

Doctors want to head off diabetes

Early detection can prevent complications

BY BETH HATCHER
STAFF WRITER

When Dr. Prashant K. Patel starts talking about diabetes, his voice quickens as he speaks of numbers and statistics with lightening speed.

There are approximately 18.2

million Americans with diabetes, a third of whom don't know they have it, he says. Forty-one million are pre-diabetics.

The prevention of those deadly numbers is a passion for the Cary doctor, which is why on Sept. 10 his practice, Cary Internal Medicine & The Diabetes Center, will host an official launch highlighting the practice's diabetes treatment.

The 103 Baines Court practice — headed by Patel and Dr. Vijay K. Juneja — has been aggressively treating diabetes since its start

five years ago, Patel said. After all, diabetes, a condition in which the body either cannot produce or properly use insulin, is associated with myriad health problems such as heart and kidney disease that internists like Patel often have to treat.

Earlier this year, partly since the internal medicine practice had received recognition from the American Diabetes Association for its diabetes treatment, the two doctors decided to add the "& The Diabetes Center" to their practice's name. The new classification already is garnering more diabetic patients, so far about one new diabetic every three days, a number Patel thinks will increase after the official launch.

"We want to see diabetics, but we're more excited to see pre-diabetics. That's the population we want to work with," Patel said.

Among other services, the practice tracks the progress of diabetic patients, as well as offering sophisticated detection services, early treatment through medi-

BY THE NUMBERS

Diabetes is reaching near-epidemic proportions, affecting nearly 18.2 million Americans — including more than 600,000 in North Carolina. While an estimated 11.1 million have been diagnosed, 5.9 million people are unaware that they have the disease. Diabetes is the fifth deadliest disease in America, killing more people than AIDS or breast cancer. More than 210,000 Americans each year will die from its complications.

SOURCE: AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION



Dr. Vijay Juneja looks over the new bone-density machine at Cary Internal Medicine & The Diabetes Center.

STAFF PHOTO BY GRANT HALVERSON

combined with relative insulin deficiency. Most Americans who are diagnosed with diabetes have type 2. The cause of diabetes results from several factors. Both genetic and environmental factors, such as obesity and lack of exercise, appear to play roles.

The practice treats both types of patients, but sees an overwhelming majority — 98 percent — of type 2. It is mainly the type 2 numbers that are on the rise, Patel said. The practice does not treat gestational diabetes, which affects some pregnant women.

America's rising obesity rate greatly contributes to increased numbers of type 2 diabetes, which is why the practice stresses a proper diet and exercise to its patients.

IF YOU GO

The official launch of the diabetes center will start at 8 a.m., last until 2 p.m., and include free screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol and sugars from 8 to 10 a.m. R.S.V.P. to 467-6125. The practice is at 103 Baines Court in Cary.

Anthony Jones, 60, of Alamance County knows the importance of diet now. He developed diabetes in 1994, began seeing Dr. Patel two months ago and has been able to get his disease under control with diet and exercise.

"You can't cheat diabetes," he said of sticking to a new diet that means staying away from the fried fatty foods he grew up with as a southerner.

Patel said that 80 percent of North Carolinians are overweight — a dangerous figure, since fat, especially abdominal fat, prohibits insulin from converting sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life, according to the ADA Web site.

To help highlight the launch of the center, the mayors of Cary, Apex and Holly Springs declared this week Diabetes Awareness Week in their respective towns. Awareness is key in helping prevent this deadly disease, Patel said.

Contact Beth Hatcher at 460-2608 or bhatcher@nando.com.

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