

Fighting fat, combating stress with exercise

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October 7, 2009-- The "battle of the bulge" took on a much different meaning from the messages about expanding waistlines and general nutrition and well-being from the speakers during the Army Physical Fitness Research Institute's Women's Health Symposium.

The Army War College served as host for several speakers as part of APFRI's Women's Health Symposium, with lectures running from Oct. 1-5. Speakers included Dr. Pamela Peeke and her presentation "Master the Power Mind for Lifelong Mind and Body Fitness," nutritionist and fitness consultant Dr. Janet Brill who presented "Matters of the Heart: Optimal Lifestyle Rx for Cardiovascular Health for Women," an APFRI invitational brief courtesy of APFRI Director Col. Thomas Williams, and a presentation from Col. Cathy Nace, OB/GYN, which included one specifically for men, "What You Need to Know about Women's Health" and one lecture for women, "Women's Health Issues Update."

Keynote speaker Dr. Pamela Peeke focused on how the mind affects the body and how the body reacts to stress during her Oct. 1 presentation in Bliss Hall, kicking off the symposium.

"The more physically fit you are, the more mentally fit you are," Peeke told students and family members in the audience. "The mind is the driver and you have to keep stirring up the momentum in your body to keep running or keep exercising. What affects one, affects the other and if you want to be a good leader, you have to be physically fit."

The importance of physical and mental conditioning for the warrior is paramount, Peeke said.

"Stress is toxic to our bodies," she said. "Our bodies are designed to respond to stress and when we live with constant stress, it changes up everything in our bodies."

According to Peeke, men and women have different coping mechanisms for stress. However, both men and women use food as a way to deal with what may be bothering them.

"Men go straight to the bar and have a few beers and women eat when stress enters our lives," she

said. "The development of fat can lead to a number of health problems, including elevated blood sugar levels and high cholesterol and blood pressure."

Peeke told women to make more time for exercise and to not overload their schedules.

"Too many times we cram more and more stuff into our schedules and volunteer for more things that we really don't have time for and what we leave out is time for ourselves and time to exercise," Peeke said of women's schedules. "We need to man up. Men just do it. The house could burn down and they are still leaving to go and get their workout in."

Family members of Army War College students, also have each other to help deal with stress, just ask Joan Grey and Susan Boling, whose husbands have both been deployed at different times.

"I think I handle stress pretty well," said Joan Grey. "I rely on [Boling] for a lot of support while my husband is deployed."

"It helps that we spend a lot of time together, and our children are married to one another, so she supports me while my husband is deployed and I support her," Boling said.

Lauren Connelly, of Academic Affairs, said it was news to her that people who appear to be in good shape can still develop health problems without enough exercise.

"I didn't know that [fat on the inside of the muscle wall] was such an important thing to consider," she said. "I think it was important that Dr. Peeke warned everyone that even thin people can still run the risk of heart disease and those kinds of problems if they don't exercise."

Peeke suggested avoiding foods that are high in preservatives and instead, focusing on whole foods that are lean and high on protein.

Dee Connelly, of APFRI, said she hoped students and their family members were listening to Peeke's advice.

"This is the exact information that we are trying to reinforce and see students begin implementing in their lives," she said.

Dr. Janet Brill discusses heart disease

How stress is managed directly affects the diet and Dr. Janet Brill echoed many of Peeke's sentiments, providing suggestions for handling stress with healthier foods.

Brill spoke about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle by engaging in exercise and healthy eating habits, offering students and family members nutritious alternatives such as the Mediterranean Diet, which is rich in high protein foods such as nuts, beans and seeds and leaves out most red meats.

"The Mediterranean Diet sounds good and I think I am willing to give that a try," said Linda Heussner, an Army War College family member. "I am going to start out small, avoiding fatty foods and too much red meat."

Heussner said she was also going to take up Col. Williams and APFRI's invitation to family members to participate in APFRI's various health and fitness assessments.

"I definitely want to get one done," she said of the assessments. "I have a family history of heart disease and high cholesterol so I would like to know what diet changes to make and get full blood work done to see where my good and bad cholesterol stand. I would also like to get a detailed exercise plan for my body type."

Col. Cathy Nace discusses women's health issues

Col. Cathy Nace gave students and family members an education about women's bodies and what is important to keep in mind as they head into the peri-menopause and menopause phases of their lives, one of those suggestions was to continue exercising

"I thought Col. Nace was great and wonderful for our age group," said Sonya Zoller, a family member. "She had great things to say and her emphasis on nutrition and exercise was great to hear, we have heard it in every seminar this week and that was perfect, because we need that validation."

Nace told listeners to expect these changes and to educate themselves in order to cope with the changes that the body goes through.

"You really should understand the process and discuss things with your spouses," Nace told listeners during the "[WomenUpdate](#)." "[Continue exercising, try to exercise together with your spouse or family members](#)."

Nace said that as women age and enter menopause, their bodies become susceptible to osteoporosis, a condition that causes brittle bones and can lead to fractures.

"We want you to do some sort of physical activity where you are using your body weight so jogging or walking is excellent for your bones because you are continuing to carry your own weight," she said. "Yoga is also another great way to keep active and it is low-impact and helps with flexibility. It is also a great way to de-stress."

Nace said that exercise is a must in later years and that injury and like Peeke's advice, time constraints are not an excuse.

"Make time to do it," she said. "Your kids are older, you are finding yourself with a little more time on your hands, so get out there and get moving."

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