Kelly’s Choice was developed in December 2012 by Kelly Springer. Kelly is a Registered Dietitian, working with adults and children, with a specialty in weight loss and health promotion. Kelly started contracting dietitians/nutritionists in May 2013 to help grow “Kelly’s Choice” across New York State. Contact us today to set up an appointment. www.kellyschoice.org.

Let’s learn from Registered Dietitian, Kelly Springer, How to Get Heart Smart! In this article, Kelly will be covering essential, nutritionist-approved tips to help care for your heart.

Did you know that only 3% of Americans have ‘ideal’ heart health?

Fish high in unsaturated fatty acids including omega-3 help to lower blood pressure and reduce inflammation throughout the body putting less strain on blood vessels and subsequently lowering your risk of heart disease. Those who consume one to two servings of fish high in omega-3 fatty acids and low in mercury - such as salmon, shrimp and tilapia a week are predicted to see decreased blood pressure of 2 to 3 millimeters of mercury over the course of two to eight years. Some offices use disposable products - but that is more expensive and wasteful, since the garments are simply discarded after a single use. In addition, those products are often flimsy or improperly sized, which can make the patient/provider relationship more stressful. Some offices purchase and wash their own items, but that also is expensive and labor-intensive, and often the washing and handling procedures do not follow OSHA guidelines. Some offices are serviced by suppliers whose primary focus is on ‘bigger is better’ - hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, and/or industrial facilities. They can provide the products, but not the personal attention and specialized products that our local HealthWear program provides.

“Healthcare that puts people first” - the idea that the patient should be the focus of the way healthcare is delivered, rather than procedures, diagnostics and other metrics - is currently getting a great deal of attention. “Against the backdrop of the mandated conversion of health care to statistical models of meaningful use, metrics that measure successful outcomes, and the conversion of medical files to ‘high tech’ electronic records, we offer health care providers an opportunity to provide ‘high touch’ elements for patient care and wellbeing,” Berghorn explains.

HealthWear is officially described as a full service provider of medical garments such as scrubs, patient gowns, lab coats, mats, and all linens such as sheets and towels to medical, surgical, dental, physical therapy and massage practices. But, as founder and owner Mark Berghorn points out, HealthWear is much more than just a supplier of sterilized gowns and linens - it’s a business concept that recognizes the value to providers in offering highest quality products that bring reassurance and peace of mind to both patients, while presenting a professional image for care providers and office staff.

“Incorporating more fiber and unsaturated fats found in fruit and vegetables increases antioxidant pigments found in fruit and vegetables. Anthocyanins in the body. Anthocyanins are an important family of antioxidants. They reduce blood vessel hardening and improve blood flow and are essential components of fruit and vegetables. Dark chocolate, that contains at least 60 percent cocoa, is rich in flavonoids and antioxidants both of which improve blood flow and have a 30% lower risk of heart attack than those who indulge in 100 grams of dark chocolate per day are act as heart-protecting agents. Chocolate lovers who consume one to two handfuls a day are simply predicted to see decreased blood pressure of 2 to 3 millimeters of mercury over the course of two to eight years. Some offices use disposable products - but that is more expensive and wasteful, since the garments are simply discarded after a single use. In addition, those products are often flimsy or improperly sized, which can make the patient/provider relationship more stressful. Some offices purchase and wash their own items, but that also is expensive and labor-intensive, and often the washing and handling procedures do not follow OSHA guidelines. Some offices are serviced by suppliers whose primary focus is on ‘bigger is better’ - hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, and/or industrial facilities. They can provide the products, but not the personal attention and specialized products that our local HealthWear program provides.”

In addition to patient gowns, HealthWear also provides lab coats and a variety of scraps and warm ups for staff. “We have found that many offices appreciate the opportunity to offer a consistent professional image through our office garb, which is manufactured primarily by Landau, the premiere manufacturer of such professional medical garments. Some of our clients even have their scraps and warm ups customized with the practice’s name.”

HealthWear offers the same high level of sanitizing and laundering for staff garments as it does for patient garments, and will also clean and sanitize garments and linens owned by providers themselves. “Because this is a full service program, we provide repairs, size adjustments and replacement of worn garments in addition to our full service laundering, sanitizing and custom steam finishing. Plus we ensure that all personal garments are labeled so that you’ll get your own back.”

HealthWear also offers a full line of linens - sheets, pillowcases, bath blankets and thermal blankets - as well as a variety of health care towels, including wash cloths, surgical and massage towels. “Because of our careful handling and laundering process, which results
In less wear and tear, we are able to use higher quality materials, such as microfiber sheets. It’s just one more level of tactile comfort that we can provide to our customers to provide to their patients.

In addition, HealthWear offers rental and cleaning service for walk-off mats, since, as Berghorn points out, having clean mats in an entryway keeps moisture, dirt and grime from being tracked through the office. “Normal vacuuming removes only a fraction of the dirt and dust, and doesn’t sanitize, so our weekly laundering and sanitizing service helps to provide a cleaner, safer and healthier environment for both staff and patients.”

Mark Berghorn, founder of HealthWear, is an Alfred State graduate who had spent years in the dry cleaning and uniform rental business. While working as a sales manager at Schapiro’s Uniform Rental in Endicott, Berghorn began to develop ways to extend their marketing concept beyond industrial uniform rental into other areas, particularly smaller practices and care centers in the health care field. “I saw this as an untapped niche market with great potential to be developed,” Berghorn said. “In 2002-2003, after I had begun to formulate the concept, I did some traveling around the country to check out existing models, thoroughly researched the requirements for handling medical garments and blood-borne pathogens, had some prototype garments made, and signed up my first customer.”

In 2005, Berghorn purchased the health care garment portion of the business from Schapiro’s, temporarily renting space in their facility. “It was certainly taking a risk involved in a new business venture when my wife and I were expecting twins! But the past ten years have proven it was definitely worth it.”

Later that year, Berghorn moved the business into its current location at 703 North Street in Endicott. “At the time, we had one driver and a total of three employees, only one of which was full time. But within a year, we had expanded to three drivers covering multiple routes. By 2009, we had to take over additional space in our building, add new equipment and upgrade our facilities. In 2010 I hired Mike Micalizzi, a friend and former manager at Schapiro’s, as our Vice President of Sales. That freed me up from doing all the sales and service so I could continue to grow and develop the business. We have added additional higher capacity equipment as we have continued to expand, and this year we added our fifth route.”

The company licenses its name and logo to other locations in New York State and beyond. “We considered franchising the concept,” Berghorn said, “but licensing is a cleaner, more direct way for us to expand without requiring as much ongoing hands on supervision. Each licensee is independently owned, and hires local workers. That’s very important to me. I really believe in the ‘source local, supply local’ model, and I wasn’t looking to build an empire - but I knew that our concept and approach was worth offering on a broader basis. Licensing is the best way for us to do that.”

In addition to the original office in Endicott, HealthWear has licensed offices in Western New York, Pennsylvania and Louisiana.

When asked why he thinks his business has been so successful, Mark Berghorn has several answers.

“We know who we are. We’re not trying to compete with the industrial laundry service providers, the kind that show up with a tractor trailer full of patient and hospital garments. We are committed to serving smaller offices, surgical centers, private practices - places where personal connections between patient and provider are still essential. We develop those same kinds of personal relationships with our customers, too. Our ‘people-centered’ approach to care includes our van drivers, who know their customers by name, and understand the specific needs of each office and practice we serve.”

In fact, Mark notes, “the real face of our company is Ray, who was our original driver. Everybody knows him - and he knows all of our customers! And now we’ve added his son Jake as another driver - and our customers call him Ray 2.0, because he brings the same professional friendliness to what he does that his dad has shown for years.”

Mark also believes in the mantra that businesses can “do well by doing good,” and offers several examples.

“Certainly clean, fresh linens and cloth gowns will be more comfortable, more comfortable than disposable gowns, and offer a higher level of patient dignity and modesty, but it’s ultimately more cost effective for the practices, and certainly more attentive to the increasing concern for environmental stewardship and reducing our disposable waste and trash.”

The company has also made strategic choices in the equipment and laundering processes they use.

“In 2007, we began using ozone processing for our laundering and sanitizing procedures. It saves energy and money, which means it’s both environmentally sound and efficient.” (Note: Ozone is oxygen (O2) with an extra atom of oxygen attached, thus forming O3. Ozone is created naturally during a lightning storm, and can be created artificially by passing dry air or oxygen through a high voltage electrical field.) “When ozone is introduced into the washing solution, because it carries an electrical and chemical charge, it actually starts to dissolve soil on contact, even insoluble soils like grease and oil. Because it actually dissolves the soil, we can greatly reduce the amount of detergent and cleaning agents we use, which means no chemical residue.”

So we don’t have to put garments through multiple rinse cycles, which saves wear and tear on them, and saves water. And since it works in cold water, we can save energy, which is good for the environment, while it also saves us money. Ozone is an extremely effective biocidal and disinfecting agent. In fact, it kills bacteria much faster and more effectively than chlorine bleach, which is the standard sanitizing agent used in laundering. So we can provide garments that meet or exceed OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) standards using less hot water, less detergent, less chlorine and a shorter laundering cycle. And there’s even a non-quantifiable additional advantage - ozone is what gives clothes that ‘fresh from the outdoors’ smell, which is much nicer than the lingering scent of bleach in garments.”

Berghorn’s estimate, the company uses about 60% less detergent and alkali, and adds that because there is less residual moisture in the goods after extraction, it even saves on drying-related costs. “We certainly appreciate the cost-savings,” Berghorn notes, “but we also like being able to save energy and be more environmentally responsible in the way we conduct our business.”

HealthWear’s cleaning and sanitizing procedures are guaranteed to comply fully with all OSHA requirements. “In fact,” Berghorn notes, “we literally wrote the book on this when we created the IML (Independent Business Medical Laundering Standards) in 2011. It’s a comprehensive document designed for independent businesses like ours to ensure that all proper handling procedures are followed, and to document best practices in customer service to enhance the linen provider/health care provider relationship.”

But the single most important explanation for HealthWear’s success may be its unique vision - to offer medical providers the opportunity to provide their patients with a less stressful, more comfortable care experience through the high quality uniforms and patient-sensitive service HealthWear provides. Through personal experience, Mark Berghorn came to understand what a difference a little extra TLC and dignity could make when someone is experiencing a personal health challenge. “It’s difficult enough to be facing a challenging medical diagnosis, or undergoing a difficult treatment program. Even those seeing the doctor for a routine appointment may experience anxiety, embarrassment, or just being scared and vulnerable as you’re sitting there worrying, wearing a paper or a typical in-office garment which can be flimsy, improperly sized and inadequate to provide coverage or warmth...That adds a lot of stress at the very time you want less of it.”

Care providers who are committed to the patient-centered model of health care want to reduce stress for their patients, while providing higher levels of care, comfort and reassur-
Health Wear
800-858-8109
www.healthwearrental.com

How did you discover HealthWear?
Company owner Mark Berghorn stopped by the OB/GYN office I was managing at the time to show me his unique line of individually packaged gowns and introduce their full line of products and services.

And as a result you began using their service?
Yes - I've been a customer of HealthWear for about twelve years in various practices I have managed in Cortland, Ithaca and Auburn.

Which of their products have you used?
For patients - gowns, mammography capes and shorts - for staff, lab coats - and mats and towels for the office.

How has using HealthWear helped you as a business manager?
I know that anything I need will be delivered in a timely manner, exactly as promised. We get prompt responses to emails or phone calls, and they immediately assist us if we need assistance with adjusting or managing our inventory. In my twelve years of working with them, I have never had a complaint about a driver, their products or their services.

How has using HealthWear helped your patients?
Patients really appreciate having an individually wrapped gown, which they know is fresh and clean - and the gowns are cut generously enough that patients feel comfortable waiting in the exam room, or if they need to leave the room for an additional procedure. The quality of the gowns is far above average, and they are always returned to us immaculate, really looking brand new.

How has using HealthWear helped your staff?
They appreciate not having to spend time washing their own or using disposables, and we don't charge any upfront fees. So our customers are able to pay for the services they need, as they use them." That's been a key to success as well, in an era in which cost-cutting measures are essential for survival, particularly in smaller practices and surgical centers.

Asked about where the company goes from here, Berghorn reflects "We're comfortable with our continued but steady growth of 10-15% per year. We've paid off all our business loans, and we continue to add routes to our local service area and to license new partners in other areas. I feel good about what we do, and how we do it, and I look forward to another great year."