

They're putting Health in Motion

Program's participants take ownership of heart health



Left to right: Dick Pepper, John Kane, Gail Blackmore, health services manager, Heart Health and Emergency, Wayne Brooks and Jim McKeage

John, Dick, Jim and Wayne banter in friendly debates and compete to get a word in edgewise. But the four men are bonded by a powerful common denominator – heart disease. They've all come too close to death for comfort, and have now adopted a heart healthy lifestyle. Today, they're helping others do the same.

When John had his first heart attack, he had what he calls a “poor me” attitude. Two heart attacks later, he knows he plays a powerful role in his own health. He hasn't made this transformation

alone. With the help of Capital Health's Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Health in Motion program, John, Dick, Jim and Wayne have all taken ownership of their heart health.

They began by attending “The Heart Show,” an early outpatient education program facilitated by nurses, physiotherapists, dietitians, and pharmacists. The sessions focus on topics such as risk factors, stress, nutrition, medication and exercise. “The sessions allowed time for questions and were very beneficial,” says Jim.

The four also signed up for Health in Motion's 12-week program, where a multidisciplinary team of nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, dietitians, pharmacists and psychologists at the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre guided them through an education and exercise regime for improved cardiovascular health. “It's a let-down to have to leave after the 12 weeks are over,” says John.

But long after the Heart Show and the exercise program are over, it is their passport to cardiovascular health that reminds them where they've been and where they're headed. The passport documents their risk factors, a summary of personal health data and their personal goals. Participants are encouraged to track their blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and physical activity, among other personal statistics. “The passport allows you to take ownership of your care,” says Wayne. “You have to take control of your own destiny.”

With their destinies seemingly well in hand, these four men could simply have gone back to living their lives, grateful for the opportunity to have participated in Cardiovascular Health in Motion. But they didn't. Their gratitude to the dedicated team of professionals who helped give them a second (or third) chance at life is profound. They needed to give back.

So on Valentine's Day, the men joined the Cardiovascular Health in Motion Program – as volunteers. Then they visited cardiac patients on 6.2 of the Halifax Infirmery, the first in what will be a weekly routine. They listened to patients' concerns. They answered their questions. And they told them about the Cardiovascular Health in Motion Program.

“It's exciting to be part of such a life-changing operation,” says Dick. And while much may be up for debate with this crowd, this is one sentiment that's unanimous.

Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Health in Motion

resulted from the integration of two programs – Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation and the Heart Health Clinic. Since the start of the Health in Motion program, the number of participants has increased and the wait list has decreased from 30 weeks to four weeks.

“The Heart Show” is held every Monday (except statutory holidays) at 9:30 a.m. in the VG Auditorium.

For more information about the Cardiovascular Health in Motion Program, please call 473-3846.