Diabetes is a risk factor for heart disease

SPRINGFIELD – There is an ad currently running on television about a Type 2 diabetes pill that asks people on the street if they know that having Type 2 diabetes more than doubles your chance of dying from a cardiovascular event such as a heart attack or stroke.

One woman’s response, whose husband has diabetes, was to look at him and say, “That can’t be true, can it?”

The answer — cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death for adults with Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Dr. Quang Pack, a preventive cardiologist in the Heart & Vascular Program at Baystate Medical Center, says when it comes to risk factors for heart disease there are six “big ones” to control — high cholesterol, uncontrolled blood pressure, lifestyle changes, and when those aren’t enough, by taking medications — statins for high cholesterol, ACE inhibitors, beta blockers and others for high blood pressure prescribed by a doctor to help control risks.

Over time, high blood glucose from diabetes can damage blood vessels and the nerves that control the heart and blood vessels. The longer one has diabetes, the higher the likelihood to develop heart problems such as coronary artery disease, heart failure or stroke.

“Then it’s why it is so important to lower your blood glucose levels and keep them under control. The good news is that you have the power within you to control your diabetes begin with some simple lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, exercising and eating a healthy diet. But, sometimes that is not enough, and your doctor may need to prescribe oral medications or insulin to help control your blood glucose levels,” Dr. Chelsea Goedert, an adult and pediatric endocrinologist at Baystate Medical Center/Baystate Children’s Hospital, said.

“There are many medications available to treat diabetes, some of which can lower your risk of future cardiovascular events,” she added.

To make an appointment with a Baystate cardiologist, call 413-794-2273. For an appointment with a physician specializing in adult diabetes, call Baystate Endocrinology and Diabetes at 413-794-7031, or for children, call Baystate Children’s Hospital Pediatric Endocrinology at 413-794-5437.

House passes Alzheimer’s and dementia legislation

WILBRAHAM — State Rep. Angelo J. Puppolo Jr., D-Springfield, announced the state House of Representatives recently passed legislation establishing an Alzheimer’s Disease Advisory Council. The bill requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to conduct an assessment on existing state efforts and implement a state plan to address the disease.

There are currently 120,000 individuals in Massachusetts with Alzheimer’s or a related dementia, and experts predict the prevalence of Alzheimer’s will increase 25 percent in the next decade. Currently, more than 300,000 people in Massachusetts act as caregivers to one of these patients.

In 2017, Medicaid costs for caring for people with the disease totaled $1.55 billion.

This legislation ensures our commitment to confronting this issue, and will go a long way to strengthening our ability to provide quality care and support to people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s throughout the Commonwealth,” Puppolo said.

The legislation creates minimum-training standards for elder protective services social workers and establishes a continuing education requirement for medical professionals to improve the diagnosis, care, and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.

The Alzheimer’s Disease Advisory Council, established in the legislation, will be required to meet quarterly and will provide EOHHS and the Legislature with recommendations on Alzheimer’s policy, an evaluation of state-funded research, care and programs, and many outcomes of current efforts. EOHHS will create an integrated state plan to facilitate the coordination of government efforts while ensuring that appropriate resources are maximized and leveraged.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body’s blood glucose (sugar) level is too high. Normally, the body breaks down food into glucose and carries it throughout the body. The cells use a hormone called insulin to turn the glucose into energy. The two main types of diabetes are Type 1 and Type 2. In Type 1 diabetes, the body doesn’t make enough insulin, which causes the body’s blood sugar level to rise. In Type 2 diabetes, the body’s cells don’t use insulin properly as part of a condition called insulin resistance.

Initially, the body reacts by making more insulin, but eventually can’t make enough insulin to control its blood sugar level. February is American Heart Month, a special time to work closely with physicians to modify one’s risk factors through lifestyle changes, and then those aren’t enough, taking medications — statins for high cholesterol, ACE inhibitors, beta blockers and others for high blood pressure prescribed by a doctor to help control risks.

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