"Diet is important because people can lower their risk for both heart disease and cancer with the same dietary changes."

Dr. Robert Eagan, a distinguished con-sultant and professor at Mayo Clinic and Mayo Medical School for more than two decades, has proposed a new system to accelerate the fight against cancer. The health education marketing system

A noted authority on lung cancer, Dr. Eagan left Mayo Clinic in 1994 to become medical director of the Regional Cancer Center at St. Joseph Hospital, Orange, Calif.

There, he has become a leading advocate for early detection and prevention programs, using such programs as Healthy Habits® — and the Healthy Habits health risk assessment — to increase public awareness about cancer. His new focus is grounded in experience.

Dr. Eagan’s specialty — lung cancer — is the deadliest of all cancers in the United States and one of the most preventable. Like all cancers, early detection is key to its treatment, and a healthy lifestyle is critical to its prevention.

"When you deal with the end stages of a disease like cancer, with a few exceptions we haven’t seen a list of advances in the last 30 or 40 years," said Dr. Eagan. "Most of the advances come in the early stages, in better detection, prevention and education. That’s where we can make a difference."

Serving a market area of more than 1.5 million people, the Mayo Clinic and St. Joseph Hospital together sponsor hundreds of community education programs each year and also works closely with its primary care physicians to promote early detection and patient education.

Working under a system of service line marketing, Dr. Eagan uses Healthy Habits in a variety of settings — as a handout at public events, as a guide for doctors and patients, and as a marketing tool in contracting with providers, payers and corporate clients. The center also conducts hundreds of Healthy Habits health risk assessments each year at health fairs and other public events, with follow-up testing as needed.

Still, he is searching for even more ways to market the wellness message.

Most recently, Dr. Eagan has proposed obtaining exclusive rights to The Heart Diet® then shifting it to become a “cancer diet” offering the same recipes and wellness information to an entirely new target population.

"Diet is important because people can lower their risk for both heart disease and cancer with the same dietary changes."

Better Health, Starting Now

Recent studies show that as many as 60 percent of all cancers can be tied to our daily lifestyle — at home and in the workplace. Healthy Habits carries a powerful message of wellness. Most people can change their risk for cancer.

"Healthy Habits, a Family Guide to Help Prevent Cancer, is a comprehensive wellness program that shows people how to take action against cancer. Used by physicians, hospitals and payers across the country, the 30-page guide educates people to move beyond their fear of cancer to take positive steps toward a healthier lifestyle."

The customized booklet includes action checklists, screening guidelines, a family health history chart, and detailed information about the symptoms, treatments and risk factors of the seven most common cancers. The information is easy to read and easy to understand. Premiums that can be paired with the booklet include a “10 Healthy Habits” magnetized message board, and a customized poster. A Healthy Habits Risk Assessment also is available for more information on how you can obtain exclusive rights to Healthy Habits, call HMS at 1-800-833-5755.

Dr. Robert Eagan, a graduate of Albany Medical College, joined Mayo Clinic in 1973 after completing a postdoctoral fellowship in oncology at Dartmouth Medical School.

He served 17 years as a consultant in medical oncology at the clinic and also taught at the Mayo Medical School, the last 13 years as a professor of oncology.

Upon arriving at St. Joseph, Dr. Eagan quickly embraced the tenets of marketing to develop new educational outreach to both the general public and to primary care physicians. Inspired as a physician, he is also a committed team player.

"To do what I do, you have to be a part of a system. That’s why I chose to do something other than practice medicine. We want to make sure that patients in our area are going to doctors who can handle their needs.”

Most physicians like the education component, said Dr. Eagan, but some balk at the time it takes to talk with patients. One advantage with Healthy Habits, he pointed out, is that people can take the healthlet home, study it at their leisure, and make optimum use of physicians’ time by asking more informed, follow-up questions.

By educating patients, said Dr. Eagan, physicians can greatly increase their effectiveness in preventing illness. And that helps well for everyone, especially a managed care environment.

"In a managed care situation, if a primary care physician can take care of patients and provide education, then it’s far more cost-effective for the system and numbers of patients are going to be changing. How we build our programs now is going to have a big influence on what happens next.”

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If you haven’t already done so, I urge you to take a few minutes to read our interview in this issue with Dr. Robert Eagan. As a highly regarded clinician, his perspective on wellness is especially relevant. To my mind, it’s also visionary.

To add a brief postscript:

Nearly 10 years ago, I created a media campaign with a simple message for women on the importance of mammography. The ads featured a woman radiologist who later was criticized by her professional peers — and even the county medical society — for taking her message too far. She was advertising!

Consider how dramatically our attitudes have changed. Mammography saves lives. And because of aggressive health education programs over the past decade, more and more women are surviving breast cancer, thanks to early detection.

Today, many physicians like Dr. Eagan are continuing that crusade — carrying the message of prevention into the community, into the workplace, and onto the cellphone of primary care physicians and decision-makers within their own medical systems. What a tremendous difference. And what a welcomed change!

In the coming year, we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Heart Diet — a program that, from its inception, was designed to build healthy habits. Our Partners in Prevention network distributed more than 1.5 million booklets this year, reaching its success with years of repeated use. This is a way of thinking about health that has been embraced by our readers. And, as we approach our most productive sessions ever. We hope you’ll reserve the dates and plan to attend.

Field two years of success, The Heart Diet continues to grow in popularity. Our program builds, so does the message. I’m excited about what’s ahead in 1997.

Dues Set for 1997 Roundtable

The 1997 Roundtable, bringing together top strategists in the Partners in Prevention network, will be held July 9-11 in Seattle, and it promises to be one of our most productive sessions ever. We hope you’ll reserve the dates and plan to attend.

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