

## 'Comforting to know'

Stroke screenings provide early detection

by Brett Andersen

THISWEEK NEWSPAPERS

Bill Bond, Apple Valley, called his clinic after learning that a Rochester-based team was setting up shop at the Apple Valley American Legion Dec. 22 to provide health screenings.

The clinic confirmed to Bond that the tests were valid and "a good preliminary." If a complication was indicated, officials at the clinic said they could then begin to take the appropriate steps.

Bond, whose family has a history of carotid blockage, said he had been wanting his doctor to recommend a screening, but he hasn't for what Bond assumed were fiscal reasons.

"For \$35 it is really a good safety check," he said, adding that a co-pay to see the doctor is \$20.

Stroke Detection Plus team leader Terry Joyce said, "Unfortunately, the way insurance is set up now, your doctor can't order these tests unless you've had a symptom or had a stroke."

Stroke Detection Plus offers all four tests for \$115. According to Joyce the tests at one prominent clinic run approximately \$1,100.

### Test/from 1A

mately \$1,100.

He said the company sends the test results to the client, who should share a copy with their regular physician.

Joyce said "one of the good-bad things" is that nearly every day they find something. The day before he said they sent a gentleman straight to the hospital.



Photo by Brett Andersen

Ultrasound technician Steve Edwards checks a client's carotid artery for blockages Dec. 22 at the Apple Valley American Legion.

Many of the blockages in the carotid arteries and the abdominal aortic aneurysms occur without symptoms, he said.

"You can have one that is huge and not even know it," said Joyce.

Despite Bond's family history, the ultrasound showed his carotid arteries clear.

"That is comforting to know," he said.

Ultrasound technician Steve Edwards said he doesn't restrict his search to blockages and aneurysms. If he sees "incidental findings" — anything that isn't supposed to be there — he takes extra pictures of it for the doctor's examination.

He said he has found a cancerous growth on a client's thyroid, which was promptly treated.

"I found a lady who had a huge tumor in her uterus," he said. "It weighed about 40 pounds."

Edwards said the woman thought she was just gaining weight, but the tumor blocked

him from doing the abdominal aortic aneurysm test.

According to Edwards, the cancerous tumor had not spread and the doctors were able to remove it.

He said he occasionally notices abnormalities on the liver and kidneys while performing the test.

The team provided four tests to participants who pre-registered.

The tests are:

- Stroke screening — using ultrasound to check for blockages in the carotid arteries (located in the neck), which causes the majority of strokes. Symptoms include sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the face, arms and legs, sudden loss of vision or slurred speech, dizziness and severe headaches;

- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm screening — uses ultrasound to detect the existence of an aneurysm which can rupture and be fatal. The vast majority of these cases occur without

symptoms;

- Peripheral Vascular Disease screening — checks for blockages in the legs. About 2 million Americans are diagnosed with the disease each year and it is the leading cause of amputations in America. Symptoms include numbness in the legs, loss of hair on toes and feet, and cramping in the legs that is relieved with rest; and

- Osteoporosis screening — screens for abnormal bone mass density in men and women.

Early treatment is effective. There are often no symptoms until a bone fracture occurs. According to Joyce, estimates by the World Health Organization say there are about 8 million women and about 3 million men walking around with osteoporosis who "have no clue."

For people who do not want all four tests, the Osteoporosis test costs \$25 and the other three cost \$35 apiece.

Joyce said the team primarily works in American Legion clubs, Elks Clubs, Moose Lodges and similar civic groups.

Joyce is a retired firefighter/paramedic and the other members of the team have extensive hospital/clinic experience.

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### Are You At Risk?

#### 2 Or More Check Marks And You Are At Risk

- Over 40
- More Than 20 lbs. Overweight
- Family History of Strokes
- High Cholesterol
- Cigarette Smoker
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Inactive Lifestyle
- Heart Disease
- TIAs — Minor Stroke