Congestive heart failure is a condition that is increasing in frequency as the population ages and as the treatment of their types of heart disease has improved. The treatment for congestive heart failure remains a challenge. We have a number of new drugs over the past ten years which have made significant improvement in both the quality and duration of life for patients who have this condition. As you are well aware, the treatment is multi-faceted and usually requires several medications.

There are many new drugs in the development stage making the treatment of congestive heart failure look even brighter in the future. As a recent cardiology journal stated, there is an “unprecedented wealth of pharmacological innovation that may soon transform the management of those challenging patients” with congestive heart failure. However, this is not a promise that appears to be just around the corner. The development of drugs involves time, money, and considerable clinical research to establish their benefits and risks. Agents are being developed that are targeted to make the heart contract stronger, improve the kidney’s ability to get rid of extra fluid, reduce the amount of fluid that can build up in the lungs, and improve the metabolism in the heart so it can use the energy more efficiently.

We are looking forward to the development of these new drugs and the use of them in our program as soon as they are available, which may be months or years in the future. In the meantime, it is important to continue with the medical regimen that has been tailored specifically to your needs. Continue to ask questions about your medications and what is being developed for you, and most importantly, continue to keep us informed on how you are feeling.

J. William Richardson, MD

What’s in a Name?

A name can be very important. A name is how something or someone is recognized. A name can elicit a wide range of reactions, thoughts, and images.

Our name is The Heart Failure Disease Management Program.

Over the past years, we have had patients suggest alternate names such as “Heart Improvement Team,” “Heart Team,” “Cardiomyopathy Program,” or my favorite: “Connie’s Heart Family (CHF)” (I’m aware you are cared for by a team much bigger than me alone, but “family” is my nickname for all of you!)

When I approached our medical director for his thoughts, he suggested we open the discussion to include our readers. What are your ideas for our program name? We welcome your input!

Please call me with your feedback. You can reach me by phone at 563-584-3425 or 1-800-648-6868 or by email at wesselsc@mercyhealth.com.

We’ll tabulate the responses, present them at the next support group meeting and proceed from there. Because this is your program, we feel its name should reflect the spirit of all of you.

Thanks for allowing us to help you LIVE WELL.

The Heart Failure Team
Eating Fresh Produce is Healthy All Year Long

Kristie Jacobsen, MA, RD, LD, CNSD

Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a good diet, any time of the year. A fresh fruit salad or vegetable dish served with low sodium soup is one way to reap great health benefits during any season.

Including fresh fruit and vegetables in your diet on a regular basis is also a great way to increase your intake of soluble fiber. Soluble fiber is a natural substance which absorbs water and becomes gummy and thick when eaten. The gummy substance binds to fatty substances in the body, like cholesterol, and eliminates them.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are an important part of the low sodium diet, because they are naturally low in sodium and sometimes sodium-free altogether. The goal is to eat a total of four cups of any combination of fruits and vegetables every day. This quantity will assure you get full benefit from the essential nutrients contained in them.

In fact, the more color and variety you eat, the wider range of vitamins you gain. Deep colors indicate the most concentrated sources of vitamins and minerals.

At your next meal, cut an apple, banana, orange and grapes into bite-sized pieces for a fresh fruit salad. Its vitamins, minerals and soluble fiber will help keep you healthy this winter!