

TSET Better Health Podcast Transcript

Episode 44: Getting to the Heart of Good Health

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Summary: This year, American Heart Month in February gets an added Leap Day of observance and a TSET Better Health Podcast episode dedicated to heart health and disease prevention. Cardiologist Tim Daly explains how disease develops in the heart and blood vessels over time and how to avoid it, and we'll visit a county wellness center where people of all ages gather for classes and activities that are great for both heart and spirit.

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[Theme music]

James Tyree: Warm greetings to you this winter and welcome to Episode 44 of the TSET Better Health Podcast. This is your host James Tyree, associate director of Integrated Communications at TSET ...

Dylan Jasna: And I am Dylan Jasna, TSET associate director of campaigns and brands. February is American Heart Month, which makes sense considering Valentine's Day falls in this month. And yes, this is a friendly reminder that Valentine's Day is coming up. But American Heart Month also serves as a month-long reminder of just how important maintaining good heart health really is. After all, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for nearly 700,000 deaths per year. That is a more than cancer, COVID-19 and accidents.

J. Tyree: You know, Dylan, a lot of cardiovascular disease – which includes coronary heart disease, stroke and any m that medical condition that involves the heart or blood vessels – can be avoided. Or, at least, we can take control and do things that improve heart health. Decreasing the risk of cardiovascular disease in Oklahoma is part of our mission here at TSET, and it's something that many of you care about for yourself and your family and friends.

D. Jasna: So today we will hear from a cardiologist who will share with us what he sees on the job and advises to his patients to help them with their cardiovascular health. We'll also hear from staff at the Cleveland County Wellness Square in Norman, where James and our audio engineer Sam visited recently. The staff members talked about classes, activities and events at the Square that are not only tons of fun, but also beneficial for heart and total health – and how you can be good to your heart no matter where you live in the state or beyond.

J. Tyree: Let's begin by meeting and conversing with a cardiologist in Oklahoma City.

Dr. Tim Daly: Sure. I'm Tim Daly. I'm an interventional cardiologist at Baptist Integris Hospital in Oklahoma City.

D. Jasna: Thank you for joining us. So what is an interventional cardiologist? What does that specialty entail?

Tim Daly: An interventional cardiologist specializes in opening up arteries or doing different procedures, which we can talk a little bit about more.

So there's medical conditions, like heart failure, rhythm problems. And then of course, coronary disease, is something prominent in society. People come in with blockages in the heart arteries, which can lead to heart failure. Those are the kind of things we deal with. Also, not to go into it too much, but like I said, peripheral arterial disease, so people who have blockages in their leg arteries or neck arteries that cause strokes, or cause legs for amputations. Those kind of things, we also deal with. It's a big, broad umbrella that we deal with.

D. Jasna: That is very serious stuff. Why do you think heart and cardiovascular disease is so prevalent?

Tim Daly: Why is it so common? Well, first and foremost, we're living longer. If you're a caveman back in the day, you didn't live long enough to develop coronary disease. That's one big thing. Then, as we started going through, historically, the Industrial Revolution, we had people living longer. Then, we started seeing more factors. Whenever we talk about the factors, the risk factors, you have modifiable risk factors, which we'll talk about, and then we have non-modifiable risk factors.

Non-modifiable risk factors, most importantly, is genetics. If your dad had a heart attack at age 20, that you're going to be more likely to develop heart disease when you're earlier on in your life. We usually tell people, male, before the age of about 50 or 55, or a female before the age 55 or 65, somewhere in that range, if you have it earlier than that in your family, it's earlier heart disease and you're more at risk.

I think that the biggest factor though is all the modifiable risk factors. We're eating less healthy, we have more diabetes, we have more obesity. We have rates of smoking, hopefully will be going down. We have all those kind of things that are going out there. High cholesterol, all these kind of factors that we have to look at. As a society as a whole, of all those things I just mentioned, we haven't been doing a great job over the last 20, 30 years, of doing better exercise, lifestyle modification, those kind of things. Rates of obesity are going up. All those kind of factors are weighing in. Why is it becoming more common is because we're still doing somewhat of a poor job about working on those modifiable risk factors way more than even the genetic ones.

D. Jasna: What is the biggest modifiable risk?

Tim Daly: Well, let's go with the first and foremost thing. My huge pet peeve is smoking. I always tell people in the office I would probably be out of a job if it wasn't for the tobacco

industry. Because seriously, it's the number one through about the number 50 risk factor that I tell people they need to cut out.

As far as working on those risk factors is concerned, that's going to be the number one thing. The working towards those barriers to get over that, those modifiable risk factors that people have had set patterns in their life for a long time, is very difficult. It's one of those things that you find a lot of resistance when I tell someone, "Hey, you need to quit smoking," for example. They say, "Well, I've been smoking since I'm nine years old." Literally, I've had people tell me, before they were even 10 years old, people have started smoking in Oklahoma. I usually tell them that's the time to quit, "You've been doing this long enough, now is the time."

D. Jasna: What can you say about reducing the risk of other modifiable factors, like diet and nutrition?

Tim Daly: If you've ever seen the documentary *Supersize Me*, we have ginormous portions. We tend to overeat. The rates of obesity, diabetes, all those things. But as far as the data behind diets, there's usually what we talk about is heart healthy diet, or a Mediterranean diet. You can look these up, but really it focuses on more fresh vegetables, fruits. Working with more fish as opposed to red meats. There's good data behind supporting those things. A heart healthy diet is different than obesity diet.

Weight is a little different than heart healthy, but trying to focus on the more complex carbs instead of simple carbs. Think about how many sugars we drink in our soft drinks, and those kind of things. Try to cut down on those unhealthy habits, again, is a mainstay. And then, of course, like I said, the fast-food industry has really blown up over time so trying to focus away from that as much as you can is a good idea.

D. Jasna: We know that physical activity is also important, but how active do we need to be for good heart health? Does it take a ton?

Tim Daly: People will get in this mindset of, "Oh, man, I have to be really killing it at the gym to be healthy." That's really not what the data shows. Any exercise, movement, is what makes you live longer. As a matter of fact, I always tell people, I saw a video of these elderly women, they were all over 100. They said, "What's the key to a long life?" They all said, "Keep moving."

I really think that is a huge factor. The data, as I was going to say, is that even a light to moderate intensity exercise, and we're talking about just walking, trying to get your heart rate up a little bit where you can feel the warmth going in your body, those kind of things.

Sometimes, we have people who say, "I can't. My joints are bad, my back's bad," whatever. "I'm in chronic pain." I always say if that's the case, then if you can get access to a pool, like YMCA, something that can unload the joints, that's probably the best exercise. Outside of that, I really recommend these little pedal machines you can get on Amazon, or walmart.com, or anything like that, for fairly inexpensive, 40, 50 dollars. And try to get in exercise that way. But it is extremely important to keep up the exercise.

D. Jasna: From all you know and have seen, what do you want our listeners to remember most about cardiovascular health?

T. Daly: Yeah. That's a big question. I think I would just say that, probably we already discussed this, don't ... I think people get overwhelmed. They hear, "I need to do a good diet. I need to do exercise. I need to quit smoking. I need to get my cholesterol down," et cetera, et cetera. I think you just should take it a step at a time. Assess what's going on realistically. A lot of people live in denial about their habits. I always tell people I would start with smoking, by far and away, as my first and most important thing is working towards quitting smoking. Because it doesn't matter if you're on the right statin medicine for your cholesterol, and you exercise, and all those kind of things, if you're smoking, you're doing damage every time you're taking a breath. That's not even to mention the other non-cardiac effects of smoking.

I would say that you just got to start taking those one things at a time. And realistically looking at yourself and saying, "What do I need to do to improve my heart health?" Because a lot of times, like I said, people are in denial. People don't have to come in my office to hear that, they know what the best thing to do for themselves is already. They just haven't really taken those steps yet.

[Music]

J. Tyree: Thank you Dr. Tim Daly for that helpful information from a vantage point that most of us don't see first hand. A lot of the points he touched on for improving heart health are areas in which TSET brands, specifically Shape Your Future and the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, address in a supportive way.

D. Jasna: *(Dylan speaks on how Shape Your Future and the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline provide resources and assistance for Oklahomans who want to live healthier and quit tobacco.)*

J. Tyree: That is good to know, thanks Dylan. Healthy eating and physical activity are both key for good heart health. But to stick with it, nutrition and activity have to be accessible, enjoyable and practical. Audiovisual storyteller Sam Carrillo and I found all this and more at the Cleveland County Wellness Square in Norman. While I interviewed some staff members, which you are about to hear, Sam was off shooting video of a bootcamp class that is designed for people of all ages, after which he talked with its instructor – so be sure to check that out on this podcast page. But for now, let's meet some of the people at the place often simply called The Well.

Cat Willis: My name is Cat Willis. I am a health educator and an injury prevention specialist at the Cleveland County Health Department and here at The Well.

Micah Caruso: My name is Micah Caruso. I'm also a health educator. I work with the Cleveland County Health Department and also at The Well.

Mary Bixler Lovely. My name is Mary Bixler, and I'm our Public Information Officer at the Cleveland County Health Department, and The Well as well.

Tara McClain Hi, I am Tara McClain, and I run the farmer's market here.

J. Tyree Very good. Okay, my first question is starting really basic, and then we'll dive down into more specifics, but you mentioned The Well. What is The Well, and what makes it so special?

T. McClain The Well is the Cleveland County Wellness Center. It is a joint effort between Cleveland County and the Cleveland County Health Department, and it is basically just an overall whole wellness center that we give classes, we have nutrition classes, we have the farmer's market here. It's just general overall wellness.

J. Tyree So there are a lot of things happening here. Can you just give a couple of examples of popular classes, or programs, or things like that?

T. McClain Oh, sure. Yeah. We have quite a plethora of different kind of categories of classes, because we do see some different types of audiences. So we've tried to cater classes to all the people in our community that utilize The Well.

And we have some great partnerships with individual business owners and folks that are Farm Market vendors, but also other organizations. We work with Mid-America Tech Center, and we also work with Moore Norman Tech Center, so those have become partnerships across The Well and those agencies that we can provide trainings. We do different classes. These are essentially their classes, so we do different cooking classes. We're doing a basics of crochet class that's going to be really fun. So specified into that almost homesteading a little bit, baking bread, doing your own cinnamon rolls, kombucha, different things like that. So that's a really fun partnership that we have with those organizations.

And then we get into some of those physical fitness where we have cardio kickboxing, and yoga, and meditation and mindfulness. Prenatal yoga is something that we just started. So a little something for everyone.

And then we do dive into that, not just nutrition and cooking education, but we also do financial wellness, financial planning classes with people that are really well versed in Medicaid and Medicare, or estate planning and funeral planning, because if you have not been through that, it is really, really something that can involve the whole family and takes a lot of intentional planning.

J. Tyree So that is very important, but to go back to the nutrition classes as this is, heart health. What type of nutrition classes do you have here?

T. McClain Yeah. We work with one individual who is a registered dietician, and we've worked with a couple different diabetes prevention centers that are local partners in Norman. But

right now we really have these nutrition classes focused on nutrition 101. What are the basics for really eating healthily and getting what you need?

And also we've gotten a lot of interest in nutrition for immunity, whether that's preventing chronic illness and chronic disease, or managing it. That's been a big focus for us right now. And then also meal prepping, because we are in Norman, so we have busy families that are meal prepping, but also college students. So that's been a focus for some of our nutrition classes, not just what needs to be in those meal preps, but how to do that. What are some tips and tricks for meal prepping?

So those have been our focuses for I would say probably the past quarter or few months. Especially during New Year's, we're all trying to get recalibrated to our healthy lifestyles and healthy eating.

J. Tyree Let me ask you this. Are there some programs that you and Micah will be working on?

C. Willis We are offering a really new cool program at the start of February called A Way to Wellness that is going to be directly impacting nutrition, physical fitness, and overall wellbeing. It's going to be called A Way to Wellness.

The reason why we're going to be doing this is because in 2020 Oklahoma had the ninth highest obesity prevalence in the nation, so Oklahomans are 4.5% more likely to be obese than the national average. We want to change those numbers and empower Okies to be able to have less barriers to make healthy choices in life. And what's going to be really great about this is it's going to be what we hope to be real help from real people, for real people. So it's not going to be two people up on a soapbox yelling at you to change your lifestyles. It's going to be us two doing the program with you, helping you get rid of those barriers in a very realistic and healthy way.

M. Caruso That will also be a free class. We will do the screenings. Whether you have insurance or not, you are able to come for those eight weeks.

C. Willis Each class we will also be doing the blood pressure and then the weight to measure those health markers, and that's what sets us apart from a lot of different programs when it comes to health, is that we are connecting you to health screenings as well as giving that best research... Sorry, evidence-based research.

And we also will be pulling in a nutritionist from the Cleveland County Health Department to teach on nutrition for those classes. And Micah and I will be teaching the remainder of the classes and giving stress management. We will be giving you smart goals, we will be meeting you where you are at and helping you achieve the goals that you would like to make your life better and healthier, because everyone deserves to be well after that.

J. Tyree That's right. It sounds like you have a class that has several people, but the last thing that you said is that even though it will involve a number of people who register, that it really is helping for meeting individual goals.

- C. Willis Yes. We look at you not as participants, but as experts of your own health, and we will help you, meet you where you are at, and help that goal be realistic, timely. We also ask you to share these findings with your doctor, because one thing that we really want to encourage is to go to the doctor to get those health screenings each year so that you can be well.
- J. Tyree This sounds like a really wonderful class, but it's just one of many, many things happening here at The Well. And so just how dynamic of a place is it in terms of activities, and classes, and things like that?
- C. Willis Oh, certainly. Yeah. And this is a great place for Tara, our Farm Market manager, to pop in, and so I'll let you talk about how dynamic the Farm Market is, and how it really pulls a lot of our programs together.
- T. McClain Sure. Our Farm Market is every weekend, every Saturday, all year round. We do have a climate controlled inside building, so even on those pretty bad weather days we still have market. We've only canceled one day this year. But pretty much even throughout the winter, a lot of our farmers are still bringing in produce. We still have tomatoes even though it's the middle of the winter. We have people that are growing in hot houses. We still have all of your lettuce, all of your root vegetables, and you can get those all year round.
- But it's not just vegetables. We also have people that do crafts, we have crochet, pretty much anything you could ever think of. We've got the honey, we've got the meat, we've got eggs. Anything you can get at the grocery store, you can pretty much get here.
- J. Tyree And it's super local.
- T. McClain Yeah. And it doesn't take a long distance to get to you. There's really something to be said about eating fresh fruit and vegetables that only come from minutes away.
- C. Willis So because this is Heart Health Month, one of the things I want to touch on is all of the physical fitness classes that we have available. We have yoga, we have Tai Chi, we have bootcamp. We have levels for all abilities. So if you aren't very bendy, hey, we've got yoga for everyone.
- T. McClain We've got chairs.
- C. Willis Yeah, we have chairs. We have Zumba, if you're interested in more getting your dance on. We have a Norman Regional walking group. So really, we have all different kinds of classes that can help with heart health.
- J. Tyree Cool.

M. Bixler And I think something that's really cool about The Well, and maybe you already touched on this, but we have offerings that are for folks who might be mobility impaired. So we have those walking groups that are inside on a paved surface, and so you can still, if you have a cane or you have a wheelchair, there's definitely still great ways to participate in those healthy, healthy behaviors and just that community of getting together.

And then one class that I just really love, it's called Dance for Parkinson's, but it's actually open to anybody who is mobility impaired. And we host that here at The Well in our event hall, Market Hall, excuse me. And that we have OU School of Dance that comes in. It's basically everything you could do from a seat, so it is definitely wheelchair friendly, but we also have some kids come that have maybe cognitive differences. And so it's just really open to anybody who might not fit in that, be comfortable in a traditional dance class. We are sensorially aware, mobility aware, and I think that is so important to offer people, because just so much of our community that can't quite interact in some of those normal cardio kickboxing fashion. And so it's really important to have an outlet for our whole community.

J. Tyree That's terrific. Now, a question I have for you is that, of course this is Cleveland County Wellness Square and a lot of dynamic things happening here locally, but his podcast goes throughout the state and beyond. And I know that you're familiar with the state health department. And so if someone is living elsewhere, are there similar activities happening with health educators or anyone else?

M. Caruso Why health educators are important, the way I see it, is that our job is to fill in the gaps where the education is the most important inside that specific district. So we specifically get to go out and figure out what is the most needed within our districts, and find which specialties we are the most interested in and find different ways to serve our communities.

And it's amazing because health educators I think are kind of like chameleons, because we just shift and change to make sure that we fit the needs of Oklahomans to get them the education and the resources and support that they need. So I think that's why health educators are incredibly important.

M. Bixler Yeah, and I love that you spoke to that, Micah, because I think that is the beauty of being boots on the ground, so to speak, with our community is we're able to get that direct feedback, that two way communication, so important to understand what are the needs, where are the barriers to health literacy or changing those behaviors. So much of leaning into that prevention framework is education. And so it's so amazing to get direct access to our community. Cat and Micah, and Tara with the Farm Market, are very involved in our community and very connected. And we do a lot of different outreach to just reach people and tell them what they are eligible for at the health department, but also again, how do we lean into that prevention? How do we help treat you acutely, but how do we lean into that prevention framework and work on increasing our health outcomes?

We know in Oklahoma we're on the bottom of lists that we don't want to be on, at the bottom of the ones we do want to be on, at the top of the ones we don't necessarily want to be on. And so we know that education can change behavior, which can change health outcomes. And I think it's really cool to see that that doesn't necessarily bottleneck at the state, that it can trickle down and can be customizable, like Micah was saying, to what that direct community needs. And that's so important. If we're really reaching different people, different communities, there might be different language challenges, and we've really got to be able to meet people where they're at. So I love that you spoke to that so well.

M. Caruso Thank you.

J. Tyree This is the final question and it's for you guys, going into heart health, ~~just~~ what one tip would you have for people to be good to their ticker?

M. Caruso You know you best. Be kind to yourself.

M. Bixler Our district nurse manager is really wonderful at the health department, and we put together a little video last year and she was talking about what are some of the best things that you can do for yourself in the realm of heart health. And I think we don't talk about this enough, but really that prevention and getting some tests that can help you establish what your baseline is. Maybe that's what your blood pressure runs, your A1C, that's your blood sugar. Some of these different tests that you might not think about are really important to establish until you're then in an acute situation that's going to set you up for some chronic long term problems that do affect your heart health. And so I think that's really important to be on that prevention side, and just talk with your physician if you have one that you see. Get some of those tests so you can establish a baseline, and then cater your plan to what your needs are.

T. McClain My one tip is to really think about your life and what you enjoy, and to do what you love. So whether that's getting out to have a cup of tea with your friend and helping your mental health, whether that's getting out to take a walk and getting to know your neighbors, coming to The Well and dancing your heart out. Find what you love to do, and do it, and keep on doing it. That is my tip, whether it's food, whether it's exercise, whether it's just learning how to take a breath and find what you love and do it.

J. Tyree That's wonderful. I love it.

[Music]

D. Jasna: I live in Oklahoma City, but that makes me want to go down I-35 and visit the Well. A lot of great things happening there that's not only good for heart health, but also sounds

like a lot of fun. But I also appreciate their mind and body health tips and comments on how Oklahomans can benefit from their local health educator no matter where they live.

J. Tyree: And as you mentioned before Shape Your Future at shapeyourfutureok.com offers a lot of helpful and practical resources for families and individuals who want to eat better and move more, even and especially for those who are crunched for time with their busy schedules. So happy American Heart Month, everyone, and remember there is a Leap Day this year so we get an extra day to celebrate!

D. Jasna: Yes we do, but remember to take good care of your heart all year long. We also remind you that you can listen to this or any past episode by visiting Oklahoma.gov/tset/podcast, or anywhere you normally listen to podcasts. Take care stay heart healthy and until next time, this is Dylan Jasna ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree wishing you peace ...

D. Jasna: And better health.