

MEDICAL BRIEFS

Rx for women

There's no better present for Mother's Day than the gift of health from St. Mary Hospital in Livonia.

Bone-density testing is available any time at the Marian Women's Center, which also offers mammography, ultrasound testing and health education. Call (734) 655-1100.

A "Skin Cancer Awareness and Screening Program" will take place Saturday, May 13, in the hospital's West Addition A and B. A discussion on skin cancer 9-10 a.m. will be followed by cancer screenings 10 a.m. to noon.

"Women's Health Issues" will be presented at the hospital noon-1 p.m. Tuesday, May 16 in West Addition A. Nurse Mary Lou Anolik will discuss heart disease, osteoporosis and menopause. Call (734) 655-8940 to register for the skin cancer screenings and health issues discussion.

Cancer support group

Have you received a diagnosis of cancer within the last six months and don't know where to turn?

The Newly Diagnosed Cancer Support Group at Oakwood Hospital meets 6:30-8 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month in the Adray Conference Center at Oakwood Hospital and Medical Center, 8101 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn. You do not have to be an Oakwood patient to attend. Call (313) 693-7765.

Who are you?

The subconscious mind is a curious thing. It stores and remembers events, words, places and people you do not even realize you heard, saw or felt. Betaford General Hospital's Health Development Network, as part of its Mind-Body Connection workshops program, is offering "The Cube: The Secret Language of Your Mind Revealed" 7 p.m. Monday, May 15.

"This cube program is an ancient visualization technique," says Donna May, class instructor. "It is based on a popular book that asks a series of questions. The way you answer those questions has a lot of symbolic meaning into what type of things your subconscious mind remembers."

The workshop will be at the Health Development Network, 39750 Grand River Ave. in Novi. Cost is \$20. To register, call (248) 477-6100.

Free car seat check

Motor vehicle crashes are the nation's leading cause of death and serious injury to children younger than 14. More than 70 percent of these tragedies can be prevented if car seats and safety belts are used correctly.

Oakwood's Keep Kids Safe! team and Oakwood Annapolis Hospital will offer a free car seat safety check 3-6 p.m. Thursday, May 18, in the West Outpatient Lobby driveway at Oakwood Annapolis, 53165 Annapolis Ave. (off Michigan Avenue and Venoy), Wayne. For more information, call Oakwood at (313) 791-1494 or (313) 791-1488.

We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous avenues for you to offer your own or others' information including Medical Desk (providing selected medical), Medical Newsletters (providing selected medical news in the medical field) and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, correspondents). We also welcome noteworthy ideas for health and fitness related stories. To submit an item to be considered you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

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Implant helps palsy patients

Oakwood's Program for Exceptional Children treats the whole child

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Kimberly White, 12, of Garden City is an articulate honor roll student who loves to write about stories and eat macaroni and cheese. When she grows up, she may become a famous author—or a police dispatcher. Then she could ride to work with her father, David White, a sergeant with the Garden City Police Department.

She recently finished a story about a girl who made a time machine and traveled with two friends to the Eiffel Tower in the year 6000. "I like to write fictional stories because then you can make anything happen," she says.

Kimberly, who has cerebral palsy, can easily say "intrathecal baclofen therapy," whereas her mother, Kim White, trusts herself with just using the initials, ITB therapy.

Intrathecal baclofen therapy, which uses a surgically implanted pump to deliver anti-spasticity medicine directly into the spinal fluid, has made a big difference in Kimberly's life. She had the pump implanted in January at Oakwood Hospital.

"I like it because for me I can do a lot more things," she said. "Now when I walk my heels touch the floor, my feet are more in line and my back is a lot straighter. I can sit Indian style without any help. Before I needed help, but now my legs move by themselves."

Relatively new treatment

ITB therapy is a relatively new treatment for severe spasticity in children and adults with cerebral palsy and traumatic brain injury. A neurosurgeon implants a Synroflex pump, about the size of a hockey puck, just under the skin of the abdomen. A tiny catheter is threaded around the abdomen and into the spinal fluid. The catheter carries "baclofen injection," a medication that substitutes for the brain's naturally produced relaxing chemical, called GABA.

Because baclofen injection is delivered directly into the spinal fluid, minute doses can be used. Baclofen taken by mouth is not effective. The pump is programmed by a computer to release the correct amount of the drug. It can be reprogrammed externally.

Kimberly sees both Dr. Yasser Awad, the pediatric neurosurgeon who implanted her pump, and Dr. Susan Youngs, a pediatric physiatrist at Oakwood Hospital's Program for Exceptional Families. Youngs, the program's director, manages Kimberly's overall medical care and her rehabilitation program.

"Kimberly is a great example of the kinds of children who come to our program and get more of the comprehensive approach," said Youngs. For Kim-

berly, ITB therapy was a good choice, she added. "She's really motivated, which also makes her a good candidate."

Searching

"When you have a child with special needs, you almost feel you have entered a secret society," said Kim White. "You need to know the right password to get a question answered. If you don't get hold of the right person and ask the right question, you don't move forward."

She and her husband know "something" was wrong with their daughter by the time she was 1 year old. "She was verbal, but her movement... she would do the low crawl," said Kim White, striving to describe her daughter's movement across the floor.



All smiles: Kimberly White says her newly implanted medicine pump allows her to walk better and sit Indian-style. Her parents, Dave and Kim White, are her biggest cheerleaders.

It took two misdiagnoses before the Whites had an answer: Beautiful, bright-eyed Kimberly, who was born premature and weighed only 2 1/2 pounds, had cerebral palsy.

For several years, the Whites took Kimberly to Shriners Hospital in Chicago for treatment. The drive was long and inconvenient. One day, Kim

"I can sit Indian style without any help. Before I needed help, but now my legs move by themselves."

—Kimberly White

Age 12

White asked Kimberly's local pediatrician to write a new prescription for braces. He said he couldn't, and referred her to Dr. Awad.

Kim was wary. She had seen so many neurologists. There was nothing new to be discussed.

"It turned out to be wonderful," she said. "Dr. Awad was the first one to say, 'Do you know your options?'"

Kimberly was shown videos of different treatments, including botulinum injections (used to treat local spasticity), to which she said, "no." However, she became very excited after seeing the video of ITB therapy and became even more excited after a test run of the drug yielded positive results. The device was implanted on Jan. 11.

Results came quickly.

"Oh my, a lot of people noticed her steps were easier. She could put her arm up over her head. Now she can 'high five,'" said Kim White.

Anne Marie Michon, a nurse who works with Dr. Awad, said all the children who have had the pump implanted experienced positive results, ranging from dressing or being dressed more easily to walking faster or without a walker.

"Every patient has improved to some level."

Comprehensive care

Kim and Dave White found the right people and the right answers at Oakwood Hospital's Program for Exceptional Families, which treats patients with a wide range of chronic, complex disorders and disabilities, including cerebral palsy, muscle disorders, spina bifida, rheumatologic disorders, traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, amputations and sports injuries.

"They treat the whole child. Dr. Awad looks for what's best physically. Dr. Youngs looks at the emotional component. Even the nurses, they work as a complete team. I was so impressed," said Kim White.

"We all spend an exorbitant amount of time on the phone with families, dealing with life issues," said Youngs.

Youngs understands the frustration her patients and their families have undergone traveling back and forth, sometimes at great distances, between specialists. "That just wears on a family. There wasn't one person or place that was pulling it together," she said.



Tender touch: Dr. Susan Youngs tends to Desiree Raschke of Melvindale, one of her younger patients in the Program for Exceptional Families.

Life-saving advice for mothers about strokes

Taking time to learn the warning signs of stroke could be the best Mother's Day present you could ever give anyone. According to the American Stroke Association, stroke kills more than 97,000 women each year.

A critical step in surviving a stroke—a blockage of blood flow to the brain caused by a clogged or ruptured blood vessel—is speed. Call 911 as soon as the signs are evident.

Fast action is important, especially now that a new emergency treatment for stroke—a clot-busting drug called tissue plasminogen activator (t-PA)—can greatly reduce the risk of death and permanent brain damage. Unfortunately, less than 5 percent of Ameri-

cans get to the hospital in time to receive t-PA, which must be administered within three hours of the onset of symptoms to be effective.

The warning signs of stroke are:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

More than half of women who survive a stroke die within eight years. However, the chance of suffering a stroke can be reduced by practicing a healthy lifestyle.

Women should control high blood pressure, stop smoking, control blood cholesterol, become physically active, avoid obesity and work with a doctor to prevent or treat atrial fibrillation and carotid artery disease. Atrial fibrillation is the rapid, uncoordinated beating of the heart's upper chambers. Carotid artery disease affects the blood vessel system that supplies the brain.

To learn more about stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE or visit the American Stroke Association Web site at www.StrokeAssociation.org.