25 September 2015

Be good to your ticker this World Heart Day

World Heart Day (29 September 2015) is the perfect day to quit smoking, get exercising and start eating healthy – all in the name of keeping your ticker in good working order.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) is encouraging people to make lifestyle changes and be good to their hearts, wherever they live, work and play.

Clinical Director Cardiac Catheterisation Laboratory, Dr Rohan Poulter said heart disease did not discriminate; it affected young and old, men and women.

“Heart disease is still the single biggest killer of Australian men, women and children, taking a life every 27 minutes,” Dr Poulter said.

“Overeating, lack of exercise, unhealthy diets and high blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels are all factors which can trigger heart disease and threaten our own lives and those of loved ones.

“The good news is that heart problems can be prevented; these risk factors can be controlled and treated,” he said.

Former G.P. Ray Johnson’s passion is racing small sailing boats on the Noosa River; hard physical work for someone who is 70-years-old.

He naturally assumed the intermittent pain he experienced between his shoulder blades during races was merely muscular and not unexpected for his age.

“When the pain kept recurring and began to radiate down my left arm, I realised it needed further investigation,” Mr Johnson said.

“Unfortunately my heart attack occurred before the investigations were complete.”

On the day of Mr Johnson’s heart attack, he had more episodes of pain than usual and as his family was preparing to take him to hospital, he collapsed unconscious.

“I was fortunate that my son was with me and he knew how to apply cardiac resuscitation. I’m told the ambulance arrived promptly and restored the rhythm of my heart with a defibrillator. Still unconscious, I was taken to the nearby Noosa Hospital where a decision was made to transfer me to Nambour General Hospital where there were more specialised facilities and expertise,” Mr Johnson said.

At the Nambour General Hospital, an x-ray revealed a complete blockage of a major artery. With a probe inserted through a peripheral artery the coronary artery blockage was cleared and stents inserted to keep the vessel open.
Dr Poulter said early intervention gave Mr Johnson such an excellent clinical outcome.

“We perform many procedures here at the Cardio-Vascular Labs at Nambour General Hospital which ordinarily would have required the patient to travel to Brisbane,” Dr Poulter said.

“Without our facilities at Nambour General Hospital, transferral to Brisbane would have been needed and he may not have survived, or his heart would have been a lot weaker and his quality of life after the heart attack not as good as it currently is.”

Mr Johnson acknowledged the very prompt treatment at Nambour General Hospital led to only minimal damage to his heart.

“Now aged 72 I’m back racing small boats again. Sometimes I’m a bit stiff and sore the next day but there’s never any pain like that I experienced with what turned out to be angina masquerading as muscular,” Mr Johnson said.

“I urge people to be aware that cardiac pain is not always felt in the front of the chest. It can be felt in such places as shoulders, neck and upper back. Prompt investigations may reveal a partial blockage which can be treated by a variety of methods, avoiding a full blown heart attack.

“We can be grateful for the expertise of our ambulance and medical personnel. Without their skills and prompt treatment and not forgetting my son’s knowledge of cardiac resuscitation, I doubt that I would be here two years after my heart attack and fit enough to still be racing on the Noosa River.

“In fact, without them, I doubt I would have survived!”

The Cardio-Vascular Lab is a new service offered at Nambour General Hospital that was started in the lead up to the Sunshine Coast Public University Hospital and has a throughput comparable to Brisbane hospitals.

The SCHHS is continuing to grow services such as cardiology to better meet the community’s needs.

ENDS

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