

Don't skip your screenings

As the COVID-19 pandemic has raged across the country, many people are putting off routine health screenings. Even in rural areas like Ringgold County, healthcare professionals have advised patients to postpone some testing, but not forever. Bruce Ricker, D.O. said that when the pandemic was thought to last two to four weeks, it made perfect sense to postpone screenings like colonoscopies. "But as time marches on, we need to look at the risks versus the benefits."

For men over the age of 40, a genital and rectal exam is recommended every two years. It increases to every year after the age of 50 when a colonoscopy is also advised.

Both Ringgold County Hospital and the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic have created new procedures to ensure the safety of both patients and staff. Dr. Ricker advises the community to continue social distancing, especially if you have a family member who is high risk. But the message is clear: COVID-19 is not the only thing that can affect your health. Stay informed and educated and up to date with routine health screenings.



Positive attitude helps in cancer fight

Regular, routine health screenings are recommended for all adults, usually beginning at the age of 40. Checks for colon and prostate cancers are standard for men as they age. However, one type of cancer, testicular, is the



Math teacher, athletic coach, and cancer survivor, Brett Ruggles is surrounded by his family

most common malignancy found in young men, ages 15 to 35. There are no screenings for it and in most cases, there is no pain. Bruce Ricker, D.O. advises young men to "know their bodies and be aware of any changes."

For one testicular cancer survivor, Brett Ruggles, pain and discomfort were what drove him to be checked out seven years ago. The Mt. Ayr High School math teacher and basketball and softball coach said, "I started to feel a lot of pain. As males, we don't talk about things like this. I kept thinking it would go away. It was January and it was basketball season. I thought I could get through it, but then everything started to hurt."

He went to his doctor and got an ultrasound and a pregnancy test. "Here's an interesting thing," he said. "I took a pregnancy test! If it comes up positive, you have cancer. Mine was positive." Once he was diagnosed, he said the staff at Ringgold County Hospital sprang into action. "I went to the front of the line for all testing," he recalled. He was quickly scheduled for surgery. "I had to announce to the basketball team that I was stepping away for a week or two. It was a tricky time. That team will always be special to me."

Brett had Stage One, non-seminoma testicular cancer. After his surgery in January in 2013, he went through two cycles of chemotherapy beginning in early March. Like many cancer patients, he suffered hair loss and almost daily nausea. "On one of the hardest days, I remember I was typing lesson plans. I put my hands on my head and my hair was falling out in clumps. Out came the clippers and we shaved my head. I thought, this is for real."

Even on the darkest days, Brett always felt he could fight the cancer. "I remember getting home and thinking, it's going to take a bigger bus than this to knock me down!" He missed some school days, games, and parent-teacher conferences. "My immune system was so low. And it was prime flu season at school."

But he has made a full recovery and credits his care at RCH and the hospital in Des Moines along with his positive attitude. "I never thought I would

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lose this battle," he said. While he was going through treatment, he ran into author Jon Gordon who had written the book, "Feed the Positive Dog." "I believe it. You must stay positive and fight. I had a T-shirt made!"

Brett had a lot to fight for. With a wife and three children, a high school full of math students, basketball and softball teams, there are plenty of people looking up to him. He was only 32 years old when he was diagnosed. "It's usually a young man's

disease," he said. "I was literally on the outside edge for this." He admitted that when it comes to these personal types of cancers, no one wants to talk about it. "I take a different approach. I joke about it. I bring it up in class. I talk to my guys about the idea of checking themselves. I tell them that if it doesn't feel right, it's not right. I want everyone around me to understand that it's ok to talk about."

To schedule a telehealth visit, call 641-464-4470

We appreciate our nurses!

We are celebrating the hard work, compassion, and dedication of nurses everywhere. Here at Ringgold County Hospital, our thanks go out to all the nurses in our hospital and clinic who care for our community every day. In this month's newsletter, we're profiling two outstanding Mount Ayr Medical Clinic nurses for their contributions.



Marcia Showalter

Marcia Showalter, RN, has been a nurse in the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic for 13 years. She grew up in Mount Ayr and graduated from Mount Ayr High School before heading to the Iowa Methodist School of Nursing. "It was awesome!

We had lots of hands-on training back then." After graduating, she wanted to spread her wings, so she spent a couple of years delivering babies at Nebraska Methodist Hospital in Omaha.

Marcia felt a calling to come home to Ringgold County to be with her family. Through 42 years of nursing, she has done everything from bringing babies into the world to helping patients and their families through the end of life. In between, she's been a nurse at schools, nursing homes, and in public health. "Being a nurse, you put yourself out there," she said. "Nursing is a calling. You must have some real passion for what you do."

Marcia counts guidance counselors and a great middle school science teacher for encouraging her to pursue a nursing career. (The science teacher is still one of her patients!) She actually visited the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic while in high school for a career exploration day. Now she spends 10-hours in the clinic, four days each week, working alongside Bruce

Ricker, D. O. "I appreciate being matched up with Dr. Ricker," she said. "I enjoy people and being able to have contact with them. I'm passionate about keeping them well and getting them better!"



Marcie Page

Marcie Page, RN, has been a nurse at the Mount Ayr Medical Clinic for 12 years. A native of Creston, IA, she married young and had three children before going to Southwestern Community College to get her degree in nursing when she was 27. She

was already an Emergency Medical Technician and planned to become dually licensed as a paramedic after graduation. A month after getting her degree, the rules changed, and she decided to stay with nursing.

For many years, Marcie served the elderly at various area nursing homes and in a geriatric behavioral unit at Greater Regional Hospital. "I like working with the elderly. Not everyone can do it," she said. "They're often set in their ways, especially in a long-term care setting. You have to go into their reality." When asked why this became her calling, she said, "It's just who I am. I've been this way my entire life."

An Acute Care nurse when she joined Ringgold County Hospital 13 years ago, Marcie often worked in the Emergency Room, and would also fill in at the clinic when they needed extra help. She transferred to the clinic, and for the first eight years, she saw patients of all ages, from infants to adults. After an accident that injured her arm, she moved into triage and has been there ever since. "I like it. I field probably 50 phone calls a day and take care of scheduling and prior authorizations," Always compassionate, she added, "Sometimes people just need someone to listen to them."