

**Physician Forum Series...Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention by Richard S. Matthews, MD
FAAFP**

On Monday, May 24th, close to 40 community residents attended a physician forum presented by Dr. Richard S. Matthews, Board Certified Family Physician at HCH, addressing the importance of heart disease and stroke prevention.

After reviewing the key factors of prevention and symptoms, Dr. Matthews opened up the discussion forum for questions. Many attendees wanted to know how they could lower their risk of heart attack and stroke.

In answer, Dr. Matthews said "If you have high cholesterol and on prescription statin drugs, ie. Lipitor, to reduce the "bad" cholesterol, there are also some simple life style changes one can make to lower the elevated levels. For example, he said "Taking between 1,000 and 2,000 milligrams of over the counter Niacin daily, can help to reduce "bad" cholesterol. Matthews stressed to begin the supplemental doses at 250 milligrams in order to measure your body's tolerance. Many who take Niacin will experience itching, tingly, or feelings of warmth, but starting with a low dosage and depending comfort level, individuals can increase their intake. Recent studies have shown that Niacin can reduce bad cholesterol by 20%, and also increase good cholesterol by 20%.

Several of the attendees posed the question, How will I know that I am having a heart attack if my symptoms are atypical? Matthews answered by recounting a situation that occurred with one of his previous patients. During an appointment, the patient expressed that after walking his dog, each time he developed a sore throat. Dr. Matthews examined the patient, and determined cardiac stress and soon after, the patient underwent bypass surgery. "Not all heart attacks will present the typical symptoms, I encourage any person experiencing unexplained pain or discomfort to call their physician

and seek medical attention,” said Matthews. “If you believe you are having a heart attack, call 911 immediately and take 325 milligrams of aspirin.”

“Time is tissue,” said Dr. Matthews. From the time a patient walks through our ER doors to the time they arrive at the catheterization laboratory, every minute counts. We have everything here onsite to provide the heart attack or stroke victims the medical necessities to increase their chance of survival and we do it quicker than most facilities our size,” said Dr. Matthews.

When asked about stroke prevention and symptoms, Dr. Matthews touched on several key points amongst which were recognition of the classic symptoms and the importance of acting quickly. He used the acronym FAST to break down the usual symptoms of: face drooping (F), arm weakening (A), slurred speech (S), and time is critical (T). “Like a heart attack, time is the most important factor, and calling 911 imperative.

This was the first in the 2010 Physician Forum series. “We were delighted with the large attendance and especially with the positive feedback we received,” said Robin T. Taylor, Executive Director of the Foundation and Forum Coordinator. “Physician Forums like these allow us to educate the community and its members on popular healthcare topics. HCH’s mission is to provide to highest quality healthcare and by doing so, it’s our job to share with our resident’s knowledge that can help them to lead a healthier life.”

Throughout the summer, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital will be hosting additional Physician Forums with their own board certified physicians. Dr. Richard Carter, Gastroenterologist, is next on the schedule focusing on “Colon Cancer” June 14th from 12 noon to 1pm at the Jane Woodruff Medical Clinic. For more information regarding Physician Forums or to RSVP, please call (828) 526-1313.

[About Highlands-Cashiers Hospital](#)

“HCH is a community hospital that provides diagnostic, surgical and acute patient care to the public through on-site professional services, or as a referral to regional support providers. Our emergency care facility is Physician staffed 24/7 and treats patients promptly, monitoring their visit with personal care and attention. We make the extra effort to assure that you get “best of class care”, and feel “special” every time you pass through our doors. HCH also provides Physician Clinics, a skilled Nursing Facility, Hospice Care, Skilled Rehabilitation, and Medically-Based Wellness Programs allowing individuals and families nearby access to professional care in these critical areas. The hospital continues to expand its programs to provide the public the broadest possible range of quality healthcare. Our *Board-Certified Physician Staff* continues to grow to better serve you, as do our medical specialties now covering 14 areas of healthcare, specialties usually only found in much larger facilities. We continually update our range of diagnostic procedures by adding new state-of-the-art equipment.”

Our goal is to be the healthcare partner to whom you can entrust your life.