

Promise

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

Who does what during heart surgery

ADD IT UP

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ENHANCING EVE

Gynecology's less invasive techniques

How St. Paul's is helping trainees like Kelly Liebich reach their goals

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» UP AND RUNNING

A PULMONARY PILOT PROJECT YIELDS POSITIVE RESULTS

Seven people with chronic pulmonary disease started breathing a little easier this spring thanks to an innovative program at the Kerrisdale Community Centre in Vancouver. And now it looks like the seeds they've sown have the potential to grow into a much larger movement towards better patient health and quality of life.

The Community Pulmonary Rehabilitation Pilot Project, an education and exercise program designed to help patients develop self-management skills for chronic pulmonary disease, drew an initial set of five women and two men. The group met two afternoons a week for six weeks running. The agenda featured an hour of interactive, participatory education – covering everything from respiratory therapy and pharmacology to physiotherapy and nutrition – and an hour of monitored exercise in the fitness room.

Health-care professionals at St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver Coastal Health and St. Paul's PRIISME Project – a program specifically designed to address the growing health burden of diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) – designed the rehabilitation program. Its objectives: To provide the specific knowledge patients require to overcome these diseases; and the motivation and inspiration for lifestyle changes that will transform this knowledge into practical, one-full-breath-at-a-time reality.

The project's group-therapy structure combined with hands-on assistance from a set of compassionate instructors has generated upbeat results. "It took me awhile to understand the changes I have to make," admitted one participant. "But now I've got my own walking machine and runners, and I intend to use these."

This kind of feedback is music to the ears of Jane Burns, PRIISME and COPD clinic coordinator at the Pacific Lung Health Centre at St. Paul's and the force behind the pilot project. In a follow-up focus group, she reports, all seven participants agreed that the program had affected their health positively.

"Now that word's getting out," Burns says, "more and more people want to take part in it."

Indeed, the success of the springtime endeavour has led local doctors to refer enough of their patients to keep three full programs of eight participants apiece running at the Kerrisdale Community Centre throughout the summer and into the fall. The centre is also offering an exercise maintenance program for 10 people.

"Now we'd really like to see the program running in more communities," says Burns. With staffing commitments from Vancouver Coastal Health already in place, and interest growing in a project that is a clear success, she and many others are hoping that will only be a matter of time. —N.G.



Matters of the heart: Pilot program coordinator Jane Burns and pulmonary patient John Nixon.