

## MEDICAL BRIEFS

### Organ donation

April is Michigan Donor Awareness Month, and state Rep. Laura M. Toy is urging local residents to consider signing up as organ donors. Last year, 547 Michigan residents received life-saving organ and tissue implants, including 27 children.

"These people got a second chance because of someone else's generosity," said Toy, R-Livonia. "When you become an organ or tissue donor, you can help spare another family from the tragedy of losing a loved one."

An average of 17 men, women and children die in Michigan each month while awaiting organ transplants. Barely 4.2 percent of Michigan's population has signed up as donors, well short of the 35 to 40 percent achieved in other states. Each donor can help up to 50 different people through life-saving and life-enhancing organ and tissue transplants.

"I'd like to see more Michigan residents become organ donors," said Toy. "Since April is Donor Awareness Month, I encourage anyone who hasn't already signed up to do so. Countless lives could be saved."

For more information, contact the Gift of Life Agency of Michigan at [www.lam-giftoflife.org](http://www.lam-giftoflife.org) or call (800) 482-4881.

### Project Healthy Living

Bonus days for Project Healthy Living, a comprehensive, free health screening program, will take place 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, May 17, and Saturday, May 18, at the Livonia Mall, 29514 Seven Mile Road (at Middlebelt), Livonia. Botsford General Hospital is a co-sponsor.

Free basic tests include: height and weight, vision, blood pressure, and counseling and referral. Additional tests include:

- Blood Panel Test of 22 profiles, \$30. This includes total cholesterol, thyroid, glucose, HDL (good cholesterol), triglycerides, red and white blood cells, platelets and calcium. Take all prescribed medications. A four-hour fast is recommended. Water, plain tea or black coffee are allowed.

- Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test for men, \$25. An annual PSA blood test is recommended beginning at age 50 (age 40 for African American men).

- Cancer Antigen (CA-125) blood test for women, \$25. This blood test may detect reproductive problems in women.

For information on additional special tests and services, call the Project Healthy Living HOTLINE 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday at (866) 746-4968.

### Ladies night out

St. Mary Mercy Hospital presents "Life Changes: It's My Turn Now," the second lecture of the "Ladies Night Out" series 6-9 p.m. Thursday, May 16 in the Auditorium.

This interactive workshop focuses on the changes that occur normally through the process of living, working, children leaving home, illness, divorce, death, etc. The lecture and discussion will cover strategies for coping and growing. The program is geared to have fun, laugh, cry, and learn.

There is a \$10 optional donation, and pre-registration is required. For more information or to register, please call (734) 655-1182 or (800) 494-1817 (for out of area callers). St. Mary Mercy Hospital is located at 34675 Five Mile Road in Livonia. Please use the Five Mile Road entrance. For directions or additional information, please visit [www.stmarymercy.org](http://www.stmarymercy.org).

### Making connections

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer newsworthy information including Medical Database (upcoming calendar events), Medical Newsmakers (appointments/new hires in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies).

We also welcome newsworthy ideas for health and fitness related stories.

To submit an item to our newspaper you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

**CALL:** (248) 901-3578

**WRITE:** Observer & Recreational Newspapers (Specify Database, Newsmakers or Briefs) Attn: Susan Steinmueller

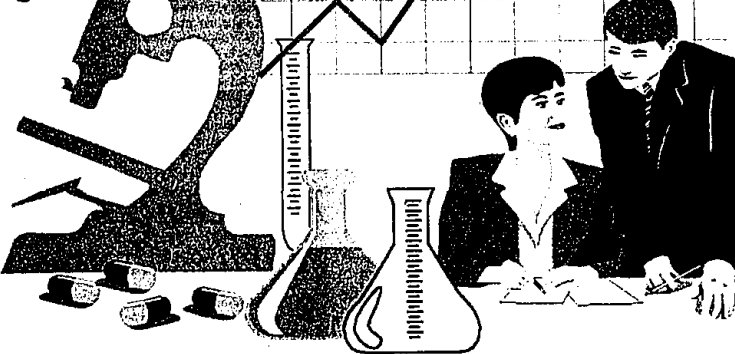
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# Clinical trials

good medicine, good business



BY CAROL MARSHALL  
SPECIAL WRITER

It's part hope, part science and part big business, and without it, the medical world would still operate in the Dark Ages. It's the practice of clinical trials, and for every new drug or therapy available to patients, there is a trial that proved its effectiveness.

"Our motto is Today's clinical trial is tomorrow's standard of care," said Veronica Decker, Beaumont Hospital's director of Oncology Support Services. "What we've found in so many areas is the reason your doctor can turn to you and say this is the standard of care because of a clinical trial that worked."

The trials test new drugs, medical devices and treatments, and can include just a handful of participants or more than 10,000 patients.

Even before the trial begins, it's closely examined, said Michael Hudson, Henry Ford Health System's director of Cardiac Intensive Care Unit and the co-director of the Henry Ford Clinical Trial Center.

"More and more we're seeing a shift in which pharmaceutical companies sponsor the trials," Hudson said.

### Sponsors

Approximately 60 percent of the 1,200 studies Henry Ford Health System conducts each year are sponsored by drug companies. The other 40 percent is funded by the National Institutes of Health. Beaumont's cancer trials are funded largely by the National Institutes of Health, with only 20 percent funded by drug companies. However, 70 percent of Beaumont's general research trials are funded by drug companies and 30 percent by the National Institutes of Health.

"Before a clinical trial can be approved, the hospital typically collaborates with the sponsor to write a protocol, which must then be approved by an institutional review board to be sure it's ethical and protects the patients in the study," Hudson said.

Once the approval is in place, doctors are notified and may offer participation to patients who meet criteria. Patients may either choose to participate in the study or may opt for the hospital's current standard of care. Once the available patients are identified, the selection process begins. Selection is random, and patients have no choice in whether they are part of the group that receives the new treatment or drug, or if they receive standard care.



Veronica Decker

ive therapy, the care they receive is not always better than what they would have if they didn't participate, and that's important for them to understand," he added.

The nature of clinical trials has the potential, however, to lead to better care even if the treatment or drug tested is not more effective than the current standard of care, said Decker.

"When you participate in a study, your records are being reviewed by



Michael Hudson

"It may or may not help them individually if they participate, but it helps in the study," Hudson said.

About half of Henry Ford Health System's eligible patients participate in trials when they are offered, according to Hudson.

### Better care

Patients choose to participate for many reasons, but often they believe they will receive better treatment.

"Patients hear the word 'trial' and they automatically assume they are getting superior or novel treatment. That may or not be the case. The reality is the reason we are conducting the study is to determine whether or not that drug or treatment is really better," Hudson said.

"Even though in all studies patients need to get safe and effective

doctors from around the world," she said. "And often, you do get better care. Say the standard would be that you normally would receive one CAT scan, but because you're in the study, you might get two. Or you might get to see another specialist, or an additional doctor or nurse who normally you wouldn't get to see just because they're involved in the study."

The hospital's follow-up is also more diligent with patients in clinical trials, she added.

"We will really sound patients if they are scheduled to come in for a follow-up visit. The study relies on complete information, so we'll call and call to remind patients to come in if they miss appointments. That can lead to better care."

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Michael Hudson  
Co-director of the Henry Ford Clinical Trial Center

### Deeper motivation

Still other patients participate for altruistic reasons.

"We're so lucky to have this kind of community," Decker said. "Our patients often participate even if they don't believe the study will benefit them because they believe it can benefit the community, or they might help other people or their children's generation."

Such was the case for Sam Reider of West Bloomfield. Reider, a healthy 69-year-old, agreed to participate in the Henry Ford Hospital SELECT trial, which will determine the effectiveness of selenium and vitamin E in preventing prostate cancer.

The study requires a 12-year commitment from participants, and Reider plans to continue to get check-ups every six months for the duration of the study.

"I'll stay in it if I last that long," joked Reider. "It's really no inconvenience at all, and when it comes to finding prevention and cures, sooner is always better than later, so maybe I'm helping someone else by being part of this study. Maybe it'll make a difference for future generations."

Reider recommends involvement in clinical trials. "I feel the same way now as I did when I started with this six months ago. There should be more people coming forward to do this. Every person can help."

### Hospital reward

While most patients and participants are involved for personal reasons, it's often a business decision for a hospital to become involved in clinical trials.

Doctors are often eager to participate in order to offer patients cutting-edge treatments, but a hospital's interest in trials ranges from good medicine to notoriety to money.

"We have been finding more and more that patients expect good hospitals to be involved in clinical trials, so the hospital feels the need to

Please see TRIALS, C7

## Irene's Myomassology Institute schedules holistic health festival

Irene's Myomassology Institute, 28061 Franklin Road, Southfield, will celebrate the grand opening of their new 16,000 square foot facility by hosting a Free Holistic Health Festival 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 4.

Activities include free massages, a dulcimer performance by Charlene Burrey, and an opportunity to meet nutritionist Monica Levin, author of *Enhance Your Health: Wheat Free Milk Free Cookery*. Experts in fitness training, chiropractic care, personal development and natural women's health care will be on hand. In addition, free classes on yoga, reflexology, stress management through touch, chakra balancing and carpal tunnel relief will be presented. There also will be lectures throughout the day on intuition, vegetarianism, nutrition, aromatherapy and the impact astrology has on health.

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"I'm both excited and overwhelmed with our new school. Although it is a little scary at the age of 81 to be taking on a project of this size, I consider myself very blessed to have had the opportunity to help so many people

Please see HOLISTIC, C8



## Grief workshops help daughter cope with loss of mother

Arbor Hospice & Home Care will present two free workshops beginning April 28, for women who have lost their mothers.

Titled "The Memory in the Mirror: Daughter Reflecting on Motherhood," these workshops help women who lost their mothers seek a positive, ongoing connection with their mothers beyond death.

Workshop participants are encouraged to bring with them a tangible expression of their mother (a photograph, trinket, or something she created).

"While the loss of a loved-one is unique and its impact immeasurable, we recognize that the loss of a mother forever changes each woman's life, yet the bond remains," said Jacquelin Gatlin, director of Grief Support Ser-

vices for Arbor Hospice & Home Care.

"Whether the loss was last year or 25 years ago, this workshop has proven to be a source of great strength and support for women of all ages."

The workshop will be presented at the following locations:

- 2-3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28, Ward Church, 40000 Six Mile Road, Northville.

- 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 7, Arbor Hospice Residence, 2366 Oak Valley Drive, Ann Arbor.

The workshops are open to all members of the community and are free of charge. Space is limited to 60 attendees per location. To register for the series or for further information, please contact Arbor Hospice & Home Care at (734) 662-5999, ext. 117 or register online at [www.arborhospice.org](http://www.arborhospice.org).