

## **Is It Time for a Check-Up?**

by Barney Whatley

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I think I am like most guys in that I hate going to the doctor unless I am having pain and it does not go away after a while. Not too long ago I was experiencing some discomfort when I would raise my arm. It felt as though someone was shocking my elbow with an electric wire. It was not too long after that that my wife suggested that I quit “moaning and groaning” and make an appointment with the doctor to see what was wrong. I told her he would just tell me to quit using my arm for a while and come back later if it didn’t get better. I finally gave in and made an appointment, but the doctor was away and I was seen by a Physician’s Assistant (PA). After some poking and prodding, the PA decided I had a pinched nerve in my shoulder and suggested that I have an MRI done to determine where the nerve was pinched and what could be done about it.

I went to the hospital and had the MRI done, and when I went back to discuss the results with the doctor, he advised that nothing was evident in the MRI and that I should not use that arm for a couple of weeks and come back to see him if it did not improve. He also advised that the MRI did show a spot on my lung that he thought should be investigated, so he made an appointment with a pulmonary specialist to have it checked out. In addition to this, he advised that I had a slight heart murmur that should also be checked out and he scheduled a visit with a heart specialist to have a cardio echogram done.

This entailed having a CAT scan completed with the injection to highlight the veins and blood vessels. After the CAT scan, I went back to the pulmonary specialist, and he advised that he thought it might be a vein, but he was not sure and wanted another CAT scan done in three months. This was done, and the results were the same, so we scheduled a third CAT scan for six months down the road. When it was time for the next CAT scan, I was informed that my pulmonary specialist had left the area, so I put it off until I had my next annual physical. At that time I was scheduled for another CAT scan, and the results of that one were the same as before.

Meanwhile I went to the heart specialist and had the cardio echogram completed, and he advised that I had a sticking valve, but that it was not serious as long as I did not have any of a number of symptoms. He did say he would like to have another cardio echogram done in a year to see if the condition was stable. This was done, and he advised that it looked about the same as last year, and could we do it again next year?

So, \$3,000 later (plus what insurance paid) the end result of all of this seems to be that I should return every year for these tests to insure that nothing is wrong. That is why men hate to go to the doctor!

What does all of this have to do with my job, you ask? One of the things I do as part of my job is to conduct assessments for water systems to see what shape they are in from a financial and management standpoint. In doing one of these assessments, I spend time with the water operator, the clerk and sometimes the city manager or a board member and ask questions related to the daily operation and future planning of the system. These assessments are then typed up,

and notes and recommendations are added at the bottom. The results are then presented to the governing body during a public meeting, at which I stress that the recommendations are ONLY recommendations and that they need to run the system in a manner that they feel is best for the community and their residents.

These assessments are done as a matter of course for systems that are borrowing money from the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund, but any system serving a population less than 10,000 can have an assessment completed. The cost of the assessment is FREE, which is affordable to every system, and the results will not force the system to spend any money, unless they choose to. Many of the recommendations involve policies, procedures or other “paperwork” items to implement them, and NeRWA is willing to assist in this at no charge to the system.

If you would like to have an assessment completed for your system, or if you have any questions regarding having one done, call the office at (800) 842-8039 or call me on my cell phone at (402) 480-4297 and we will schedule a time for me to stop by. This is one Check-Up that is fairly painless and will only lead to further appointments and scheduled procedures if that is what the system wants to do.