

Coumadin Clinic plans celebration; will honor veterans' service May 23

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

“It’s about humanizing health care.”

That’s the philosophy of Family Practice of Holyoke coumadin clinic personnel Judy Weimer, FNPC, specialty clinic manager Mary Kay Knode and Weimer’s associate D’Nae Clinkenbeard, EMT.

As a result, three times a month, coumadin clinics have developed into much more at Family Practice of Holyoke and Melissa Memorial Hospital.

Routinely, coumadin clinics involve managed care for patients who are taking the blood thinner. Labwork is taken and medications are adjusted.

Weimer has encouraged a new focus to the clinics in recent years. She said they try to celebrate the coumadin clinic patients’ presence on a regular basis. They pay attention to when their birthdays are and just honor each patient in individual ways.

“Our focus is on the depth and strength of their life experiences,” said Weimer. “We want them to know this is a friendly place they can come and can look forward to it.”

“It’s not often you look forward to going somewhere to get a needle in the finger,” said coumadin clinic regular Richard Brown of Holyoke.

He knows exactly when he started on coumadin—in February of 2004 when he had open heart surgery and five by-passes.

He is quick to praise the effort of the coumadin clinic staff in keeping a recordbook for his medical reference, but also in talking with him at each monthly visit.

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He admits the average person takes 10 minutes to go through the clinic, but he averages more like 15 minutes, "because they can't shut me up!"

He said he had a tendency to be careless about getting back for check-ups, but now he gets reminded, and he appreciates that.



Richard E. Brown is pictured in his U.S. Army photo decades ago. His photo and story, as well as those of other fellow veterans will be featured in the Coumadin Clinic Celebration at the Family Practice of Holyoke/Melissa Memorial Hospital Specialty Clinic Wednesday, May 23 from 7 a.m.-noon. The community is invited to stop by to pay tribute, enjoy refreshments and join the fun.

At high-stress times, like when his wife died earlier this year, Brown said his blood levels went crazy. He went back every two weeks for a while until he straightened out. He credits the "good, caring people" who monitored his levels and showed genuine care for him.

To be on coumadin, patients typically have a significant disorder. But the clinic staff sees their lives in a much broader sense. "We see it as a privilege to get to see them on a monthly basis," said Weimer.

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Having developed their own little community in the coumadin clinics, staff started talking to patients about their lives. One of the commonalities is many are veterans or they're related closely to a veteran.

Patients were asked to bring in their pictures from when they served their country. The story library grew and grew.

Celebration planned

"Years melt away when you talk to them about their years in the military," said Weimer.

As a result, the lives of the coumadin patients and any veteran in the area will be celebrated at the next coumadin clinic Wednesday, May 23 from 7 a.m.-noon.

When an assistant heard about the party, she bought decorations out of her own money and bought flags to give away.

The staff wants to do something to celebrate these lives. The specialty clinic area will be decorated with pictures of the veterans, as well as other paraphernalia. And the community is invited to stop by to pay tribute and celebrate.

Anyone can bring in a picture and their story to add to the decorations.

"We're so jazzed up about this," said Weimer in her typically fun-loving, supportive, caring way.

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Some trivia will be shared, prize drawings will be held. "It's a celebration," said Weimer, acknowledging the focus of learning to humanize their experience with their patients.

Holyoke Enterprise May 17, 2012