



# Southern Building Material Association's SBMA Wellness Newsletter

January 2012

"We Wish You A Happy & Healthy New Year."

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**Don't forget to make your plans to attend your SBMA Building Products Show in High Point, NC on February 1 & 2, 2012. Contact Cindy Hartley at [chartley@crosslink.net](mailto:chartley@crosslink.net).**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

## 6 health tips your doctor wishes you would follow

By Deborah J. Botti

When Dr. David Bleeker, board-certified in internal medicine, reflects on his 28 years in practice and the advice he most wishes his patients would follow, there's one situation that quickly comes to mind.

"So many patients inspire me," says Bleeker, who recently joined the team of physicians at Middletown Medical P.C. "But sometimes the negative or sad experiences can also be inspiring. This one was particularly powerful for me because it was completely preventable."

Bleeker tells of a woman who devoted her life to her husband's care. He suffered from several chronic conditions, including cancer.

So how do Dr. David Bleeker's experiences compare to those of doctors nationwide? The Consumer Reports National Research Center recently polled 660 physicians nationwide, the results of which "provide a road map toward more productive (doctor-patient) relationships."

The top complaint among doctors coast to coast correlates with Bleeker's: commitment. The first step toward better care is a long-term relationship with your health-care provider, who should be your partner in overall health.

While the national survey listed "respect being a two-way street" as the second issue highlighted, Bleeker's second was the survey's third - compliance, especially in terms of taking medication.

Keeping written records to be brought to office visits or made as a result of a visit is across-the-board advice, as was the usefulness of having the support of a friend or family member during a visit. And both the survey and Bleeker encouraged patients to organize their concerns before the appointment.

Similarly, Bleeker's experiences with those armed with online information paralleled those of doctors nationwide. Research carefully, using trusted sources, he says.

Deborah J. Botti

"She was also a patient of mine, but I didn't see her as often," he says.

Rather, she was in Bleeker's office every couple of months with her husband. "She was in her 70s, and I reminded her that she was overdue for her colonoscopy," he says.

**Make time for checkups**

But she didn't have time for herself — until the day she came into his office with severe abdominal pain that she woke up with one morning. Appendicitis was initially suspected, but subsequent inpatient testing revealed a culprit far more insidious: colon cancer that had metastasized.



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*"Without continuity of care, there can be a big difference in the quality of care."*



*The most important things that any of us can do to*

"She ultimately died before her husband," he says. "I remember she told me, 'Dr. Bleeker, I have no one to blame but myself.' It was so incredibly sad.

"We're all very busy with the minutiae of our lives, and I'm not immune to it, either," says Bleeker. "But we have to remember to stop and do the things that are important for us. The people who get the second chances are very lucky. Most don't have that opportunity."

So with that goal of optimum health in mind, here's what Bleeker wishes all patients would do:

### **1. Build a strong doctor-patient relationship.**

Some people think a doctor is a doctor, so what's the difference? You can have 10 different doctors with 10 different treatments that are equally good, he says. However, if you start intertwining the treatment recommendations of multiple doctors, the result can be a recipe for disaster. "Without continuity of care, there can be a big difference in the quality of care," Bleeker says.

Bleeker says if you can't see the same physician, perhaps because he has no openings on the day you're experiencing symptoms, then at least try to go to the same group where there is universal access to your medical records.

### **2. Follow the doctor's orders.**

"If I put you on a medication and it has a side effect you don't like, don't just stop taking the medication without calling me," he says. Bleeker says it's not uncommon for patients to do just that — and then return for their follow-up visit a month later and tell him then that they stopped taking the prescription because it gave them a headache.

"Why didn't you call me?" he'll ask.

"Because I didn't want to bother you."

But it's much more of a bother to come back a month later and be back at Square One.

### **3. Watch your diet and exercise.**

The most important things that any of us can do to stave off many diseases is to eat healthful, nutritious foods and move more. "They're the most important, but the most difficult to do," says Bleeker.

What Bleeker has learned over the years is that he can increase compliance to about 50 percent when he's specific. If he tells a patient, "Watch your diet" or "Get more exercise," that probably won't be effective.

But if he gives patients a written diet plan with specific foods to eat and specific foods to avoid — with instructions to keep a daily food journal for review at the next visit — there's a much better chance of success.

The same holds true for exercise. He might recommend walking briskly for 25 minutes three times a week, with a 10-minute warm up and a 10-minute cool-down.

### **4. Keep a record of your medications with you.**

Bleeker says he just met with a new patient, because of a change in insurance, who has multiple medical problems — but no idea what medications he is on.

"Not only does this make it difficult for me to treat him, but it could be dangerous if he were to be treated in the ER," says Bleeker. "That information needs to be readily available."

Medications can have contraindications — or negative interactions when combined. Bleeker recommends that patients make a list of not only every medication they take — including over-the-counter drugs — but also the specific conditions for which they're taking each one for. A copy should be given to each physician, the patient's health-care

stave off many diseases is to eat healthful, nutritious foods and move more.



Make a list of the top two or three things to discuss with your doctor.



Remember, the Internet is just a tool.



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proxy, kept with important documents, as well as in the patient's wallet.

#### **5. Make a list of the top two or three things to discuss.**

"It's difficult to get back into that door after you leave," says Bleeker. And with so little time for not only an exam but also all your questions, it's easy to forget some of the particulars you thought about a few days ago that you wanted to discuss. When the doctor asks "Is there anything else?" that list will provide the answer.

Similarly, if there is something important going on — maybe this appointment is to discuss ominous test results — bring someone with you to that visit. "It's hard to concentrate if you're hearing difficult news," he says. "That person becomes your memory. They'll ask the questions that you can't."

At the very least, if there's no one available to accompany you, bring a pad and pen and write down everything. "There's a lot going on in a 10-minute visit. And if there's anything you don't understand as you're writing it down, you can ask the doctor to clarify," he says.

#### **6. Remember, the Internet is just a tool.**

And it can be a very good — or very bad — tool, he says.

"Don't believe everything you see online, and go to reliable sites to do independent research," Bleeker says. "If you do a Google search of high cholesterol, for example, the top sites that pop up often have a financial backing. Someone wants to sell you something."

If you have a question about infectious diseases, for example, Bleeker recommends going to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website. A pharmaceutical inquiry? The FDA. Diabetes? The American Diabetes Association. And so on.

Read blogs, reviews and reactions with an open mind.

"Anyone can have a positive or negative experience about anything," he says. "That doesn't mean it's true."

## **2012 Employee Wellness Tips**

### ***Post nutritional information on your vending machines.***

Fifty-five percent of people who make purchases from vending machines purchase those items at their place of work.<sup>13</sup> Of those purchases, 72.8% of those purchases were candy bars, salty snacks/chips, and pastries.<sup>14</sup> Educating employees on nutrition by posting information on fat and calories right on the front of the vending machine may help them choose healthier snacks throughout the day. It may even help them eliminate bad snack choices altogether.

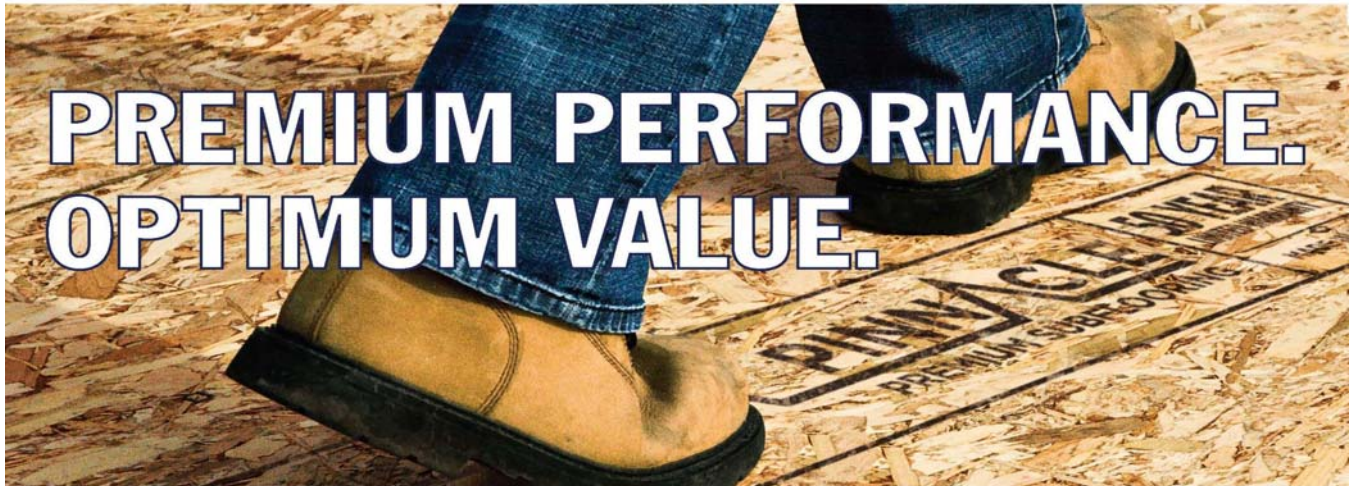
### ***Educate employees on recommended fruit and vegetable intake.***

Diseases associated with dietary imbalance rank among the leading causes of illness and death in the U.S.<sup>15</sup> The FDA recommends two to four servings of fruit per day and three to five servings of vegetables daily,<sup>16</sup> but only 13% of adults eat the minimum amount of fruit and vegetables needed.<sup>17</sup> Keeping a food log may make it easier get the recommended servings into your diet.

### ***Create a checklist for safe travel.***

In 1999, Almost 700 million Americans went on pleasure trips, and of those 700 million, 77% traveled by car.<sup>44</sup> Include in your checklist such topics as roadside emergency safety, where to find an affordable first aid kit for your car, important items to bring along, and safe driving tips. Reliable travel information is available at [www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com).

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