

Breast Cancer Program

Dr. Faris AL-Gebory, general surgeon at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital, will present the second in a series of community service programs on April 6, a Saturday, at Lawrenceville Central Christian Church, 303 Buchanan Drive.

In conjunction with the hospital's radiology department, Al-Gebory will present a program on the specifics of breast cancer, from 10 until 11:30 a.m. Finger foods and other refreshments will be provided, and nurses will be on hand to administer complimentary blood pressure checks.

AL-Gebory, who has been on staff at LCMH since October, is making an effort to educate the public with such information sessions on a regular basis. At his first program in January, AL-Gebory discussed cancer prevention.

"Breast cancer is the number one cancer in the United States," said AL-Gebory. "There is a very high prevalence in women, especially Caucasian women, because of genetics, family histories, hormonal exposures and the food that we eat."

The good news, according to AL-Gebory, is that breast cancer is easily treated, especially if it's discovered in an early stage.

"It's a very serious disease. If we don't catch it early the outcome can be poor," he said. "The good thing is, we can catch it early with simple tests. Then the disease can be curable 90 percent of the time."

According to AL-Gebory, prevalence has dropped greatly in the United States. That's mainly because more women are getting mammograms, and there are new forms of chemotherapy and hormonal therapy.

Lawrence County Chief Executive Officer Don Robbins says treating breast cancer is of particular concern for Al-Gebory.

"He's very passionate about treating breast cancer," said Robbins. "Breast cancer is one of those things he came to me right off the bat about, when he first got here. He wants to talk about creating a culture of excellence around breast cancer here in Lawrenceville."

Robbins said women in Lawrence County "need to have every opportunity" to have examinations and ongoing evaluations done in order to monitor the potential of breast cancer occurring.

For its part, the hospital has a mobile mammography unit that travels throughout the area. Not only is the unit located at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital each week, but it's been stationed at some of the

leading employers, such as Toyota Boshoku Illinois, east of Lawrenceville and Rucker's Wholesale Candy in Bridgeport.

"Dr AL-Gebory is very interested in treating breast cancer, and working hand-in-hand with our mobile mammography unit as it continues to make an impact in the communities we serve," Robbins said.

AL-Gebory stresses that women should have a mammography done annually. Monthly self-examinations are also a good idea. If any kind of abnormality turns up, they should immediately consult a physician.

Additionally, AL-Gebory says many factors could be modified to reduce the risks of breast cancer. For example, he says, women who have children after the age of 30 are at greater risk. Also, he said, women who nurse their babies are much less likely to develop breast cancer.

"The main goal is to educate women about their breast health," AL-Gebory said. "It's a serious disease. But there are a lot of things that can be done to reduce the risks."

Office hours for AL-Gebory are from 1 until 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday at the Surgical Specialty Clinic, located on the second floor at the hospital. The office can be reached by dialing (618) 943-3100.

10 facts about breast cancer

1. One in eight women in America will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

2. In 2018, an estimated 266,120 new cases of invasive breast cancer were diagnosed in women in the U.S., along with 63,960 new cases of non-invasive breast cancer. There were about 2,550 new cases of breast cancer in men.

3. For women in the U.S., breast cancer death rates are higher than those for any other cancer, besides lung cancer.

4. About eight out of 10 women who get breast cancer do not have a family history of the disease.

5. More than 3.3 million breast cancer survivors are alive in the United States today.

6. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women, besides skin cancer.

7. On average, every two minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States.

8. Worldwide, a man's lifetime risk of breast cancer is about 1 in 1,000.

9. Every 19 seconds, someone in the world will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

10. The most significant risk factors for breast cancer are gender (being a woman) and age (growing older).