



Megan O'Brien named provider of the year by Augusta court



Megan O'Brien receives her award from Justice Nancy Mills during an emotional ceremony, October 24. Seven people graduated from the program, four of whom are Megan's patients.

Our own Megan O'Brien, FNP was recently named Medical Provider of the Year by the Maine Co-Occurring Disorders and Veterans Court in Augusta. The court awards agencies and individuals who go above and beyond to help complete its mission of rehabilitating felons with mental illness and substance abuse issues and reducing the amount of hard time they serve.

Megan becomes only the second health care provider to receive an award from the court and is currently the primary care provider for four of the seven patients who graduated from the program. The court has been referring their clients to the Belgrade Regional Health Center for three years.

Justice Nancy Mills of the Kennebec County Superior Court said, "Finding the right provider makes all the difference. Ms. O'Brien truly cares about the patients she sees."

Justice Mills cited Megan's consistent, caring approach towards primary care and her communication with case managers as the reason for her award.

"I like knowing that these types of successful programs are out there," says Megan. "If I can play a part in that success, I feel honored."

Visibly moved during the graduation ceremony, it's clear that Megan has formed an emotional bond with these patients, taking joy in their success and their ability to turn their lives around.

"It helps to have a strong patient-provider relationship when working with these individuals," she says.



New provider!

Please join us in welcoming Tammy Gannaway Kerr, FNP, who will be joining the medical team this December. She brings experience in another Maine family practice setting as well as a background in child development

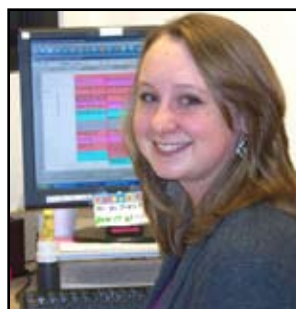
services. Her clinical area of interest is family practice. "I am looking forward to partnering with health center individuals and families on their health goals and working to improve the overall wellness of the Belgrade Lakes Region as I return to my roots in the central Maine area," she says.

Farewell Vickie!



As you can probably tell by the sash, longtime provider Vickie Chapman, APRN retired from the Belgrade Regional Health Center on August 31. Staff, board members, family and friends gathered at a recognition ceremony to wish Vickie well. A tree was planted on the health center grounds in her honor. Best of luck Vickie!

Welcome Shelley!



Shelley O'Neal has joined the Front Office team at BRHC and brings with her enthusiasm and customer Service that is sure to please! Please say hello to Shelley next time you are in the office.

Healthy Community Initiatives



FLU CLINIC

The Belgrade Regional Health Center Board Supplies 100 Flu shot vaccines to the community. Now an annual event, Health Center Staff came to work on Saturday, October 1 to administer flu shots (supplied by the board) to any community member that was interested-free of charge. The turnout was fantastic! Donations were accepted and once again, our community was very generous. Thank you to everyone that was involved in this endeavor!

FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS

Through the holiday season, BRHC is collecting non-perishable foods to donate to the local Food Pantry.

HOLIDAY GIVING TREE

Staff, board members and patients are gathering hats, mittens and scarves to decorate our Holiday Giving Tree. As patients come into the health center in December, these items will be available to anyone that could use new warm winter gear.



LIVING WELL CLASS

Living Well for Better Health classes are being offered at the health center. The current class began on November 8. Six week session of classes are open to the community FREE of charge and covers ways to deal with issues such as:

- Chronic Pain
- Setting Goals
- Eating Well
- Being Stressed
- Talking with others, including your doctor
- Being Tired
- Using Medicines
- Feeling Sad
- Solving Problems

Who is this for?

Any adult who has a long term health condition is welcome. A family member or friend may also participate. Learn to cope with many health concerns.

This class will be offered again in the future as well. Please contact us with interest.

Make a Note



How many times have you left the Health Center and then remembered a question you wanted to ask?

It's always OK to call when you have health care questions, but another tip that may help for future visits is to write down questions before your appointment and bring them with you.

Good times to think about questions are when you get the reminder call about your upcoming appointment and while in the waiting area at the Health Center. You can then give your questions to the nurse when your name is called and they will be happy to begin getting answers for you.

It is important both to you and to us that your questions are answered. Writing a note and bringing it with you will help make that happen.

Great changes are coming!

BRHC recently had an information meeting with Mike Herring, CEO of a physician practice in Texas. He explained how their practice successfully uses the patient portal and many of its **benefits including our ability to respond to emails, appointment requests, prescription requests, etc., and how much time it saves the practice, physician and staffing, as well as the patient.**

We, too, plan to offer this service to our patients early in 2012. With the new Patient Portal in place the patient will be able to access their records and request appointments, look up appointments that are already scheduled, make changes to their personal information and send in questions for the staff. When patients send an email to the practice, the practice will be able to respond to patient requests which will automatically chart in the patients record. The emails will streamline our interaction with patients who choose to use this option.

We are planning the implementation of the patient portal with the input from one of our patient advisors to create the best options and workflows possible for our patients. Please look for additional information in the coming weeks!

What's in YOUR cabinet?

Leftovers can be wonderful if it's tasty food that can be reheated, but leftovers can be dangerous when it's medication from a previous illness or injury.

For several years, we have heard the reminder to change our smoke detector batteries when we change the clocks, and to that we would like to suggest another important activity – **taking an inventory of all medicines (both prescription and over the counter) and look at the expiration dates.**

There are several reasons why this is important. One of them is that the potency and effect of medications change over time. When you are prescribed a medication, the dose and instructions are based upon your health care needs at that time. If either of these change, the medication you are taking may not be appropriate for you, and could have a detrimental effect.

Another factor that affects medications is where they are stored. Although bathroom medicine cabinets have been the default location for decades, the heat and humidity of a bathroom may be harmful to many medications. Better to find a safe, dry, place in your home.



And yet another unfortunate factor of having leftover medications is that some of these, especially those for pain, have been the cause for home burglaries. Thieves then sell prescription medication illegally, and the results can be deadly. For the past several years in Maine, more people have died from the use of illegal prescription drugs than in car crashes.

Keeping medications safely secured and then properly disposing of unneeded and expired medications only takes a few minutes – and since this time of year, we “fall back” an hour with our clocks, that gives us the extra time to start a new tradition in home safety.

If you have medications that are no longer needed or expired, there are a couple ways to dispose them easily and safely.

Local police departments and sheriff offices have prescription drop boxes where you can safely and anonymously dispose of unwanted and unused prescription drugs. They will accept both prescription and over the counter medications, including vitamins, samples, lotions, and ointments.

For more information, please contact the Health Center.

Patient Centered Medical Home Update

Belgrade Regional Health Center is part of a statewide pilot project along with 25 other primary care practices examining how we can improve service and clinical quality to better benefit patients and communities. This project includes transforming the Health Center into a “patient centered medical home” model.

There are several aspects to the pilot, which are based upon 10 core expectations. These expectations include: how we work as a team, how we connect with healthcare neighbors in our community, and how well we respond to the needs of our patients. Some of the other features, including our Patient Advisory Council and our upcoming Patient Portal, are direct results from our effort to improve service to our patients.

Many of the changes being enacted are “behind the scenes” to **ensure our patients receive safe, effective, and timely medical care.** Examples are offering our patients same-day access to our office and on-call services 24/7 so that you can receive advice or non-emergent care in the appropriate setting. We also know that if you have been in the hospital or the emergency department, it is important that we contact you to be sure you understand your medications and plan an appropriate follow up with your provider. Providers and nurses at the clinic work together to ensure that patients are receiving “best practice” care for their health care needs.

Another component of improving clinical quality for patients is partnering with our behavioral health specialist. Jessica Hopkins works closely with providers to identify patients who may benefit from interventions to help them make difficult changes – quitting smoking, losing weight, managing stress. She also offers short-term counseling for patients living with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other challenges.

“Patient Centered” is a core part of both our daily operation and our ongoing vision for the Health Center. This goal includes every person, from the front office who help with appointment scheduling and questions, to all of the providers, and those who may be “behind the scenes” who are essential to assuring that the care you receive from the Health Center meets your ongoing needs. We hope you will join us and share your experiences and feedback to help us along this journey.

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Breast Self Exam Diagram

These practices are most effective when practiced at the same time each month



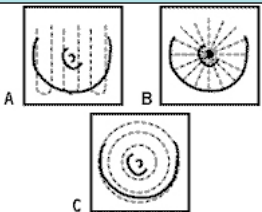
1. While in the shower raise your right arm. Use the three finger pads of your left hand to touch every part of your right breast. Feel gently for any lumps or changes under the skin. then raise your left arm and use the three finger pads of your right hand to examine your left breast.



2. Standing before the mirror, place your arms at your sides. Check both breasts for anything unusual - discharge, puckering, dimpling or changes in skin texture. Clasp your hands behind your head and look carefully for any changes in the shape or contour of your breasts. Gently squeeze both nipples and look for discharge.

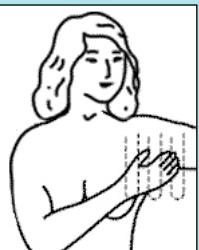


3. Lie flat on your back with your left arm over your head and a pillow or towel under your left shoulder. Put your left hand behind your head. Use the finger pads of three middle fingers to begin touching your left breast gently but firmly.



4. Move around the breast in a set way. You can choose from the vertical strip (A), the wedge (B), or the circle (C) method.

Always use the same method every time. Be sure to cover the entire breast. The exam should now be repeated on your right breast. middle fingers to begin touching your left breast gently but firmly.



5. Finally, rest your arm on a firm surface and use the same method of your choice to examine the area between the breast and the underarm, and the underarm itself. All of this is breast tissue too.

Breast Self Exam (BSE) By Patricia Fleming, RN

Wear your seat belt, put your helmet on before riding your bike, never swim unsupervised, don't play with matches, don't talk to strangers, the list goes on. These are just a few of the health safety tips we teach our children growing up. Why don't we teach our children when they enter into their teens how to examine their own breast so they can get used to what their breast normally looks and feels like? By becoming familiar with your own breast, it will become easier to recognize anything different and unusual.

Breast Cancer does not just affect females. It is expected that over 1,000 males will be diagnosed with male breast cancer each year. Unfortunately males often wait to let anybody know about their symptoms and therefore the disease is more likely to have spread, this leaves many males with less hope that treatment will lead to recovery.

It is easy to learn how to perform breast self-examinations (BSE), it only takes a few minutes. It might seem strange at first, but learning BSE as a skill can help to assist in good breast health. The BSE is a way in which you can check your breasts for changes (such as lumps or thickenings). There are two parts to a BSE:

- How your breasts look
- How they feel

It is a good idea to do your BSE once a month, and it really makes sense to pick the same time each month because breast usually change with the female menstrual cycle. For females the best time to do BSE is about a week after your period starts. For males, do your exams monthly and use a calendar if that helps for a reminder.

To the left is Breast Self-Exam Diagram

See your Primary Care Provider if you find any new changes in your breast. Below are a few conditions that should be checked by your Primary Care Provider:

- An area that is distinctly different from any other area on either breast or underarm.
- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or in the underarm that persists through a female's menstrual cycle.
- A change in size, shape, or contour of the breast.
- A mass or lump, which may feel as small as a pea.
- A marble-like area under the skin.
- A change in the feel or appearance of the skin on the breast or nipple (dimpled, puckered, scaly, or inflamed).
- Bloody or clear fluid discharge from the nipples.
- Redness of the skin on the breast or nipple.

*****Remember these changes can occur in females and males*****

Female or male, know how your breast feel and look so you can detect changes immediately and contact your Primary Care Provider. A BSE can help females and males detect cysts or other benign (non-cancerous) breast problems. Getting into the habit of examining your breasts when you're still in your teens can help you get used to the way they normally look and feel as your body matures. When you become familiar with them, it will be easier to recognize anything unusual. So before we hand our teenagers the car keys ~ let's hand them this healthy lifestyle habit.