

HEALTH & FITNESS 99

Laboratory services at Kings Mountain Hospital: *Advanced technology, old fashioned caring*

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Hospital laboratory work is not something that people spend a great deal of time thinking about. In fact, not many people know the complexities of the modern lab. It is, however, one of the most important tools a physician can have to understand and treat disease. At Kings Mountain Hospital, approximately 10,000 laboratory tests are performed each month and all of them are completed in one hour, or less!

Christine "Chris" Stewart serves as the Laboratory Director at Kings Mountain Hospital. She is a veteran of five years at KMH, and has seen her share of changes within the laboratory environment. "I am very proud to be a part of this hospital and am extremely proud of our laboratory staff," Stewart said. And, from their track record, she has every right to be. Under her leadership, the laboratory at Kings Mountain Hospital has undergone significant changes. One of the most important has been the replacing of their major equipment and computerizing their operations. "Now, we have very modern equipment and have test results to physicians in a very timely manner," Stewart said. "And, we can deliver accuracy along with our speed..." she

added.

Since Kings Mountain Hospital's affiliation with Carolina's HealthCare System, protocols and techniques have been standardized. "Procedures and techniques at Kings Mountain Hospital's Laboratory are the same as those from any hospital within the System. Although we do not perform as many different types of tests as some of the larger hospitals, those that we do are well within the standard," she noted.

Kings Mountain Hospital performs what is commonly known as routine laboratory testing. That is, they administer physician-ordered test that aid in the diagnosis and management of a patient's illness. "We deal with the front line tests, and deal with them quickly," Stewart said. "We are proud of our turnaround time and know that it adds value to the healing process," she added. Kings Mountain Hospital's Laboratory also utilizes major labs within the region. They send microbiology and reference laboratory tests to Charlotte to be able to concentrate on the procedures that they do well.

One of the most stressful processes for any lab, and hospital in general, is preparation for their accreditation. Kings Mountain Hospital's Laboratory underwent their latest accreditation survey from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of HealthCare Organizations (JCAHO). "Accreditation surveys are

always tough and stressful, however, we came through it very well. The survey team had very positive comments about our lab and staff," Stewart said. "Now, we are preparing for the next one," she added. Surveys for most hospitals occur every three years. In the laboratory, however, surveys occur every two years, and they are inspected during the routing hospital surveys too. "We seem to get surveyed all of the time!" Stewart said.

Besides all of the routine inpatient lab tests, Kings Mountain Hospital's Laboratory offers comprehensive outpatient tests. The outpatient environment is different from most hospitals. "We know the majority of our patients by name and have been seeing them for long time," Stewart said. Indeed the rapport between the staff and patients set them apart. There are very short waiting times and patients do not hesitate to give the lab personnel their appreciation. "Our staff gets hugs and pats on the back regularly," Stewart noted. "We really care about our patients, and they know it. We try to make them feel comfortable in the hospital environment and they seem to really appreciate it," she added.

Because Kings Mountain Hospital is small as compared to others within the region, the staff is a close-knit group. "Our lab staff works together very well and have become sort of a family. They help each other and other departments within the facil-

ity. Everybody here works together for the patient," Stewart proudly stated. In addition to being a friendly staff, they are very competent. All of the technicians are certified and all have college degrees.

Chris Stewart currently maintains three licenses and has significant experience in both laboratory procedures and departmental management. Two of her three certifications are Federal licenses, recognized by the American College of Clinical Pathologists and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She also has a State of Florida license from the Department of Health and Human Services. She came to Kings Mountain Hospital from Clearwater, Florida and spent six years in the military. Receiving most of her formal training in laboratory procedures from the military, she was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. She also earned a degree in Medical Technology from Temple Community College.

Chris enjoys spending time with her husband and two small children. In addition, she enjoys cross-stitching and cooking. Chris and her family reside in Shelby. Kings Mountain is fortunate to have such dedicated laboratory services within the community and indeed fortunate to have the dedication and leadership of Christine Stewart.

Pharmaceutical industry said to be Y2K OK

While some have expressed concern that the Y2K event may effect their bank records, others are worried that it may also effect the contents of their medicine cabinet.

Y2K has become the shorthand term for problems that may occur if business and personal computers are not able to accurately interpret the date 01/01/2000.

Over the past two years there has been a ground swell of concern that such computer problems will render everything from regional power grids to ATMs useless.

More recently these worries have extended to the health care and pharmaceutical industries.

Consumers and practitioners have expressed concern over whether or not there may be shortages of prescription medication as a result of Y2K related problems.

Recently, representatives of the American Pharmaceutical Association (APhA) Foundation, government organizations, physician advocates, pharmacy organizations and insurers sat down to discuss their concerns with the President's Council on Y2K Conversion.

While the participants emerged from these proceedings confident that prescription medication supplies will be adequate during the last quarter of this year and into the first quarter of

next year, they also made a series of observations and recommendations.

- On average the pharmaceutical industry operates with a 90-day supply in the distribution system so local pharmacists should have access to an ample supply.

- The period around January 1, 2000 will be no exception. Plus, any Y2K issues that should arise should be handled within five to seven days.

As a rule of thumb, patients should refill their medications when they still have a five to seven day supply remaining.

- Individuals with specific concerns should consult their pharmacist, physician or insurance plan.

According to Ben Bluml, pharmacist and senior director for research at the APhA Foundation, "Y2K computer

problems may cause minor interruptions in normal services, but alone cannot cause medication supply shortage" For more information visit www.aphafoundation.org.

Glaucoma's lack of symptoms presents challenge

Losing sight of good eye care could mean losing your sight permanently. Especially if you're at risk for glaucoma, a leading cause of irreversible vision loss. In the United States, glaucoma affects about three million people.

"Up to half this number may be unaware they have the disease," said Carl Kupfer, MD, director of the National Eye Institute, one of the federal government's National Institutes of Health.

"Higher risk population groups are everyone over the age of 60, African-Americans over the age of 40, and people who have a family history of glaucoma."

In many people, glaucoma occurs when the

normal fluid pressure inside the eye progressively increases, leading to optic nerve damage and reduced peripheral (side) vision. As the disease worsens, the field of vision gradually narrows and blindness may result.

A dilated eye exam, in which drops are placed in the eye to dilate the pupils, is considered the best way to detect glaucoma. Experts recommend that people at risk for the disease have such an examination at least every two years. If detected and treated early in its progression, glaucoma can usually be slowed and serious vision loss can be prevented.

"Glaucoma has no early warning signs of

possible vision loss," said Kupfer. "So people at risk for glaucoma often presume that if their vision is fine, there is no need to be concerned. It is only when they notice vision loss that they take action. And while steps can be taken to preserve remaining vision, such as with eye drops or laser surgery, vision already lost from glaucoma is lost forever."

A free brochure, "Don't Lose Sight of Glaucoma," is available by writing to Glaucoma, 2020 Vision Place, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-3655 or via their website at <http://www.nei.nih.gov>. January is Glaucoma Awareness Month. This nationwide effort is coordinated by the National

Eye Institute and sponsored by organizations representing the National Eye Health Education Program Partnership, to educate the public about the importance of preventive eye care.

People at risk for glaucoma should have a dilated eye exam at least every two years.

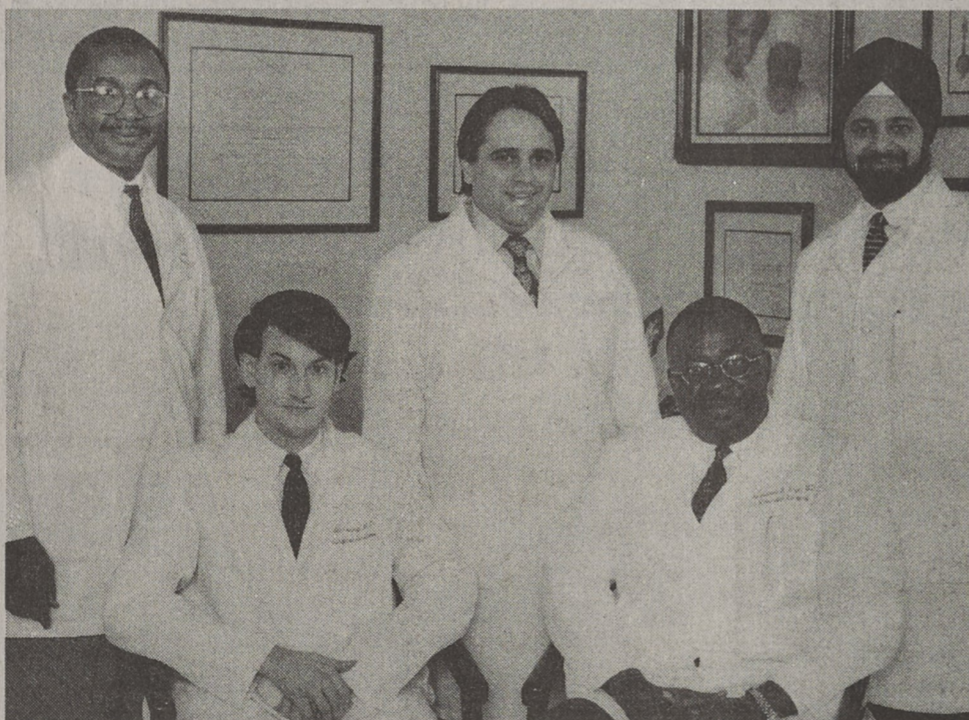


To educate Americans on heart attack prevention, The American College of Emergency Physicians has partnered with Bayer® Aspirin to provide Americans with a free Heart Attack? React! brochure and refrigerator magnet with lifesaving steps to take during a suspected heart attack. Call 1-800-231-5118.

To learn about childhood depression or other mental illnesses and treatments, visit the American Psychiatric Association's web site at www.psych.org or write to the American Psychiatric Association, Division of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. 20005

For information on the Community Campaign for Diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-232-8580.

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procedures including: **Vascular Surgery, Laparoscopic Surgery, Hernia Repair, Breast Biopsies, Abdominal Surgery, Gallbladder Surgery and Varicose Vein Surgery.**

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Kings Mountain Hospital
Carolinas HealthCare System

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Oak Grove Baptist Health Fair

1022 Oak Grove Rd
Kings Mountain, NC 28086

739-4833

Date: November 6, 1999
Time: 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.
Place: Fellowship Building

Healthy snacks will be provided by the WMU

Booths Available

- Screens:
- Glucose- Kings Mountain Parish Nurse Ministry
- Cholesterol- Kings Mountain Parish Nurse Ministry
- Blood Pressure: Kings Mountain Parish Nurse Ministry
- Vision: The Cleveland Eye Clinic
- Hearing: Kings Mountain Parish Nurse Ministry
- Education:
- Prostate Cancer- Cleveland County Health Department
- Self-Breast Exam- Kings Mountain Hospital
- Hypertension Class- Dr. Ian Stamp

No Fee

For more information call 'Charlotte Craig, Parish Nurse or Laura Senter, Parish Nurse at 730-5138