

Everett Boyle  
took part in a **free  
abdominal aortic  
aneurysm screening**  
that may have  
saved his life

# A SCREENING SUCCESS

BY JOHN BERGGREN



*John Kelemen, M.D.,  
Salina Regional's Chief  
Cardiovascular and  
Thoracic Surgeon*



Everett Boyle, of Salina, has been more conscious about his health since having a heart attack and quadruple bypass surgery 11 years ago. The 71-year-old has been a loyal participant in Salina Regional Health Center's cardiac rehab program all these years—working out under the supervision of nurses a couple of times a week. He often takes walks outdoors on his own when the weather is nice. Heart disease just happens to run in his family.

So, when his wife, Dorothy, saw an ad in October for a free abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening at Salina Regional's outpatient imaging center with consultation from John Kelemen, M.D., Salina Regional's chief cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon, it made sense to try to be a part of it. The clinic was offered in cooperation with United Radiology Group.

## A SIMPLE TEST

An AAA is an enlargement or bulge in the descending aorta that can burst, causing internal bleeding that is often fatal. People at greatest risk include



*Everett Boyle was quickly back to his regular workouts through Salina Regional's cardiac rehabilitation program after undergoing endovascular surgical repair for an abdominal aortic aneurysm.*

past and present smokers, those with high blood pressure or a family history of AAA, and men age 65 and older.

To screen for the disease, a technologist using ultrasound places a wand on the abdomen to visualize the descending aorta and takes measurements at key places. The presence of a bulge in the aorta indicates a weak area that could rupture.

"It's a relatively simple test that doesn't subject a patient to X-rays or any risk, but can accurately tell us if something is wrong," says Arnold Cabrera, M.D., a Salina Regional radiologist.

On the day of the screening, Boyle remembers how simple the test seemed.

"People ahead of me were in and out in just a few seconds," Boyle says. "Then when it was my turn, they kept looking and looking ... and I knew it wasn't good."

What doctors saw made them suspicious of an AAA. Additional testing immediately ordered at the hospital confirmed it.

### REPAIRING A SILENT KILLER

Boyle was scheduled to undergo an endovascular repair of his aorta a couple of days later. The minimally invasive technique used an incision in his leg to thread and deploy a new graft to the site of the aneurysm.

"Until recently this surgery was performed through an open incision in the abdomen and it was a major operation for the patient," Kelemen says. "In the past few years, the endovascular technique has become the new standard because it is much less traumatic."

Boyle spent three days in the hospital after surgery and was quickly back to his normal routine.

"I feel lucky," Boyle says. "They said if that aneurysm had burst, that would have been about all she wrote."

Boyle never had any symptoms of an AAA, which isn't uncommon. Symptoms can include a pulsating sensation coming from the abdomen, unexplained lower back or abdomen pain, and discoloration or unexplained sores on the legs and feet.

"Usually when we see these cases, they show up in the emergency department and it's an impending emergency," Kelemen says. "If it's a dissecting aneurysm, meaning bleeding internally, it's often fatal. The only way to prevent it from getting to that point is to screen for it."

Kelemen's services extend beyond vascular repair (which was required for Boyle's case) to include cardiac bypass and valve replacement surgery, as well as general thoracic surgery, including lung and esophageal surgery.

"I'm glad we have these services available in Salina today," Boyle says. "When I had my bypass surgery I had to go to Wichita because the heart program hadn't yet started here. It's 100 percent better to stay in town. My wife and kids were able to be close by, and they didn't have to hunt for a place to stay." 

### LIFESAVING SCREENINGS

Watch for additional abdominal aortic aneurysm screening clinics to be held near you. In January another free screening was held in Ellsworth and more are planned in communities throughout the region.



## SALINA REGIONAL VEIN CENTER TAKES AIM AT 'SPIDER VEINS'

Many people attribute varicose veins or "spider veins" to age. Women often find them embarrassing. But, they're more than that. They can be painful, and even lead to health risks if left untreated.

It's estimated that 40 percent of adult women have varicose veins and 20 percent of men also show symptoms of venous insufficiency. The cause of venous insufficiency is a degeneration of the valves in the veins that carry blood back to the heart and lungs for oxygen. When the valves fail to work properly, blood tends to pool in the veins and they become dilated or swollen. Genetics and age play a role in the condition, but so does gender. Females more commonly show signs of the disease than men, and pregnancy is thought to be a contributor.

Whether the condition is purely a cosmetic issue or a health risk must be determined by a physician. If there are additional symptoms such as numbness, swelling, pain or soreness, then the condition is more likely to necessitate medical attention and will likely be covered by insurance. If the condition proves to be only cosmetic in nature, insurance may not apply. The clinic offers a free initial consultation so patients can know if insurance will provide coverage.

There are several treatments available and the condition can often be treated in the doctor's office setting. For superficial "spider veins," sclerotherapy may be used, which involves injecting a solution into the vein that causes it to swell, stick together and seal shut. Once the vein is sealed, the flow of blood stops and the vein turns to scar tissue and shrinks. For larger veins, the clinic uses a microfiber laser, which is inserted into the vein (similar to having an IV placed) to seal it shut. After treatment, patients are able to resume normal activities immediately and most feel no pain or only minimal discomfort.

While many places offer variations of the treatment, few in the region have the breadth of vascular disease treatment experience of Salina Regional's chief cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon.

"Many people find comfort in knowing I treat the whole spectrum of cardiovascular disease," says John Kelemen, M.D. "I'm not limited in the magnitude of intervention I can use. I treat everything from the superficial to life-threatening conditions."



### GET A FREE CONSULTATION

Call the Salina Regional Vein Center at **785-493-VEIN** for a free consultation.