

# Community Wellness Program

Screening high-risk patients for AAAs.

BY JOHN WIEST, MD

The Community Wellness Program (CWP) is a screening program designed for patients at high risk for AAAs that brings together industry, hospitals, and patients to increase awareness and detection of AAAs. It is the result of a partnership between Life Line Screening (LLS) of America, Inc. and Medtronic Vascular, Inc. (Santa Rosa, CA). The third partner in this arrangement is the hospitals who agree to take part in this program.

## THE PROGRAM

LLS has more than 10 years of experience in ultrasound screening, providing the know-how, operations, equipment, and personnel to execute the screenings. The duties of the LLS role begin with the 80-person call center that prescreens callers to identify high-risk participants and set appointment hours. The day before the event, participants receive a reminder call with instructions regarding fasting and driving directions. At the screening site, LLS sets up the two AAA screening "stations" with their mobile ultrasound equipment that can screen up to 150 participants per event. Results of the ultrasound screening are mailed to each participant 21 days after the event, when a board-certified physician has reviewed them. In the event of a critical AAA finding (defined as >5 cm), the result is printed immediately along with a letter for the primary care physician, and the patient is advised to seek further medical consultation with his doctor.

Medtronic's sponsorship of the events brings AAA screening for free to high-risk participants. The program is designed so that hospitals join as a third partner, provid-

ing an adequate site for the screening event, credibility through their co-sponsorship, and advertisement for the event. To assist hospitals in the marketing of the event, Medtronic has also developed marketing templates, providing the CWP with the same "look and feel" throughout the country. The goal of the CWP is not only early detection of AAAs but also education. For this purpose, Medtronic provides LLS with brochures that describe the risk factors associated with AAAs, the potential risks of the disease, and the treatment options and their risks (both open surgery and endovascular repair). Each participant receives one such brochure after going through the screening.

## RESULTS

The CWP is held every quarter, with each partner hospital making a real impact in the community and raising aware-

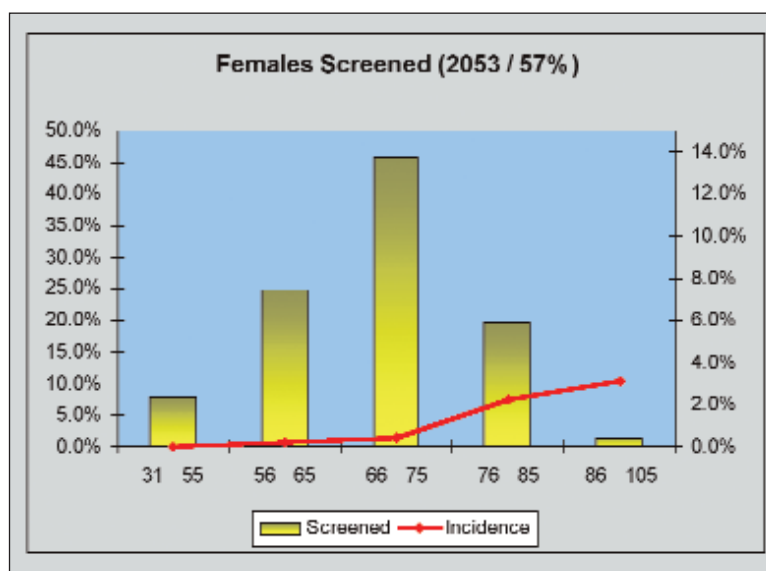


Figure 1. Aggregate data collected regarding female patients screened.

ness and education regarding AAAs and vascular disease. To date, the CWP has established partnerships with more than 50 hospitals throughout the country and has held more than 45 events, screening upward of 4,800 high-risk participants. Figures 1 and 2 and Table 1 provide a summary of the aggregate data collected and processed so far (N= 3,585; N males = 1,532; N females = 2,053).

Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, Oregon was invited to participate in the CWP last year. The vascular surgeons at our facility and the hospital administration were quite eager to participate. This program has allowed us to provide a valuable screening service for our patient population at high risk for peripheral vascular disease. In addition, the program has enhanced the image of our hospital in the community.

The CWP is a well-organized program that can be easily adapted to any hospital setting. Once some minor legal issues were addressed, the program has run extremely well during the last several months. Our first two screening events have been very successful. Our first session, held on July 31st screened a total of 141 patients and identified two aneurysms. Our second session, held on November 11th screened 136 patients and identified a total of six aneurysms, one of which was critical (>5 cm). The primary care physician for each participant noted to have an AAA was notified by a letter sent by LLS with a copy of the results. Participants were encouraged to follow up with their physician at their earliest convenience.

The future for the program at our hospital also looks promising. The third session was completely booked before the second session took place. The fourth session is nearly

**TABLE 1. PREVALENCE ACCORDING TO RISK FACTORS**

	Female	Male	Total
High Blood Pressure	1%	4.5%	2.5%
Smoker	0.9%	5%	3%
Family History of Cardiovascular Disease	1.3%	6.1%	3%
Heart Procedure	2.8%	6.7%	5.3%
Heart Attack	2.2%	7.4%	5.5%

filled at this time. There has been a tremendous response from the community to participate in these events.

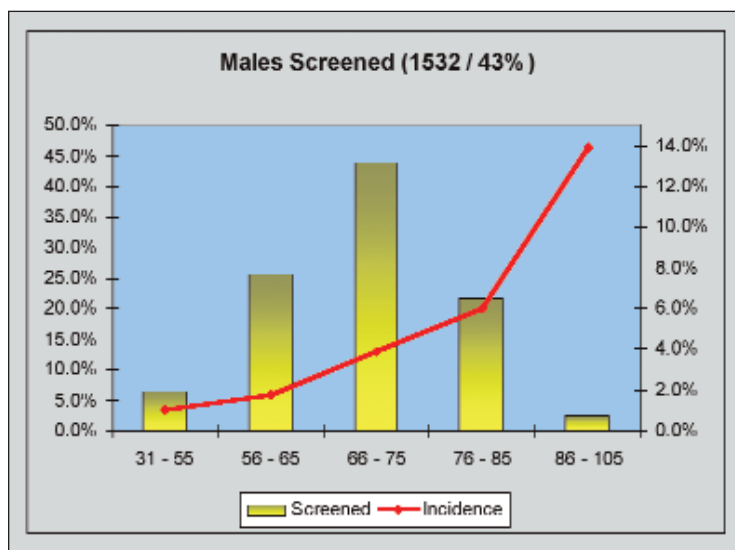
The success of the program is based on support by the hospital administration and a well-organized marketing plan. Hospital support is critical to facilitate the marketing program and to provide an adequate test site with easy patient access. Easily available parking and clear directions to the screening site are also critical.

## CONCLUSION

A well-organized and timely marketing campaign is key to the success of the program. The marketing templates provided by the CWP were a helpful guide for our public relations department. The marketing department was able to rapidly and efficiently organize a very effective advertisement campaign. The first screening event registered 150 participants with only 2 weeks of advertisement prior to the event. Newspaper ads and personal communication among participants and between physicians appear to be the best forms of marketing.

We have been very pleased with the success of the AAA screening program at our institution. The partnership between Medtronic Vascular, Inc. and LLS of America, Inc. has indeed provided a turnkey program. Medtronic and LLS are currently working to revamp their current program expanding the screenings offered to include carotid artery disease and peripheral artery disease. The complete vascular screening program is expected to begin in June 2005. Look forward to participating in this upcoming expanded screening program. For more information on the CWP please contact Jorge O'Hara (Jorge.ohara@medtronic.com), Kala Hardacker (kala.hardacker@medtronic.com), or your local Medtronic Sales Representative. ■

*John Wiest, MD, is a vascular surgeon at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland, Oregon. Dr. Wiest may be reached at john.wiest@providence.org.*



**Figure 2. Aggregate data collected regarding male patients screened.**