

**Senior Care Corner Podcast:
Kristi & Carole Yamaguchi: Faces of Influenza**

Barry: Welcome to Senior Care Corner. I'm Barry

Kathy: and I'm Kathy. Thanks for joining us.

Barry: You'll find us online at SeniorCareCorner.com with solutions and information for families and others who care for and about senior adults. Well Kathy, I think we've got another great episode lined up for everyone today; a wonderful interview with Carol Yamaguchi, talking about flu shots and the Faces of Influenza campaign. But before we get there, Kathy, you've got some news items for us.

Kathy: Indeed I do, I have several very informative and diverse items for us today. The first one is Connected Clothing for Healthcare. AT&T recently agreed to provide a wireless network for Zephyr, which makes a clothing sensor called BioHarness. Wireless sensors are embedded into articles of clothing to remotely monitor someone's vital signs and other information. The cost of these products has drastically reduced with improved technology. Previously used on college athletes to monitor vital signs, heart rate, and temperature during activities; they are now marketing beyond the athlete into first responders such as police, fire departments, and military personnel. New markets on the horizon include infants and seniors. The hope for this device would be to assist some seniors to age in place allowing loved ones to monitor not only vital signs but also falls.

Alright, our second news item is a poll. Many boomers are staying put amidst the bad economy. As boomers plan ahead to their retirement, they desire a living environment that's affordable, accessible to medical care, and close to family caregivers. At this time with the down economy, few people think that they will move into retirement. Due to the fact that some people find their pensions eliminated, investments losing ground during the recession, combined with a loss in value for their current home; retirement plans have to be altered. Only 9% of those surveyed feel that they will be able to live comfortably in retirement. Six out of ten people report that their retirement plans have lost value during the economic downturn; with 53% delaying retirement due to the decrease in their nest egg. Many people feel that their home, which was once an asset, is now a problem. Due to finances, 52% of boomers now say that they are unlikely to move in their retirement.

Barry: Wow that means we're going to see impacts of the financial downturn for a number of years with many seniors and also in the communities in which they live and which they had planned to move traditionally. So, that's not good news at all.

Kathy: Right and unfortunately some of their neighborhoods are really not going to be supportive of their aging in place in their current homes.

Barry: That also has implications, I guess, for family members who may find the needs of their parents and grandparents much different than in the past.

Kathy: That's correct. Alright, our next news item: 50 ways to prevent diabetes. As part of our national diabetes awareness month, the National Diabetes Education program wants to share ways to prevent diabetes or delay its onset. Small steps can bring big rewards. Here's just a few of the 50 ways. We'll post a link in the show notes to the full article so you can read them all.

Put less on your plate; control your portion sizes; choose healthy food in restaurants; eat slowly; use a smaller plate; eat breakfast everyday; move more each day; make healthy food choices; read the food labels; don't try to change everything all at one time. Try one new activity or one new food each week. Your health is your most precious gift, just remember move more and eat less to stay healthy.

Barry: So 50 ways, I guess another article inspired by Paul Simon. I'm sure he hears those all the time.

Kathy: I'm sure. Alright, our next news item has to do with our bones; battling our bones during the winter. Cold temperatures can put a serious strain on our bone health but it can be combatted. With the winter temperatures, we add more layers of clothing to keep warm thereby decreasing our skins exposure to the sun. The sun's rays help our body produce vitamin D, which is essential along with Calcium for strong bones. We can help our bones by increasing our dietary sources of vitamin D and Calcium, while we're not spending as much time in the sun; by eating more dairy foods such as milk, soy milk, also adding a multi-vitamin supplement like vitamin D.

Barry: Interesting.

Kathy: Our final news item is: do you want to live a 35% longer life? Stay happy says a recent study on aging. People who get up in the morning with a smile on their faces live the longest. A recent study confirms that optimism and cheerfulness will help you live longer by nearly 35%. In a five year study called the English Longitudinal Study of Aging, they included 4,000 participants; aged 52-79 years. Their responses to specific questions, combined with their longevity pattern were tracked over five years. Those people who answered in the high range for happiness parameters survived the longest, compared to those who scored lower. The conclusion of these London researchers was that all we need to do to live a long life is live to the fullest and be as happy as possible.

Barry: Thank you Kathy for those interesting and very diverse news items. Now it's time for our feature segment.

Influenza, or the flu, and its complications result in 200,000 hospitalizations and over thousands of deaths in a typical year. And 90% of those who die are seniors. That is why Senior Care Corner has been urging flu shots for senior loved ones each flu season.

This year we decided to get some help in communicating our message. We were excited when we learned about the American Lung Association and their Faces of Influenza campaign. They provide a lot of straightforward educational information on their website, facesofinfluenza.org; which we'll bookmark in the show notes. Even more exciting, Kristi Yamaguchi and her mother Carole have joined the Faces of Influenza campaign and are using their voices to spread the word about the benefits of getting vaccinated.

When offered the opportunity to interview one of them for our podcast, we thought Carole's perspective as a mother, grandmother, and especially as a senior, made her the perfect choice to help us spread the word. We hope you'll enjoy this feature segment and right now we'd like to jump right into the recording of our interview with Carole from a few days ago. Here she is.

Recording:

Barry: We talk each year about the need to discuss flu shots with their senior loved ones and this year we've brought in someone to help us deliver that message. Today we are joined by Carole Yamaguchi, who along with her daughter Kristi has joined the American Lung Association's Faces of Influenza educational campaign. Welcome to Senior Care Corner Carole and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to chat with us today.

Carole: Well, thank you for having me and I'd love to answer your questions about the flu shot and why I feel it's so important for those of us that are 65 and older to maintain our health.

Barry: Appreciate that. Before we get into that, we would be remiss if we didn't stop for a second and tell you that we have a lot of admiration for what Kristi has done, more than her achievements we feel that it's what she's put in to reach those levels and then using the spotlight that came with her achievements to benefit others. What's it like to be the mother of not only a champion artist and athlete but a champion person?

Carole: Well, thank you very much, um... Yes, through the years I've obviously watched Kristi mature in a lot of ways I'm proud that she's such a great mom to two young girls. And she still manages to maintain her foundation that she has regarding children and she's working on a reading program right now. Yes, I am very proud of so many things that she's not only accomplished but things that she still wants to do and work with the public, like the American Lung Association. And encouraging other mothers, and grandparents like myself to take care of ourselves and thru part of that campaign includes getting our annual influenza vaccine.

Barry: Well speaking of the influenza vaccine, we understand that your appreciation of the need for it was driven home by, I guess, and unfortunate situation that you observed in competitive skating. Could you relate that to us?

Carole: Yes that was a friend of Kristi's; another skater that she really admired that was a competitor at the 1988 Olympic games. Unfortunately, the day of the long program, the gal woke up with the flu and couldn't even get out of bed. That was such a shame because she

probably could have medaled. After that she told Kristi, make sure you get your flu shot and take care of yourself during the flu season. Because all the years that you spent training could all be for naught if you can't show what you've trained for all those years because you're sick.

Barry: Boy it's a hard way to learn a lesson, isn't it?

Kathy: And a lasting memory.

Carole: Oh, pardon?

Kathy: It's a lasting memory.

Carole: Yes it is. And ever since that day I've made sure that Kristi got her vaccine; not only Kristi but my other two children and husband. She was really, that was sad. It was very sad.

Barry: Well I guess from there, what is the message of the Faces of Influenza campaign?

Carole: Let's see. I'm sorry; I'm not good at interviews sometimes. But anyway, I joined the influenza campaign with my daughter Kristi just to encourage all family members, including grandparents like myself, to protect themselves and to protect all their loved ones. I make sure that my children and I make sure that they have all the grandchildren vaccinated. No one likes being sick. And I don't want to be sick and not be able to spend time with my children. I love to play golf; I like to be outdoors a lot. And we can't do that if we're down for two weeks or three weeks. Or sometimes for our seniors it takes us longer to recuperate. I think the greatest percentages of those that are stricken by the flu are the seniors that develop more complications other than just the flu because it is a serious respiratory virus.

Barry: Yea I guess I was surprised in looking at the website for Faces of Influenza to see how many people actually die from the flu each year.

Kathy: Well, it's the eighth leading cause of death, correct?

Carole: Yes it can range from 3,000 to 50,000 people. Hospitalizations are really high; estimated that last year 226,000 people were hospitalized and a good percentage of them were people who were 65 and older. And yet, we're in the group that not everyone is taking it seriously and not getting their flu shots. We need to encourage all our seniors and anyone that is 55 and older, or anyone that is a high risk; those with diabetes or heart disease and make sure that they do get their flu shot.

Kathy: Right. Well, with so many people being stricken with the flu, we can become vaccinated against it. Can you tell us when to look for the season for flu shots and when the flu strikes most and in greatest numbers?

Carole: The flu shot is available in late August and it can start from that time all through the winter months. And some people think “oh it’s already February I don’t need my flu shot”. But that’s not true; you know that the flu can continue all the way through spring.

Kathy: And it’s never too late to get the vaccine. Is that correct, we shouldn’t say “oh well, I missed the flu season, I won’t have to get it now”.

Carole: That’s true. That’s right.

Barry: It’s interesting, thinking back just a couple of years we were told that there were vaccine shortages and flu shots were being rationed. I guess that’s no longer the case, there is no reason for anyone to hold back getting a shot.

Carole: That’s right. I think it’s readily available. I mean if you look at any pharmacy; any pharmacist can give you the flu shot. It’s in all the drug stores and even all the grocery stores if they have a pharmacy in them; the pharmacist can accommodate you. There really is no excuse, it’s available.

Kathy: And if you’re wondering where to get it, your website tells you, it gives you a flu vaccine finder for a location if you have any questions about where you might get one.

Carole: Right. The website facesofinfluenza.org is a great resource to look and see. But I think that if you just look around your neighborhood you’ll see who’s stocking the flu shot today.

Barry: And as a matter of fact, you mentioned that, I do recall the signs have become almost standard now in front of especially the chain pharmacies. So, like you said there is no excuse anymore.

Carole: Right, right. That’s right; plenty of vaccines.

Barry: You mentioned the facesofinfluenza.org website, we went out there. There’s a lot of information there, but unlike other websites, it’s actually put in a language that all of us can understand. So many websites have things so technical, but this is readily available language that we can all absorb easily and we don’t have to think about what’s being said; it’s so straightforward.

Carole: Right. It’s not in medical terms; it’s something that you and I could understand easily.

Kathy: Well another thing that we should probably mention to make sure that all of our listeners are aware; it’s very important for our seniors to get their flu shots and it is going to be covered by Medicare preventative service. So there is no charge to the senior to get the flu shot; so that shouldn’t stand in their way either.

Carole: Right, Medicare covered my shot! You’re right.

Barry: And that's to say, you mentioned that seniors are at a higher risk of not only getting influenza but also of the complications resulting from it. I guess that means too then that family members, caregivers, and others that are around all the time should get flu shots to protect them.

Carole: That's, yes, you're right I think that caregivers; and being a grandmother too; I have several grandchildren I need to protect myself so that I don't carry the virus to them also. So it is important that all of us get vaccinated. And if there are any questions, you know you need to talk to your healthcare provider because you know there are different options offered also for those that are allergic or have allergies; there is a different type of shot for those seniors. But if you do have to check, if you do have a question and you don't fit in the general population, I think you should check with your healthcare provider.

Barry: Well, that's a good point too especially if you've got some special condition that you're aware of in the past that someone has done something with the flu shot. When in doubt, go ahead and ask.

Carole: Right, right yes.

Barry: I guess when we talk about influenza and getting flu shots, it really is just that straightforward, and the best way to prevent it is to get the shot. There's not a lot to talk about, either you do or you don't, isn't there?

Carole: Right, yes. You either do it or you don't. And I think that you should do it.

Barry: Definitely, I mean there are so many benefits and hardly any excuse.

Carole: Right, have you been sick before? It's awful. It's so unnecessary. If it can be prevented by a simple vaccine, I think it's worth getting. But if you have questions, you really should check with your healthcare provider. You know, that's so important because so many of the seniors are on different medication or have other health related issues. I think it's important to check first and it's important to get it. So that we don't become infected and we don't infect other people because it is spread from person to person.

Kathy: Definitely, you make a lot of good points.

Carole: I guess I just automatically get it. I've been doing this for years. And I just know, oh flu season's coming; I got to go get my vaccine.

Kathy: Right, and that's excellent.

Barry: I think we've got to get more people to that point where they automatically get it.

Carole: Yea. And you can't miss the signs nowadays.

Barry: No.

Carole: They're all over the place.

Barry: Well, we really appreciate you stopping in and spending some time chatting with us today; we know you have a busy schedule but the information that you are providing to us and to our listeners really is important.

Carole: Well, thank you very much for having me. You know I think that it's really important and it's such a simple thing to do. Just go get your vaccination, and you're done. You're protected and you're protecting those around you also.

Barry: Great point. Not only are you protected but the ones around you. That's a terrific thing. It's an unselfish thing to do because you're helping others in addition to yourself.

Carole: Yes. Thank you very much for having me.

Barry: Thank you and we hope that you have a terrific day and again, we appreciate you spending time with us.

Kathy: Thank you Carole.

Carole: Thank you Kathy. Thank you Barry.

Back live:

Barry: Kathy and I really enjoyed talking with Carole and really her joining us. We hope that you enjoyed it as well. You'll find the link to Faces of Influenza on the show notes for this episode. Kathy, you want to close out the episode with a quick tip?

Kathy: I sure would. Our quick tip today concerns DNR and advanced directive. If you have not spoken with your senior about their wishes or seeing their advanced directives in writing, the time is now to discuss it. Talk about what type of care they wish to receive if an emergency strikes. We'll put a link to the DNR information in our show notes and help you to get more information about how to talk about this important topic with your senior.

Barry: Thanks Kathy that is a great tip. Well folks, that's it for this episode of Senior Care Corner, we hope that you enjoyed it and that you'll stop by at seniorcarecorner.com. We'd love to hear any comments, thoughts, or suggestions that you may have, be it on this episode or ideas for future episodes. Please leave us a comment on the post here for this podcast; on the "Contact Us" page on our website; or you can stop by our Facebook page at Senior Care Corner and post something on our wall. Thanks everybody and until next time, we hope you have a great day.

Oh and don't forget to get your flu shot! And remind your loved ones to do so as well.