

National observances for the month of November
By Mike DeCinti

As a pseudo-reporter for the Robesonian I'm always trying to improve my writing style to fit in better with the real reporters on staff. And although there's a lot I still need to work on, the one thing I do remember is that as a writer you're supposed to avoid clichés like the plague. Ignore statements like “what goes around comes around” or “always look on the bright side of life” (although there is a special clause to allow the use of that last cliché if you are a Monty Python fan.) However, on November 3rd you can let them fly. Why? Because it's National Cliché Day. I'm as happy as a hog in slop. Not only that, but fig lovers rejoice, because the first week in November is National Fig Week. That's fig-tastic. Plus, November is also Peanut Butter Lovers Month. Mmm! peanut butter.

So why have I mentioned these things and what do they have to do with your health? Nothing. I only mention them to let you know that although the month of November, like most months, is filled with silly daily, weekly and even monthly events there are also some important ones to help educate us on living a smarter and healthier life.

For example, November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month and should be used as a time to educate the public to the dangers of smoking. Here are the facts.

- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the US. And the second leading cause of death among men and women.
- It kills more people than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney and skin cancers combined.
- It will kill three times more men than prostate cancer and two times more women than breast cancer.
- The five-year survival rate for people diagnosed with lung cancer is only 15% compared to 99% for prostate cancer and 88% for breast cancer.

Although non-smokers can develop lung cancer (about 10% of diagnosed cases which includes those subjected to second-hand smoke) the majority of cases (90%) is made up of smokers and former smokers. Addiction to cigarettes is, by far, the most important risk factor for the development of lung cancer. Unfortunately, unlike early screening for breast and prostate cancer, currently science has not identified pre-cancerous lung conditions to look for in most people. And since family history has not shown to be a factor in lung cancer, one of the best ways to protect yourself is not to smoke. For more information visit www.lungcanceralliance.org.

November is also American Diabetes Month. Here in Robeson County, this is not a new topic. Type 2 diabetes, is the most common form, where either the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin. So what exactly does that mean

- Insulin is necessary for the body to use sugar.
- Sugar is the basic fuel for the cells in our body.
- Insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells.

- When sugar (glucose) builds up in the blood instead of the cells, your cells become starved for energy and overtime your high blood sugar levels can affect your heart, kidneys, liver and your eyes.

And, as quitting smoking can help those avoid lung cancer, weight loss can help people with diabetes in two important ways.

1. Weight loss lowers insulin resistance, which helps lower blood sugar levels.
2. It improves blood fat and blood pressure levels reducing the risk for cardiovascular disease.

It's important to remember that losing even a relatively small amount of weight can make a real improvement in reducing your risk for diabetes. For more information visit www.diabetes.org.

And as always, I encourage you to visit these websites or consult your physician for more help on these and other health-related subjects.

Mike DeCinti is the marketing director for Lumberton Radiological Associates. He can be reached at mdecinti@lraxray.com or by calling 738-8222, ext. 258.