

Preventative medicine:



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Dr. Anthony Munaco, a family practitioner, reviews laboratory test results with the Polish-born Rena Wancor.

Family practitioner blames poor health on life styles

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Dr. Anthony Munaco, a Farmington family practitioner, says today's patients can be healthier than ever before — if they're interested.

Evidently that's a big "if," as the U.S. ranks 18th in the United Nation's worldwide health ratings. Maintaining good health "heavily depends on a patient's attitude and efforts," said Munaco, one of four physicians who see 100 patients a day at Farmington Family Physicians at 23800 Orchard Lake Road.

"A doctor can't provide a proper family medical history, follow advice, keep follow-up appointments, take medication and adhere to a weight loss program. The patient plays an important role in health care."

"We don't take advantage of all that's available to us," he said.

Other contributors to the nation's poor health rating include inadequate nutrition among the poor (accounting for a substantial portion of the non-natal mortalities), the American lifestyle, and our diverse ethnic backgrounds, said Munaco.

"To a large extent, we create our own problems. In this country, a lot of emphasis is placed on success, creating stress that in turn can bring on ulcers, tension headaches or heart attacks."

Cigarette smoking is the instigator of other self-induced illnesses. In addition, as Americans of wide-ranging genetic backgrounds, we present physicians with a "mixed bag of different diseases," said Munaco.

"In a place like Sweden," he said, "it's easy to focus on a particular disease because the population has the same genetic background and lives in the same environment."

"Here, diseases are harder to predict."

DOLLARS ALSO HAVE played a part on the American health scene.

In the past, it hasn't been lucrative to emphasize preventative medicine, since insurance companies and governmental agencies, in most cases, have covered expenses only after something goes wrong. (That's changing, Munaco said.)

In spite of reimbursement policies, more and more doctors who "aren't as well trained in nutrition as they might be" are emphasizing preventative methods and recognizing the importance of the diet.

"There's a realization among physicians that patients haven't been told enough about nutrition. We're referring more and more to dietitians, and many are adding them to their staffs," said Munaco, whose center will soon have its own dietary counselor.

PREVENTATIVE CARE has long been a part of what cardiologists, pediatricians and obstetricians offer their patients, said Munaco.

"Preventative health measures start from before birth with visits to the family practice obstetrician. After the baby is born he's seen each month so we can check for potential problems."

"After six months, it's once a month and later the patient is seen on a more limited basis."

If patients come in for routine physical exams, they enable the physician to practice preventative medicine by identifying potential risks based on family history and lifestyle, Munaco said.

Munaco also sees ways in which his family practice indirectly encourages people to take preventative health measures.

"If a patient has a heart attack, it changes the way in which entire family functions. Unfortunately, family members learn the hard way to take better care of themselves, to diet and exercise."

Patients' families are of great concern to the family practitioner, said Munaco.

"In addition to providing medical care, we counsel families, act as a liaison between the family and the specialists and hospital physicians, and direct them through the maze of medical care."

On a rotating basis, each of the four doctors at Farmington Family Physicians see patients at local hospitals.

CHIROPRACTIC, wholeistic medicine, kinesiology and acupressure are meeting success and gaining in popularity both because they have merit and because their practitioners believe they'll help, Munaco said.

"There's definitely a place for them and they can work, especially for the person who believes they will. A large part of healing is mental — and not so much mental as attitude," he said. It's just common sense that if a patient is willing to follow up on treatment, take medications, and establish better exercise and dietary habits that he's going to feel better, Munaco said.

Chiropractor guides patients from 'dis-ease to state of idyllic function'

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Dr. Alan Post says he hopes to see the day the whole ideology of physical well-being changed to where everyone will be taking the responsibility for his or her own health.

"With all the money spent on health care in the U.S. we are number 18 in the rating of overall health in the United Nations statistics," the Farmington Hills chiropractor said.

"Both cancer and high blood pressure have reached epidemic proportions, and I believe the only way we can curb this is through prevention."

Post likens preventative care of the body to preventative care of a car.

"You don't wait around for 30 years before you take the car in for a tune-up. You don't wait until something goes wrong. You take it in so you can assess a potential problem area, and, when you find an area of imbalance, you can correct it."

Post emphasized that it would be difficult for him to state flatly that he had found a digestive dysfunction, for example, that could be walking the path to an ulcer and that he has turned that course around.

"There is no way to prove that. But we are making possible some very dramatic effects."

POST, A NEW associate with Harp Clinic in Farmington, did his undergraduate work at University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. He worked for a while as a counselor for disturbed youth and drug abusers in New Mexico before entering Logan College of Chiropractic in St. Louis, Mo., where he earned a degree in human biology and his doctorate.

After completing his internship in St. Louis, he did post graduate work in many areas: athletic injuries, radiology, applied kinesiology and nutrition. Later, he attained certification as an acupuncturist.

"All are natural therapeutic approaches to maximizing health, which in turn maximizes your potential in life, without drugs or surgery."

All of the latest chiropractic techniques are used in the clinic to bring a patient from dis-ease to a state of idyllic function. And we help well people move toward exercise, a better diet, a better posture, stress management, whatever is needed to maximize their health."

Whether for the ill or the well, the physical, the mental and the emotional aspects of the client is considered in the wholeistic approach.

"WE'RE CONSTANTLY looking for the cause of whatever the problem. The underlying cause that may have been building up over a lifetime."

"We trace down the circuitry from the



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Chiropractor Alan Post, shown here treating Susan Pearson, believes that the human body should be kept in tune much the way a car is.

pain, which is a message from the body that something is wrong. You are ignoring that message if you give a muscle relaxer for a pain in the neck.

"All you're doing then is blocking the message. You've taken away the signal that can help you trace the problem back to its cause."

Two persons who hold masters degrees in social work are employed with the clinic. They work with those who have emotional needs to be addressed. There is also a nutritionist on staff.

The chiropractors use applied kinesiology in their work, a diagnostic technique that assesses the integrity of different systems of the body.

Post uses the same vital points in the body used in acupuncture in his work, but calls the technique "acupressure" because he does not use the needles associated

with the Oriental method of healing.

POST SEES some forward movement in Americans taking the responsibility for their own well-being, but it isn't going fast enough for him.

"So many of our health problems stem from a poor diet, and so many of us are so poorly educated in nutrition. Correcting that alone would be a big step in putting us in the right direction."

His goal, he said, is maintaining good health, but the well client who comes to him is not his typical client.

"The classic patient is the one who has had the same bad back for 10 years and walks into a chiropractor's office for the first time as a final avenue to pursue."

"He's at the point where he is reaching for, anything, and we might be his last hope! You know there are some who still think of us as bone crackers."



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Med tech Rena Wancor operates the Farmington Family Physicians' spirometer, a device that measures a patient's

lung capacity, giving both digital and graphic readouts.