidation plan

Ten organizations responsible for the management of mental health, substance abuse and intellectual developmental disability services across North Carolina are set to consolidate into four regional local management entities-managed care organizations (LME-MCOs) this year.



The plan from the N.C. Council of Community Programs, which represents the LME-MCOs, specifies that the proposed system will have three main characteristics:

- Four regions (1 Western, 2 Central, 1 Eastern)

- Geographic contiguity (with the exception of existing MCO configurations)
- 300,000-350,000 covered lives per region

“This consolidation will help the system by allowing more standard forms and process across the board, as well as a consistency of Information Technology (IT) platforms among the MCOs. Monarch staff has been working with those at the MCOs through various committees to ensure that services and support are consistent. Without consolidation, this would not have been as doable,” Monarch CEO Peggy Terhune said.

The attached map indicates the four regions proposed by the N.C. Council of Community Programs. Pending final approval of the plan, The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services will work with the Council and LME-MCO leadership on a timeline for consolidation.

Ridgefield residents celebrate MLK Day with Wingate University students



Residents of Monarch’s Ridgefield Home in Region 3 recently celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day by partnering with Wingate students to learn about equality and the life and message of MLK.

Four Wingate students from the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity visited Monarch’s Ridgefield Home in Union County and did arts and crafts with the people we support there. They worked together to make a large paper chain to symbolize the

equality of all people and to symbolize Dr. King's dream.

Lacey Gulick, operations manager at Monarch's Campus Park Drive, helped organize the event and said equality was one thing that Martin Luther King Jr. strived for, which is why Wingate students decided to celebrate it with those at Ridgefield. She noted the day was important because those we support love to meet new people and invite them into their lives.

"Bringing volunteers into Monarch increases equality to those who live with disabilities, Wingate University and our community as a whole. The people supported were thrilled to have new people in their home. There was a lot of clapping, singing, laughter and gratitude all throughout the home," Gulick said.

A few months ago Gulick and one of the people we support, Charles Smith, had the opportunity to host a table at Wingate's Internship and Career Services Etiquette Dinner and, through that interaction, students learned about volunteering opportunities at Monarch. The MLK Jr. Day craft was the first volunteer event at Monarch for the students .

Gulick hopes to continue the unique "link" created with Wingate University and said they are planning to attend the annual Shakespeare Competition at Wingate on Feb. 11 and also participate in Wingate's Career Fair on March 27.

PEOPLE WHO CARE

Monarch volunteer Jackie Church connects with day program participants through art

Jackie Church is an artist living in Currituck County. She does traditional basket weaving

and through her art has learned the importance of expression and creativity.

She and her husband are also caretakers of her brother Tim, who lives with Down Syndrome and attends Monarch's Lighthouse Club of Currituck, a day program in Harbor Point in the Outer Banks. Church said she noticed Tim's excitement following completion of a craft at the Lighthouse Club and her artistic sensibilities were piqued. She began to brainstorm with her neighbor ways to incorporate more art at the Lighthouse Club.

They started doing crafts with participants of the day program and as a result of her efforts, there is now a craft storage room at the club with materials she has organized to ensure there are always art supplies on hand. Church also spends time generating ideas by looking online for materials and visiting craft stores, like Michaels.

Tim, and others who attend the Lighthouse Club, have created everything from door hangers to sand art – and she said "they love the attention" they get from others. For Church the most important part of volunteering is seeing the faces of those we support and how much they love interacting with new people.

"Having something different to do, and different people to be around, and knowing that someone cares is so important to them," she said. "By being a volunteer you get so much back because they so appreciate it."

Another key aspect of volunteering is getting the opportunity to interact with those living with developmental disabilities. It gives you the chance to see that they have feelings and are people just like anyone else, Church noted.

"It is also important to volunteer with those we support because they are such an important part of our lives," Church said.

NEWS AND NOTES

Special Olympian Tjuana James brings home the gold

Tjuana James, a participant of Monarch's River City Achievement Center in Elizabeth City, was among 140 athletes from across North Carolina and Virginia who competed at Appalachian Ski Mountain near Boone for the 2014 Special Olympics Carolina Winter Games.



James, who started skiing when she was 19, took gold in the downhill skiing competition for Pasquotank and Camden counties. She said at the start of the competition she was nervous, but once she got on the slopes it was a lot of fun. Afterwards she got to meet people from across the state.

Lighting the Olympic Torch, another big honor for athletes, was something else James participated in during the ceremony. According to Leslie Hughes, site manager in Elizabeth City, James was extremely excited after the games to share her experiences and medal with other River City Center participants.

"When she returned, everyone was so proud of her accomplishment," Hughes recalled. "She just smiled at all the clapping and congratulations. She said she and her peers had a nice time, but it was "cold!"

Now that this important competition is behind her, James is preparing for her weightlifting competition that will be held in New Jersey later this year.

"We anticipate more gold coming our way real soon," Hughes predicted.

Roxanne Gordon prepares to compete in the Special Olympics

Roxanne Gordon, a resident of Connecticut Home in Southern Pines, has her sights set on the gold.



She will join two other Moore county residents this summer as they head to New Jersey to participate in the bowling competition of the Special Olympics USA Games.

Gordon began bowling at a very young age with her sister, and has been doing it ever since. She has won numerous gold medals playing in different leagues, and says she is excited to compete in this year's summer games.

"This is my first trip to New Jersey and I love flying," Gordon said. She is also hoping to bring a gold medal back home when she returns.

She will be among 227 competitive bowlers, including 48 North Carolina athletes, who will travel to compete in the games.

Region 7 Weight Loss Competition



Monarch staff in Wilson and Nash counties are looking for the biggest loser.

The two behavioral health offices are locked in an intense competition to see who will lose the most weight by March 28.

The battle began after Alicia Graham, clinical operations director, proposed the idea to her office following the holidays. She said everyone was looking for a way to lose weight, and a competition seemed like a good way to motivate people to do so. Plus, she noted, “I’m pretty competitive.”

At first, she said the staff was skeptical and not sure what to expect. But once they picked their teams, registered online and began the first weigh in, people started to formulate a strategy and get into the spirit.

There are currently two teams, Nash and Wilson, and every Monday they weigh in. At the beginning of the competition each person paid in \$10 so that the team that loses the most weight earns a cash prize. The office that loses the highest percentage of weight also wins a dinner out.

The teams also create challenges for each other. This week Team Wilson accepted a challenge from Team Rocky Mount. The team that exercises the most minutes for the week wins the challenge and the team members will receive a \$5.00 gift card to Subway.

Even though there are prizes at the end, the real goal of the Biggest Loser Competition is to get healthy, Graham said. “It is a way to give people motivation to change, but also provide guidance.”

Staff members have increased their exercise, some have started using Wii Fit, others are getting together at lunch time to eat out together and make healthier choices. There have also been discussions about cooking more at home instead of eating out and making poor choices ordering unhealthy food. One of the most positive changes, Graham said, is that the candy bowls at the offices have been replaced by fruit bowls.

“People want each other to do well. Everyone is supportive, willing to give tips and pep talks and there is more office camaraderie. People are sitting down at meals and getting to know each other and encouraging each other to make healthy options,” Graham said.

The last weigh in for the competition is March 28, where the teams will learn who the biggest loser is, and who will win the cash prize. Until then, staff are continuing to forgo french fries for fruit, and getting more competitive as the weeks go on.

“Maybe next we can get everyone at Monarch on board,” Graham said.

MONARCH SPOTLIGHT

NaMetris Blount - Q&A

Q: How long have you worked at Monarch?

A: I have worked here for four years.

Q: What is your title?

A: Clinical Program Director at the Mecklenburg Behavior Health Office



Q: What does a typical workday look like?

A: Typically consulting, program screening, caseload reviewing, supervising and attempting some sort of lunch break all fall in a day’s work.

Q: What is the most important aspect of your role and why?

A: Making sure the clinical aspects of my department are up to standards, that the individuals we support are clinically stable and working towards goals and ensuring that my staff is ready to respond clinically in an efficient manner at all times.

Q: What has been your most rewarding or satisfying experience, or your proudest moment while working here?

A: Seeing the individuals we serve gain independent living skills and inform us they are ready to leave because they are prepared to live independently of residential services.

Q: What might someone be surprised to know about you?

A: I am a black belt in Taekwondo.

Q: What do you do when you aren't working?

A: I spend time with family and friends.

Q: Favorite place to visit?

A: Wherever good food is!

Q: Movie or song that best describes you?

A: That's a hard one, but I would go with: "Jesus You're The Center of my Joy" by Richard Smallwood.

Calendar Highlights

Region 3 Sweetheart's Dance

Feb. 8, 2014- 6-8p.m

Pine Grove United Methodist Church

A new opportunity being provided this year is for those we support to have their hair done by participants of the Stanly County Cosmetology School. Students are offering to cut and style the hair of those we support going to the dance.

Feb. 10

The Outpatient and Open Access services at Tanglewood in Lumberton are moving to a new location. Beginning, Monday, Feb. 10, those services will be offered at 2003 Godwin Ave., Ste. C. Crisis Services will remain at Tanglewood, 207 W. 29th St., Lumberton. For details, call the new office at (910) 674-4814.

Outside the Lines & Labels Art Submission

The Center for Faith & the Arts is having their "Outside the Lines & Labels" show and exhibit to give artists within the world of mental or physical disabilities a venue to display and sell their artwork. For more information, and an entry form contact Susanna Hollingsworth at faithart@bellsouth.net

Submission deadline: Feb. 28, 2014. All artwork should be submitted in digital form with all display information attached to email. Entry form may be emailed or mailed to CFA with image: faithart@bellsouth.net or PO Box 4098, Salisbury, NC 28145.

SIS Canned Food Drive

During the month of February, SIS is collecting donations of canned goods for Stanly Community Christian Ministries. There will be a box at the front office and at the back of the building at 730 Greenwood St.

For more information contact Sandy Hendrick at (704) 986-7221, or Katherine Shaver at (704)986-7286.

Shakespeare Competition

Feb. 11, 2014 -11a.m.-2p.m.

Region 3- Wingate University

Lacey Gulick is organizing a trip to the competition in Region 3. For more information, contact Gulick at: (704) 635-8941 or lacey.gulick@monarchnc.org

Monarch Blood Drive

To sign up, contact Jordan Redman at jordan.redman@graystoneday.org or (704) 438-3459.

The drive will be held in March.

Sixth Annual Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament

May 2, 2014

Tillery Tradition Country Club

241 Tradition Drive, Mt. Gilead, NC

27306

Join Monarch for the [Sixth Annual Dreams Take Flight Golf Tournament](#) and help us to continue to make the dreams of the people we support a reality. Proceeds from this year's tournament will be used to purchase adaptive technology for people supported and our staff.

Register here: <http://monarchnc.org/news-events/golf-tournament/23-news-and-events/golf-tournament/405-golf-tournament-registration-form>