LVHN Weekly-Pocono

Lehigh Valley Health Network

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What is Lehigh Valley Flex Blue?

I hope you're having a great summer and taking some well-deserved time off to recharge your battery. A little R&R is important so you can be at your best for our patients.

Another thing that helps us be at our best is a quality health insurance plan. We’re fortunate to have such a plan at LVHN. However, many people in our community face a difficult decision every year when choosing a health plan. People often get confused because they don’t understand the intricacies of all the health plans available in the market. Most of all, they’re afraid they’ll have to sacrifice the quality of their coverage – and their care – to get a plan they can afford.

To make it more convenient for people to make a decision, LVHN and Highmark Blue Shield created a new health insurance plan called Lehigh Valley Flex Blue. Available to individuals and employers, Flex Blue provides cost-effective options that ensure people have access to our hospitals and doctors, and others consistently recognized for quality care.

People enrolled in Flex Blue benefit from greater coordination of care between the insurer and our health network. LVHN and Highmark share data and resources so participants can get the preventive services, tests, follow-up care and education they need with the greatest efficiency and without duplication of services. This improves the care experience for patients and lowers health care cost trends.

During the open enrollment period for health insurance this fall, you’ll see advertising about Flex Blue. Tell your family and friends about its benefits, and encourage them to enroll.

Speaking of the fall, that’s when I’ll present my next State of the Health Network Address. At the Leader to Leader meeting on Sept. 21, I’ll recap fiscal year 2017 and look forward at the opportunities ahead of us. A summary of the presentation will be shared with you the week of Sept. 25.

Here’s a preview: The state of our health network is strong; and it’s strong because of you. Thank you for all you do to make LVHN great. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

LVH-Pocono colleagues will continue to be covered by our current health plan, not Lehigh Valley Flex Blue.

ABOUT ME: My name is Brian Nester, DO, MBA, FACOEP, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). I came to LVHN in 1998 as the Director of LVH–Muhlenberg’s Emergency Department. Prior to becoming President and CEO in 2014, I served as the health network’s Chief Strategy Officer. I am originally from Reading, and I’m proud to lead an organization that continually strives to provide better health and better care at a better cost for the great people of our community.
Physicians and APCs Invited to Education Forum

Physicians and APCs are invited to attend Lehigh Valley Physician Hospital Organization’s (LVPHO) second Provider Pathways Forum on Thursday, Sept. 21, from 6-7 p.m. Helping patients choose wisely as they make decisions regarding health care is the topic of this forum. Dominic Lorusso, Consumer Reports Director of Health Partnerships, is the featured speaker.

“Choosing Wisely” is an initiative of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation designed to promote conversations that help patients choose care that is supported by the evidence, not duplicative of other tests or procedures, free from harm and truly necessary.

Members of LVPHO are encouraged to attend the educational session, which is part of the Achieving Clinical Excellence (ACE) incentive program. Incentives will be paid to physicians ($100) and APCs ($65) who attend at one of six convenient locations.

“As providers, we need to think about value and quality more than ever,” says LVPHO Executive Director Mark Wendling, MD. “The forum will provide clinicians with information and tools to master important conversations that can help patients understand their care and cut down on unnecessary procedures and costs. It’s a universal mission everyone should embrace.”

To register for the event, email Editorial Coordinator Lori McFerran or call 610-969-0019.

Meet August’s DAISY Award Recipient

Maricruz Dominguez, RN, is LVH–Pocono’s August recipient of The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. Here are comments from Dominguez’s award nominations that show the quality, compassionate care she provides to patients and their families.

“Maricruz is the type of nurse that every hospital wants and should have. She is always helping someone and goes out of her way to give aid and comfort everyone; her patient or not. From bringing food to pillows to blankets, or to help you in and out of bed, she is always there to help. My stay has been long and painful. However, looking back she has made it an eventful visit to be remembered. She is kind and does everything possible to ease your pain. Somehow she always manages to stop at my door and share a little cheer.”

“Maricruz was so caring and patient with my husband, who is stubborn at times. She was so kind and always brought him out of a depressed state. She was also looking out for my well-being as I sat by the bedside. Watching all the extra energy she showed told me that this job is what she was meant to do. Nurses are angels and Maricruz is one. She made my husband feel he was cared about and not just another patient. Maricruz is a Godsend to anyone who needs a personal touch or needs care and compassion.”

Each month, LVH–Pocono’s Nursing Shared Governance Council selects a nurse to receive The DAISY Award. The award recognizes the super-human efforts nurses perform every day.
Ask the Doctor: Treating a Hernia

An LVH–Pocono physician is featured regularly in the Pocono Record’s Ask the Doctor column. This week’s featured physician is Kathryn Wheel, MD, a general surgeon who specializes in robotic and minimally invasive surgery.

Q. I feel a bulge in my lower stomach. I’m not a weightlifter. Could it be a hernia?

A. It’s a popular misconception that only athletes and weightlifters are susceptible to abdominal hernias. In fact, there are several risk factors, most of which do not involve strenuous activity.

Abdominal hernias occur when a hole forms in the muscle layer of the abdominal wall. The hole can form due to a number of reasons, including constipation, urinary hesitancy resulting from an enlarged prostate, chronic cough and, yes, heavy lifting.

Most people know they have a hernia because they feel pain in their lower abdomen or feel a bulge. The bulge is typically something poking through the hernia (i.e., hole), such as a piece of intestine. So, even though you’re not a weightlifter, you may have a hernia and should visit your primary care physician to get checked out. You can also attend LVH–Pocono’s free community hernia screening on Sept. 16 at 10 a.m. at the Hughes Cancer Center. To reserve a spot, call 888-402-LVHN.

The good news is that hernias are rather common and, if treated, are not life threatening. Also, there are new surgical options to take care of the issue and get you back to your normal as quickly as possible.

Traditional hernia repair required a surgeon to make an incision in the groin, push back anything that was protruding through the hernia, plug the hole with mesh and then cover it up. The recovery time – which included swelling and discomfort – was generally a few weeks.

Today, thanks to the evolution of new surgical technology, we have a better option. With robotic hernia surgery, such as the type offered at LVH–Pocono, no large groin incision is required. Instead, we make three small incisions in the upper abdomen and insert a camera. Using robotic instruments, we take down the lining inside the abdomen, pull back whatever is inside the hernia, cover the hole with mesh and seal that mesh with the lining of the abdomen. Typically, patients are able to go home the same day, and they’re back to normal activity (with some lifting restrictions) in about two weeks.

The robotic surgery option also allows us to view the opposite side of the abdomen to look for a second hernia, which is sometimes the case. If we spot another hole in the abdomen, we can fix it immediately. With traditional surgery, this was not possible and would require a second surgery once the additional hernia became evident.

If you think you may have a hernia, don’t hesitate to have it looked at by a doctor. If you do have a hernia and you leave it untreated, it’s possible that a piece of intestine could protrude through the hole and become obstructed or strangulated, that is, pinched by the hole, which cuts blood flow. This can become serious, particularly if the intestine segment becomes perforated.

So, if you suspect a hernia – whether you lift weights or not – don’t wait to have the issue checked out. The surgical repair is now less invasive and more convenient and will get you fixed up and back to your life quickly.

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“The person at the check-in desk was extremely nice and quick to check me in. The nurse was easy to understand and careful to check that I understood her. Job well done! The phlebotomist was very friendly and extremely good at her job. The EKG tech really made me feel comfortable with the test. LVH–Pocono is the best!”

ALOHA!
The LVH–Pocono courtyard looked like an island in the south Pacific on Thursday. That’s when colleagues were invited to a Hawaiian luau BBQ. Wearing leis around their neck, colleagues enjoyed delicious food, fresh fruit, mocktails and, of course, camaraderie.