

# health matters

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## New *Support Group* for **Lupus & Rheumatic Disorders**

Comes to the Imperial Valley...

A new Lupus and Associated Rheumatic Disorders support group has been organized under the auspices of the El Centro Regional Medical Center. See next page for more details.

health matters

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## The ABC's of Hepatitis & Tuberculosis

Due to increased vaccination efforts in the United States, incidences of the majority of vaccine-preventable diseases have decreased approximately 99% from peak prevaccine levels.

Certain infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB) and Hepatitis find in Imperial County fertile fields in which to plant the germs that perennially produce an above-the-national-average yield of disease.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Jasim, who came to El Centro nine months ago as Imperial Valley's only infectious disease physician, looks upon its border proximity, and agriculture dominance as exacerbating influences for the Valley's high incidence of tuberculosis and hepatitis.

"TB is an historical disease," he said, "and it is still with us. The good news is that nationwide it is on the decline, but unfortunately here in the Valley, we are different." The Valley is known to have an inordinately high incidence of TB, a bacterial infection which attacks the respiratory system through the lungs.

Internationally, he thinks as many as one billion people are afflicted, one third of the Earth's total population. "It is a huge health issue," Dr. Al-Jasim said. "We need to stay vigilant," he adds. "This is an air borne disease that can be spread by coughing."

He said the Imperial County Public Health Department "does an admirable job" of tracking known TB patients, keeping them on their medication regimens and ensuring they make scheduled doctor appointments. He said the county also has a good working relationship with Mexicali health officials, but he recognizes the difficulty in keeping

every patient compliant in a population area of that magnitude.

There was a time when treating TB meant isolating the patient and a TB sanatorium was a common institution in virtually every county. There was one in the Holtville area.

Now treatment of active TB involves the use of four different drugs and with a compliant patient, the disease can be controlled in six months to a year, unless a patient becomes multi-drug resistant, usually a product of life style.

Dr. Al-Jasim also explained what is referred to as "latent TB" - persons who show positive skin tests and negative lung tests. "It means there has been an exposure in the past and the germ resides in the body," he explained. "There is a 10 to 12 percent chance of the germ becoming active sometime during this person's lifetime."

### To avoid getting an active TB infection:

- Do not spend long periods of time in stuffy, enclosed rooms with anyone known to have active TB until that person has been treated for at least 2 weeks.
- Use protective measures if you work in a place where people with untreated TB are cared for.
- Discuss with your health professional how to prevent TB from spreading to others if you live with someone who has active TB. Help and encourage the person with TB to follow the treatment.

### Hepatitis

Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E, are viral infections that combined affect an estimated 6% - 7% of Americans. All but one strain of hepatitis are incurable. That is type A; the other two most common strains of Hepatitis, types B and C, are incurable, but though regular treatment, can usually be kept in suppression.

Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of a person who has hepatitis A. The virus is spread most commonly when people put food or objects contaminated with the virus into their mouths. It is possible to get the virus after drinking contaminated water because, in many parts of the world, drinking water is contaminated with raw sewage. The virus also may be spread by eating uncooked food (such as raw shellfish) and unpeeled fruits and vegetables washed in contaminated water. Foods, like strawberries, tomatoes, or melons, when picked by a carrier with unwashed hands risk contaminating a user.



Food, like strawberries, tomatoes, or melons, when picked by a carrier with unwashed hands risks infecting the consumer with Hepatitis A. That's why it is important to wash all produce thoroughly before using.

"That's why it is important to wash all produce thoroughly before using," he said. Symptoms, like all hepatitis strains, may be fever, headache, nausea and possibly even jaundice. Like most diseases it is most problematic in the very young and the very old, Dr. Al-Jasim said. And for that reason an anti-hepatitis vaccine is included in the regular infant vaccinations now administered. He said vaccinations also are available to others and should be considered before traveling to many foreign areas.

Hepatitis B and C are among the more serious strains of hepatitis, and are commonly contracted by contact with the body fluids of an infected individual.

Although a cure is unavailable for hepatitis B, Dr. Al-Jasim said there are suppressive therapies available that can keep the liver from becoming scarred and help to effectively contain the disease. Vaccination soon after exposure, if combined with certain therapies, also can be effective.

### To prevent infection:

- Practice safe sex.
- Don't share needles.
- Wear latex or plastic gloves if you have to touch blood.
- Don't share toothbrushes or razors.

The hepatitis B vaccine is the most effective way to prevent infection. The vaccine is up to 95% effective if you receive all the shots in the vaccination series (three shots given at different times). The vaccine provides protection against infection for at least 15 years.

Hepatitis C is an advanced stage disease and can eventually lead to severe, permanent liver damage and cirrhosis and may be complicated by liver cancer. Because the initial symptoms are mild, hepatitis C often goes unnoticed until years later when liver damage is discovered. About 50 percent of those infected develop into liver failure or cancer. As with hepatitis B there is no cure, but there is suppressive treatment available, like the injectable drug Interferon, which combined with other medication, can control about half the cases, according to Dr. Al-Jasim.

Hepatitis C is often a self-imposed disease, attributed to the over indulgence of alcohol leading to cirrhosis, or induced by drug use with contaminated needles.

The future hope for all infectious diseases is that new drugs and therapies are coming on the scene all the time. For additional information about these or other infectious diseases contact Dr. Al-Jasim: 760-336-3773.



Dr. Mohammed M. Al-Jasim is Imperial Valley's only infectious disease physician.

## A 'Love' for Nursing...

The letters Karen Love can use after her name make up a good portion of the alphabet. She is an R.N., a CMSRN, a PHN, and a WOCN. They mean she is a Registered Nurse, a Certified Medical-Surgical Nurse, a Public Health Nurse, and a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse on the nursing staff at El Centro Regional Medical Center.

She's accomplished all of this after spending earlier years as a working mom and raising three children. In the mid-90's she enrolled in the Imperial Valley College Nursing Program, graduating with as an

Associate Degree Nurse in 1999. Since then she has earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in nursing from the University of Phoenix.

"I always knew I wanted to be a nurse; it just took awhile to get here," she said.

Love is married to Dale Love, an employee at Ryerson concrete. The three children she raised before becoming a nurse are Desiree 31, a teacher in Oklahoma; John-Michael, 27, a Staff Sergeant in the Army working for the Air Force in Belgium; and Peter, 25, just out of the Army after serving in Iraq. Peter

now works for the Haliburton Corporation in Kansas. In addition, she has two grown step-children, Bryan and Christine who live in Imperial and El Centro. She began working for the hospital as a Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.) in 1999 while still a nursing student at IVC.

In October, 2003, she completed a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing Program at the University of Texas in Houston, an intensive curriculum offering both classroom theory and clinical experience. It is the WOCN that has her dividing her time between nearly every clinical department at El Centro Regional Medical Center when needed. Currently, she is applying for National Certification through



Karen Love, RN, CMSRN, PHN, WOCN is a Registered Nurse, a Certified Medical-Surgical Nurse, a Public Health Nurse, and a Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurse on the nursing staff at El Centro Regional Medical Center.

See Love, next page

# Center of Healthcare Excellence

## New Support Group for Lupus & Rheumatic Disorders

A new Lupus and Associated Rheumatic Disorders support group has been organized under the auspices of the El Centro Regional Medical Center. The support group has been actively meeting at El Centro Regional Medical Center since January.

Spearheading this much-needed support group are Maxine Cannon, R.N., and Arlyn R. Duval, a Board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner. Both are on staff at ECRMC's Valley Family Care Center in El Centro.

Cannon said the new group will be known as the Rheumatic Diseases Support Group as it also will offer support for Rheumatoid Arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome, Fibromyalgia, Rheumatism and other Collagen Vascular Disorders.

Cannon became aware of the need for a support group because her daughter, Janine, herself a registered nurse who formerly was on the ECRMC staff, is no longer able to work due to Lupus. Cannon has been on the ECRMC nursing staff for 22 years, spending most of those years as a pediatric nurse before transferring three years ago to the Valley Family Care Center staff.

She and Duval said there are no statistics yet on the number of Imperial Valley residents who have Lupus, or the associated diseases. However, it is noted that the number in treatment is significant. Mexicali residents are welcome to attend. Spanish translators will be available. Concerned family members, friends, care-givers and interested professionals are also welcome to attend.

The Lupus Foundation of Southern California reports that more people have Lupus than AIDS, Multiple Sclerosis, Sickle Cell Anemia, and Cystic Fibrosis combined. It is an insidious disease because many sufferers are unaware they have it. Many can lead normal lives during periods of remission. Lupus is formally known as Systemic Lupus Erythematosus or SLE and a hallmark is the "butterfly rash."

Rheumatic Disorders are diseases in which the immune system turns against the parts of the body it is designed to protect. Many areas of the body—joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood vessels and brain, can be attacked and the differing symptoms make it difficult to diagnose. Most common symptoms include extreme fatigue, painful or swollen joints, unexplained fever, skin rashes and kidney problems.

Sjogren's syndrome, a condition marked by a dearth of exterior body fluids resulting in dry mouth and tearless eyes, and Fibromyalgia Rheumatism are other types of Rheumatic Diseases.

For more information on meeting times and location, please call 352-4025 or 339-7377. For information in Spanish, please call 339-7377 or 336-3023.

**AUXILIARY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Applications are available at the Front Lobby

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Ideal for Men & Women of all ages who enjoy giving back to the community!

## A 'Love' for Nursing...

*Love, from previous page.*

the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nursing Certification Board. Three written examinations, one in each discipline, must be successfully written (passed) before certification is granted.

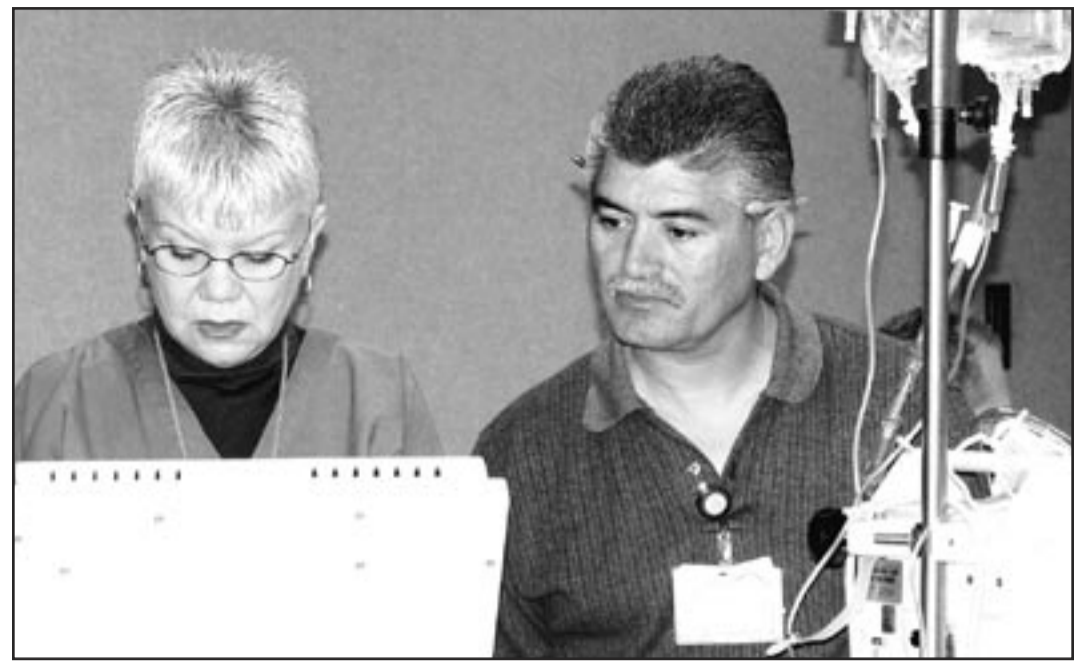
The Houston classes emphasized the care of colostomy and urostomy cases. These are patients who have had normal bodily functions surgically diverted to stomas, openings in the skin that need frequent attention. In addition, that training has allowed her to care for all wounds from accidents to surgical incisions.

While carrying the responsibilities of a Clinical Manager in the hospital's Med/Surg Department, Love also works as a resource person in skin and wound care with nursing staff, physicians, and surgeons in all clinical departments.

She said she routinely consults and collaborates with attending physicians regarding treatments and dressing for wounds. Wound care is inter-disciplinary within the hospital. In addition to working with physicians, Love works closely with the Dietary and Physical Therapy Departments.

Some patients she sees have pressure ulcers. Wounds caused by continued pressure to an area. Generally, these patients have limited mobility, often confined to a bed or a chair.

"Many of these are elderly and frail." Often



Karen Love, RN, CMSRN, PHN, WOCN teaches a colleague during a recent continuing education seminar.

they have co-existing conditions that complicate treatment," she explained.

She also sees post-operative patients if there are complications with the healing of an incision.

Imperial County has recognized a high percentage of diabetics in its population. Love treats many of them, explaining that "due to the disease process they may not know they have injured themselves. They may step on something or develop a blister. That's when I see them."

Within the past year, the hospital has added Negative Pressure Therapy to its wound

care arsenal remaining up to the minute as a health care facility and Love is excited about the technique. "A vacuum is created exerting negative pressure on a wound. The process removes extra fluid from the wound while increasing blood flow to its surface which promotes faster healing."

"Wound care has really changed. In the past, the thinking was to dry wounds up. Now research reports a moist wound environment is optimal for wound healing."

"Sometimes the wounds I see are really horrible and people wonder why I do what I do. It's gratifying to see improvement after treatment. I know I've made a difference."

## Head-to-Toe TRIVIA



### Did you know:

- More than half the bones in the human body are in the hands and feet.
- The highest recorded "sneeze speed" is 165 km (102 miles) per hour.
- The heart beats about 3 billion times in the average person's lifetime.
- A newborn baby has 350 bones, but a fully-grown adult has only 206.
- Blood is a liquid organ.
- Everyone is colorblind at birth.
- The surface area of the lungs is approximately the same size as a tennis court.
- Food will get to your stomach even if you're standing on your head.
- Skin is the human body's largest organ.
- The average adult is made up of 100 trillion cells.
- Each day the average heart beats 100,000 times and pumps about 2,000 gallons of blood.
- In the year 2025, the number of Americans over 65 will outnumber teenagers by more than two to one.

## Nursing Supervisors Receive Award



Pictured from left: David Green, CEO; Neina Davis, RN; Richie Navarro, RN; Martha Pieros, RN; Ed Kirkpatrick, RN – Chief Nursing Officer.

Six staff members who provide nursing administration duties for El Centro Regional Medical Center were singled out for the hospital's April team recognition honors by David R. Green, chief executive officer, and Debra Driskill, president of the Board of Trustees.

The nursing supervisors team is comprised of Richie Navarro, director of nursing support services, and John Watson, Martha Pieros, Al Meek, Jeannie Durden and Neina Davis, and staffing coordinator Azucena Bacani. The awards, announced at the April meeting of the Board of Trustees, will be

conferred at a meeting of the Administrative Council.

A nursing supervisor is on duty in the hospital at all times, responsible for nurse staffing, assignment of patient beds, and other administrative duties. The supervisors office also provides an invaluable teaching resource for the rest of the hospital, having an average experience tenure of over 15 years apiece. Each supervisor maintains expert knowledge in a different area of nursing, ie: obstetrics, emergency medicine, pediatrics, medical/ surgical; acting as mentors and team leaders for ECRMC's unique nurse education process.

"We appreciate the great customer service you offer to all the staff and patients," the letter of commendation read. "Your team keeps ECRMC operating 24/7 and are excellent problem solvers allowing the administrative team to sleep comfortably at night."

"Your willingness to go the extra mile... without reservation or hesitation to do what is needed to provide professional and quality service is greatly appreciated."

**DISCLAIMER** This El Centro Regional Medical Center ("ECRMC") newsletter is for the sole purpose of providing readers with reference information as a means of introducing them to ECRMC and to the services provided by its physicians, health care providers, and affiliated clinics. The Information provided is not intended to replace obtaining medical evaluations and health care advice from qualified health care providers. Reference to specific products, processes, businesses, facilities, or services does not constitute or imply recommendation or endorsement by ECRMC. Physicians are not employees of ECRMC.

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