

# Caring for the C-SUITE

New program provides preventative health care options for corporate leaders



**In 1968, Kenneth Cooper, MD, transformed the field of medicine with his emphasis on disease prevention, igniting the modern fitness revolution.** He opened The Cooper Institute—now known as the Cooper Aerobics Center—and his research, involving more than 100,000 individuals, proved the importance of moderate exercise and proactive health management. Almost 50 years later, his work continues to transform how individuals and businesses approach health.

These concepts of proactive wellness are now offered through the TTUHSC Executive Health Care Program, which originated at the Permian Basin campus, with plans to expand to Amarillo and Lubbock campuses. Currently in the testing phase, the program has the potential to change how company executives manage their health, leading to more efficient leadership.

Program participants are scheduled for a series of tests, including a computed tomogram (CT), cardiac stress testing and lab work. The session concludes with an in-depth consultation with the program's managing physician, Timothy Benton, MD, (Medicine '94) regional chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine in the School of Medicine at the Permian Basin.

"This program is a great way to inspire people to take care of themselves so they can take better care of their companies," Benton said. "It is a whole-person assessment, and the report we provide is very comprehensive. We hope the patient will take the information, look at the nutritional suggestions, add exercise, reduce stress and become healthier."

Cynthia Jumper, MD, MPH, (Resident '91; Medicine '88) TTUHSC vice president for health policy, sees the program as a way to start looking at population health and making an impact.

"As physicians, many times we see patients only through disease management," she said. "This program allows us to become involved with these patients to prevent disease. This is a shift in how some practice medicine, but finding ways to avoid disease is what public health is about."

Executive health programs are offered across the nation, reflecting a need for companies to help their leaders stay healthy.

In an excerpt from the September 2009 Harvard Business Review, Anthony Komaroff, MD, said, "It makes good sense for companies to protect their top talent. Sometimes, those who run the show can't find the time to mind their health. With an eye toward prevention, these exams attempt to accommodate busy schedules while supporting the long-term wellness and productivity of a firm's key players."

"The life of a corporate leader isn't easy," said Kiko Zavala, TTUHSC executive health project manager and former exercise physiologist at The Cooper Institute. "Corporate leaders deal with a high level of stress. Their careers may require long evenings, miles of travel and little time for exercise. This program will give them information so they can make informed decisions about their health

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to do their jobs more efficiently. Also, when employees see the CEOs taking care of their health, they may want to do it as well."

In the landmark Cooper Clinic Longitudinal Study, which began in 1970, researchers found that moderate exercise—a collective 30 minutes of activity most days of the week—will decrease a person's risk of dying from any cause by 58 percent. The study also concluded that moderate fitness levels will increase a person's lifespan by six to nine years. These facts are not lost on Tedd L. Mitchell, MD, TTUHSC president and an internal medicine physician.

"The reality of health is that good habits can extend our lives," he said. "Based on a person's age, sex, lifestyle habits and medical history, this program can determine risks so they can be addressed early and lay the groundwork for a longer life. This is a way to improve quality of life."

Mitchell, who worked at the Cooper Clinic prior to joining TTUHSC, sees this program as a snapshot of current health status.

"The extensive report the program generates will help physicians see what could be happening in the future for these patients," he said. "I feel the most important aspect of the examination is the one-on-one consultation with the managing physician. It's an in-depth walk-through of the patient's history, which is hard to do during a regular office visit."

In addition to providing a much-needed service for area patients, the executive health program will provide enhanced learning opportunities for medical students, residents and other health professionals, Benton said.

"Establishing this program allowed us to create an educational environment for family medicine students and residents to participate in a different family medicine offering," he said. "It widens the range of practice for these students and creates opportunities for them to care for the whole spectrum of a person."

Mitchell sees the program as a way to not only change the health status of corporate leaders, but also to extend TTUHSC service. "Our system is built on education, research and providing service to the people of this area. This program provides new service and educational opportunities and fulfills our mission." 

**BY JO GRANT LANGSTON**