

Fortunate Finding

“A Day for Women” Sheds Light on Skin Cancer

The sore on Sheron Chapman’s nose just wouldn’t go away. “I had it for more than a year,” the 63-year-old Huron woman says. “It would bleed occasionally, but then it would start to heal and I thought it was going away for good.”

Hardly noticeable at about the size of a pencil eraser, Chapman dismissed the idea that the sore was anything to worry about. “I thought it was just a broken blood vessel,” she says. “It didn’t hurt.”

Lifesaving Realization

Chapman continued to write off the sore as a silly nuisance until she attended Huron Regional Medical Center’s “A Day for Women” last September. “I look forward to it every year,” Chapman says. “It’s such a special day of interesting health information and camaraderie with other women. Everyone leaves feeling pampered.”

But this time, the health information on skin cancer was more than interesting to Chapman. One of the slides in surgeon Dr. Cy Haatvedt’s skin cancer presentation looked just like the blemish on her nose. “Dr. Haatvedt explained it was a picture of basal cell carcinoma, the most common form of skin cancer,” Chapman says. “He described it as a sore that won’t heal – with no pain involved. Those were my exact symptoms.”

After Dr. Haatevdt’s presentation, Chapman got in line for a free skin cancer screening. Her nose showed an area of concern, which prompted Chapman to call her regular doctor, who quickly referred her to dermatologist Dr. Ty Hansen. “Dr. Hansen said, ‘I see this every day; it’s basal cell skin cancer,’” Chapman says. Dr. Hansen

Skin Cancer (575 words + 44-word callout)

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performed a biopsy to confirm his diagnosis and referred her to plastic surgeon Dr. Sanjay Mukerji.

Aggressive Treatment

“Dr. Mukerji’s first comment to me was, ‘It is very deep,’” Chapman recalls of her October appointment. “I assumed he would do something similar to the biopsy that Dr. Hanson did in his office – just numb the area and remove it.” But Chapman learned her cancer was so deep she would need surgery.

At first Chapman, who is an active volunteer in the community, wasn’t upset about the cancer, or the surgery. She was thinking about all the work she needed to do as co-chair of an upcoming community Thanksgiving dinner. “We were in the peak of planning. I didn’t think I could work in surgery and be ready for Thanksgiving – which is what I told Dr. Mukerji,” Chapman says. “But he sat down and said, ‘I intend to treat this cancer aggressively, and you need to make it a priority.’”

Making Health a Priority

After getting her priorities in order, Chapman scheduled surgery for Nov. 13. “Dr. Mukerji explained that he needed to remove ‘the root’ or the cancer could return,” Chapman says. “I garden a bit, so I assumed a root goes down, and there wouldn’t be much of a scar.” But her small spot of cancer had webby roots that had spread and covered a nickel-size area of her nose. “Dr. Mukerji did a beautiful job with the plastic surgery – all in one procedure,” Chapman says. “He did a ‘flap’ technique, which took skin from my laugh line area and turned it up, across my nose. You can hardly tell now. And, most important, the cancer is gone.”

Helping Other Women

Chapman is so thankful for her fortunate finding at last year's "A Day for Women" she's helping plan the 2008 event. "I honestly don't know how long I would have waited to get my nose looked at if I had missed the Day for Women event last year," Chapman says. "Now, I want to help to make sure someone else doesn't ignore an important health issue like I did for so long."

[callout] include logo and Diana Jordan picture if possible

The 2008 SD Women's Expo: A Day for Women is set for Sat., Sept. 28 on the State Fairgrounds. The event will feature keynote speaker Diana Jordan, a comedian and singer who Oprah Winfrey calls "One of the funniest people on the planet." In addition to the keynote presentation, information on a diverse number of areas relating to women's health and their everyday lives will be presented in a relaxing, enjoyable atmosphere. Plus, a few lucky ladies will receive free makeovers and be transformed as "Women for a Day." Tickets for this event are \$10 in advance and \$15 the day of the show, and will be available at HRMC, the S.D. State Fair office or online at www.huronregional.org.