



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

About 100 persons attending the annual Heart Healthy Luncheon in Imperial last Thursday learned about heart health as they ate, exercised and listened.

Sponsored by Chase County Community Hospital, Chase County Hospital Foundation, Imperial Super Foods and Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department, the lunch was designed to teach women about taking care of their hearts.

One featured speaker was Jill Fiedler, who moved back to Imperial over four years ago with her family.

Last May, husband Scott, 48, was experiencing what he thought was severe heartburn. An avid golfer and athlete, he continued to play league golf while feeling poorly.

About four nights into his discomfort, Scott stayed up all night, feeling pressure extend into his neck and jaw.

In the morning, Jill took him to the hospital, where it was determined that he had three 100 percent blockages in the same artery.

Flown to Kearney, Scott had three stints inserted. He will be on medication for the rest of his life.

Doctors were amazed, Jill said, that he hadn't had a heart attack.

The family now watches what they eat, Scott has regular checkups and Jill thinks about his episode "every day."

Cindy Arterburn, a cardiac rehabilitation therapist at CCCH, said she's seen men in their 30s with heart conditions, as well as women in their 40s.

Also speaking at the luncheon was John Kraus, a respiratory therapist with Lincare of Ogallala. He said that although a direct link between heart disease and obstructive sleep apnea hasn't been pinpointed, it's there.

Heart health involves medication, exercise, diet and the quality of sleep, he told those attending. Interrupted sleep, or the blockage of the airway, causes a person to miss the therapeutic deep stage of sleep.



The airway becomes blocked when a variety of things cause the area behind the tongue to collapse into the back of the neck.

Alcohol, sleeping pills, Down Syndrome, smoking, family history and swollen tonsils, as well as being overweight, cause the collapse.

The biggest cause, Kraus said, is being overweight.

Obstructive sleep apnea causes heart problems, he said, as the interruption of sleep causes a

loss of oxygen to the muscles, including the heart. That increases the heart rate.

“If you already have a heart condition and are not treating this component, you’re not helping your heart,” he commented.

Two primary ways to diagnose sleep apnea are a sleep study or an overnight oxymetry in a hospital, doctor’s office or at home, he said.

A retainer to offset the jaw so the tissue doesn’t collapse, or Continuous Airway Pressure (C-Pap) equipment to keep the airway open with air pressure, relieve the patient’s apnea.

Other options include a tracheotomy, removing tissue from the airway, or implants to keep the tissue from collapsing.

Untreated obstructive sleep apnea can lead to congestive heart failure and high blood pressure that doesn’t respond to medication, Kraus said.

