



Feature Story

Making Heart Connections

November 29, 2016

Kaiser Permanente stands for total health and is committed to the highest standards of cardiac care. A coordinated approach that includes an integrated health care delivery system and commitment to preventative care has made Kaiser Permanente a leader in preventing and diagnosing heart disease.

In particular, by carefully monitoring and measuring health outcomes, we constantly seek opportunities for improvement and innovation. Through the [Kaiser Permanente Cardiac Device Registry](#), Kaiser Permanente routinely monitors more than 100,000 members who have pacemakers or implantable cardiac defibrillators (ICD), a small device placed in the chest or abdomen that uses electrical pulses or shocks to help control life-threatening irregular heartbeats or arrhythmias. The registry allows physicians to compare best practices amongst colleagues and choose devices with the best clinical outcomes to minimize complications associated with them. Monitoring of medical device performance is critical to ensure patient safety and quality of care for our members.

To best connect physicians and specialists directly to our cardiac patient community, earlier this year, Kaiser Permanente Orange County's cardiology department launched ICD support group meetings with an open invitation to the nearly 800 ICD patients in Orange County. Taking lessons learned from her coordination of an ICD support group while at Kaiser Permanente Fontana, Melody Alcantara, DNP, with the help of her colleagues in the cardiology department, Ellen Mcfarland, RN and Jenny Khiterer, NP, developed a program for Orange County.

To date Kaiser Permanente's cardiology department has held two ICD support group meetings attended by more than 150 patients, spouses, and caregivers. Speakers and topics have included Kaiser Permanente's Electrophysiology Director, David Cesario, MD on *Indications of ICD*, Patrick Kennedy from Boston Scientific on the *Do's and*

Don'ts with ICDs, Kaiser Permanente Pharmacists Rebecca Choe and Judith Nakao on *Knowing Your Cardiac Medications*, and Monica Courtney, LCSW on *Dealing with Psychosocial Effects of Having an ICD*.

Alcantara shared, "the purpose of the ICD support group meeting is to further educate our patients about their ICD, which can lead to a lot of anxiety, depression and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (after a shock episode). It is a time for patients to share their experience about having an ICD with fellow ICD patients." With just two sessions to start the year, the support group meetings have already made a positive impression and impact on patients,

"So glad ICD support group is in Orange County. Very informative. Worthwhile, will attend again."

"Very useful. Learned so much."

"Answered my questions immediately with clarity. Much appreciated and timely."

The next meeting, scheduled for March 10, 2017, is titled *Making Your Treatment Wishes Known*, and will focus on advance directives and ventricular arrhythmias. Future meetings in 2017 will include various topics related to ICDs, cardiac illness, and ways to help patients cope with their device. Speakers will include a marriage family therapist, a nutritionist, cardiologist, and social worker.

From providing education and care, to preventing heart disease, to treating patients with advanced heart failure, Kaiser Permanente continues to lead the way in heart health. Our board-certified specialists and multidisciplinary care teams are pioneering new ways to prevent, detect, and treat illnesses of the heart and blood vessels. Our groundbreaking treatment and research is improving the health of our patients and communities today and well into the future. For more information, visit kp.org/orangecounty.

For additional information regarding ICD support group meetings, call 714-644-2927.