

Article published Jan 3, 2008

Taking a look inside Screenings for osteoporosis, heart disease offered Tuesday

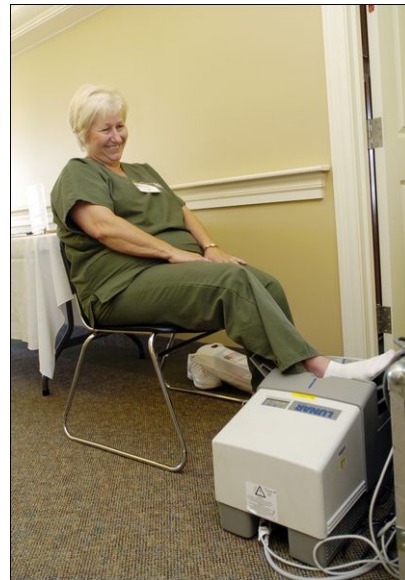
Judy Bastien

jbastien@theadvertiser.com

Screenings are an important part of medical care, these days. Women are encouraged to have yearly mammograms and Pap smears and to begin having bone density scans as they approach menopause. Men are told to have blood tests for testicular cancer. Cholesterol screening has become part of most doctors' routine exams.

But there are other screening tests that are performed only when there is a reason to suspect a problem.

Life Line Screenings Inc., a mobile testing company headquartered in Cleveland, offers screening tests for some conditions that are not part of routine medical exams. The company will visit Lafayette Tuesday, offering screenings for stroke, osteoporosis, abdominal aortic aneurism and peripheral artery disease. The charge for the screenings is a flat fee of \$149.



"The main reason we want to do these kinds of screenings is that we're looking for signs of often silent disease," said Joelle Reizes of Life Line. "We can find risk factors through painless ultrasound screening. If we find it early, doctors have a chance to intercede before something catastrophic happens."

That's what happened about six years ago for former legislator and broadcaster Ron Gomez after undergoing Life Line scans.

"I had gone to my cardiologist for a checkup and he had cleared me. A week after the cardiologist, I got a notice from Life Line that I had a severe blockage at 95 percent on one side and 50 percent on the other and that I should go to the cardiologist immediately," Gomez said.

Gomez's heart surgeon, who was a personal friend, performed an angiogram, which showed the blockages.

"He operated on the right carotid (artery) immediately," Gomez said, "and did the left one a month later. It could very easily turned into a stroke overnight.

"The cardiologist was very apologetic," Gomez said, explaining that normally, all the doctor did was listen with a stethoscope.

Dr. Jeff LaBorde a radiologist with LaBorde Diagnostics offers some cautions about mobile screenings.

"Imaging characteristics aren't that cut and dried," he said. "On the one hand, you can find a large plaque you didn't know you had. On the other, you can generate a lot of time and money chasing something that doesn't exist."

LaBorde said any screenings should be interpreted by a physician.

"Every single test is reviewed by a board certified physician," Reizes said of the scans performed by her company.

LaBorde said people should not allow screenings to lull them into a false sense of security.

"(A screening) does have the benefit of peace of mind, but to go through a scan and think there's nothing absolutely, positively wrong with you and you won't have a stroke, that's an error," LaBorde said. "It doesn't replace a full physical exam."

That's also Gomez's position.

"Once a year, I have regular check-ups with my regular doctors," Gomez said. "But, just as a hedge, I go to Life Line."