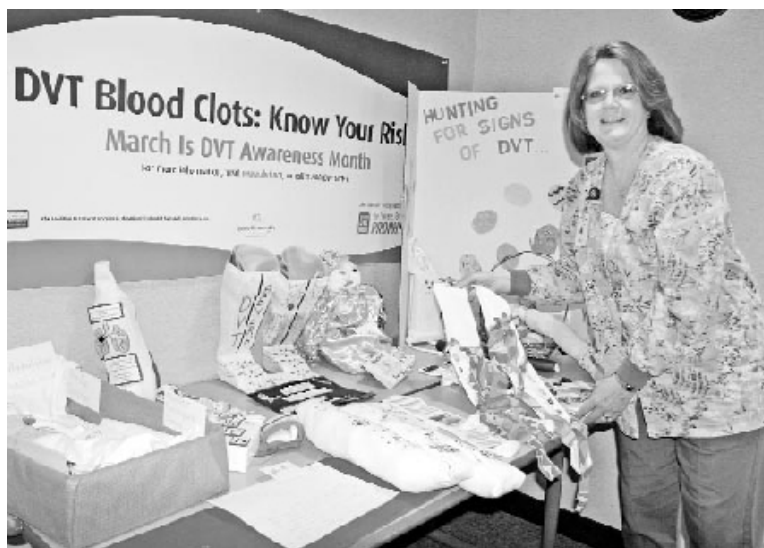


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By Duane Sherrill



Jenny Grady, of the River Park Family Birth Unit, shows the department's entry in the Sock Contest designed to bring attention to Deep Vein Thrombosis during DVT Awareness Month

Blood clots can be deadly

If someone told you March is Deep Vein Thrombosis Awareness Month, your first reaction might be to ask what the disease is and why you should be concerned. But when you consider that deep vein thrombosis, or DVT, can be fatal, it becomes very clear that it's vitally important to learn what the condition is, and if you are at risk to develop it.

That's why River Park Hospital held a special DVT awareness month program in an effort to educate the public about the condition. Deep vein thrombosis is a condition resulting from the formation of a blood clot thrombus inside a deep vein, commonly located in the calf or thigh. DVT occurs when the blood clot either partially or completely blocks the flow of blood in the vein.

The most threatening complication of DVT is the development of pulmonary embolism, which occurs when a blood clot breaks loose from the wall of the vein and travels to the lungs, blocking the pulmonary artery or one of its branches. This blocks the blood flow from the heart, a potentially life threatening condition.

River Park's Charlotte Hice, who is responsible for infection control, employee health and education at the facility, says there are several risk factors which can increase the chance of developing DVT. "The risk factors include increased age, immobility, not being able to move around very much," said Hice. "Smoking is also a risk." Hice says its important to get surgery patients moving around as soon as they can. "We do a lot of DVT education here for our patients," Hice said. "We want them to ambulate as quickly as possible to help blood flow and prevent clotting in their legs. There's medications you can use to help prevent DVT, like Heparin, to thin the blood."

The hospital even held a special Sock Contest where some of its departments created displays using socks. The hospital utilizes some pretty high-tech equipment to battle the condition if a patient is immobilized. "We also have what we call an SCD, a sequential compression device, that simulates movement in the legs," Hice said, "to help that blood flow in the legs to get back to the heart and keep it from pooling in the legs."

Hice says its important to minimize the possibility of DVT developing. "If you have a clot and it's left untreated it can travel to the lungs and cause a pulmonary embolism," Hice said, "which can be life threatening, so we do everything that we can to prevent that from happening."