Humans of HEP

This message is part of an ongoing series about the "Humans of HEP" – snapshots of stories about real people whose lives were saved, or changed for the better, because of the Health Enhancement Program (HEP).

Fellow state employees have volunteered to share their stories with you. These stories will hopefully inspire others to participate and obtain screenings that could potentially save or change their lives as well.

Ashley:

"I am writing this note in great appreciation of the HEP program. I work for the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch’s IT Help Desk. I started my position in late 2014. By mid-2015, I completed all of the requirements for my age group. After all routine testing, I found out that my cholesterol and triglycerides were very high. I had to start medication. I was also very overweight."
At this point I knew I had to change my lifestyle before my health worsened. These conditions were putting me at risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke!!! My doctor was very helpful and supportive. I joined a gym, reconnected with yoga and started paying closer attention to what I was eating. Now, I am 80 pounds lighter (and counting). I am off medication and have been maintaining healthy cholesterol and triglyceride levels!

I am very proud of what I have achieved. The HEP program helped me become better aware of my health status. For this, I am grateful. I hope my story inspires others to follow the recommendations and take care of your health!!"

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**Barbara:**

I had always been fairly regular with physicals and mammograms and would likely have continued even without the HEP requirements. But I believe that there is a positive unintended consequence to the program.

I have three children in their twenties. As my daughter was approaching 26 (and aging out of my coverage) we sat down to look for a plan for her on the Affordable Care Act Exchange. She is working, but currently does not make enough to afford her employer’s plan. Searching for a plan on the exchange was a time-consuming process and it was going to cost her. But at no time did she turn to me and say, ‘Mom, this is just too much hassle. I don’t need to have insurance. I can do without checkups.’

Once she left home, I had bugged her from time to time to fulfill her HEP requirements, but it got her into the habit and she now sees the importance of it.

Would it have happened without HEP? Possibly. But don't underestimate the value it has in setting up lifelong healthy habits for our young adults.
Jaime:

"Early in 2016 I checked my HEP status and realized that I needed to meet the baseline mammogram between ages 35-39 requirement by November 2016 when I’d be turning 40. So I decided to call and get the mammogram scheduled so I could check it off my list of things to do. I didn’t have a family history of breast cancer nor did I have any significant risk factors so the only reason I scheduled the mammogram was to comply with the HEP requirement (which at the time I may have referred to as the “stupid” HEP). Needless to say I was surprised when (after some follow-up testing) I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fast forward to today, a little over one year later, and I’m happy to say that after chemotherapy, surgery and radiation, I am cancer-free. Early in the process of meeting with doctors to discuss my course of treatment I was repeatedly asked why I had gone for a baseline mammogram…with no family history, no risk factors, not even 40 years old, and no palpable lump. My response was always the same “because of the Health Enhancement Program (HEP) requirement.” My type of breast cancer tends to be more aggressive and the location of the tumor was deep in my breast. Without early screening I can’t even begin to imagine how much larger the tumor would have been by the time I could have detected it via a self-exam. I believe that the HEP very well could have saved my life!"
Kevin:

“After working for the State for four years, I began experiencing severe ankle, foot and hip problems without much reason. I later discovered after visiting a doctor within our network that I had built up scar tissue from working on uneven terrain, walking in poor quality boots and youth sports that, without preventive and corrective measures, surgery would be a requirement.

“After receiving treatment my issues are getting better weekly, and many of my ligaments are becoming stronger and healing properly. Thank you HEP for offering such great service and opportunity to correct these issues because you cannot put a price on health.”

Anonymous:

“Thanks to the requirements of the HEP, my husband was required to undergo a colonoscopy. At the age of 57 he should have done this at age 50. His doctor never recommended that, and in 2012 he was diagnosed with rectal cancer. Fortunately it was Stage 1. Despite two major surgeries and lots of pain and healing, it will be five years in May he is cancer free. Thank you to this great health policy, because it saved his life. I am thankful every day for this program.”
Richard Hubbard:

“The health insurance program was very important in my health journey. About five years ago, I was unhealthy, as I was over 350 pounds. I hadn’t been to the doctor in years, for fear of hearing that I might be diabetic. When I was finally forced to get an exam, I found out I was pre-hypertensive.

“Instead of going on medication, which my doctor initially suggested, I chose to change my lifestyle. In the process, I lost over 150 pounds in less than a year. I cleaned up my diet and have been completely plant based for the past 6 months. I am now a vegan bodybuilder… quite a change from five years ago! My cholesterol is the best my doctor has seen, with a total number of 136! I feel great with lots of energy and am medication free.

“Currently, I am co-owner of a healthy living website where I blog about health related issues.

“To think, it all started with a requirement for a physical examination!”

Thanks to those who have shared their stories above – and to those whose stories we will share in the coming months.