

Briefs

Kids health

The Schoolcraft College Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society will sponsor a Kids Health and Safety Day from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 29, in the lower Waterman Campus Center at Schoolcraft College. This fun and educational event will include a Dr. Bear Clinic, Mockercise and activities on food safety and first aid. There also will be representatives from the police department to fingerprint children and talk about keeping out of danger, and representatives from the fire department to talk about fire safety.

Tickets for the event are \$5 per person and include a hot dog lunch. To purchase tickets, call the Student Activities Office at (734) 464-4422.

Cholesterol screening

Farmer Jack and the Greater Oakland Visiting Nurses Association continue to host "Farmer Jack Healthy Tuesdays" from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The ongoing program offers free blood pressure and glucose screening, and a non-fasting, total cholesterol screening for \$5.

"Everyone 21 years and older needs to know what their cholesterol numbers are. If 200 or lower, testing should be done every five years," said Patti Moore, Community Wellness manager for the VNA.

Screening is offered at the following Farmer Jack locations:

- March 18 and April 15, 29751 Seven Mile Road, Livonia
- March 18 and April 15, 17447 Haggerty, Northville
- April 29, 225 Canton Center, Canton
- April 29, 26400 Ford Road, Dearborn

For more information, call (484) 683-1770, ext. 213.

Beaumont grant

Beaumont Hospital's Research Institute has been awarded a \$50,000 pilot grant by the Michael J. Fox Foundation to support its Parkinson's disease research.

"We are proud to be one of a select group of institutions to be funded by the Michael J. Fox Foundation," said Beaumont neurologist and lead researcher Dr. Peter LeWitt.

"The grant allows us to continue working toward pinpointing early warning markers that may eventually lead to better treatments and a cure for this disease."

Diabetes study

Dr. George Grunberger of the Grunberger Diabetes Institute in Bloomfield Hills, is participating in the largest diabetes prevention trial to date and is looking for individuals who are at risk for diabetes to take part. The trial spans 40 countries and will enroll more than 7,500 patients. The study will evaluate two medications, currently FDA approved for other uses, to determine whether they safely and effectively delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular events such as stroke and heart attack.

Study participants must not have diabetes, must be at least 50 years old and have some of common risk factors for developing diabetes: family history of diabetes or early heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, current cigarette smoking, overweight and prior conditions such as stroke or heart attack.

Doctors visit, physical exams, lab tests, diet and exercise counseling, and study medication are provided at no charge. Financial compensation is also provided.

To learn more about this study, call (248) 335-7740 or visit www.gdi-pc.com.



The Bonville family, Dimitri, 16, mother, Tami, and father, Craig, spend time together in the prep room prior to Dimitri's stem cell transplant.

Medical breakthrough

New procedure at Beaumont helps young man's heart regenerate

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
CORRESPONDENT

Doctors around the world will be watching how a 16-year-old Michigan boy does following a first-ever experimental treatment at Beaumont Hospital after he was shot through the heart with a nail gun.

Doctors used stem cells from the patient's own blood to try to repair heart damage. Experts believe the procedure could be used to regenerate other organs, as well.

"People not just in cardiology will take a keen interest in this," said Beaumont cardiologist Dr. Steven Timmis. "This will have implications for all organ systems in everything from spinal injuries to heart attacks, to just about any other serious medical condition in which there is death or irreversible injury to tissue. We're at the dawn of a new age."

Dimitri Bonville's ordeal began on the morning of Feb. 1, not long after he started work as a handyman. Bonville was at work on a painting job when a 20-year-old co-worker pointed a nail gun at him and shot it at his chest.

"He said, 'Do you want me to shoot you in the foot?' and I said, 'No, shoot yourself,'" said Bonville, explaining what happened minutes before a silly prank would forever change his life. A few hours after he left his home, Bonville's parents were called.

Doctors at Beaumont gave Bonville a 50-50 chance of surviving the surgery.

"They opened him right up and took out the nail," said his stepmother, Tammara Bonville. "A week later, he started bleeding internally and his lung collapsed."

Doctors told Bonville's parents that

he had severe heart damage to one-third of his heart and that he would be a candidate for a heart transplant someday. They gave the family another option — the new stem cell treatment.

"When they presented this idea, we discussed it with Dimitri and he said, 'Whatever you can do so I can live,'" said Tammara Bonville. "He wanted to try anything. We started researching it and basically getting as much information as we could get. But being the first person in the world getting it, there wasn't a lot of information."

"From what we understood at the time it was basically the last resort," she said. "Heart transplants don't last forever. Being a 16-year-old athletic child, we were trying to get him back to a new normal."

RECOVERY

A month after the stem cell transplant, it was hard to believe Dimitri Bonville had any health problems at all.

"Everything hasn't really changed that much — other than I can't do nothing," said Bonville earlier this month on a Wednesday morning following a press conference at the hospital where doctors revealed the new procedure.

Beaumont cardiologist Dr. Cindy Grines had been researching the stem cell treatment when Bonville was admitted to the hospital Feb. 1.

Dimitri was taken to urgent care near his Almont home in rural Lapeer County and then rushed to Beaumont Hospital. Doctors removed the nail that lodged in his heart and actually served as a plug that prevented him from bleeding to death. Shortly afterward, Bonville suffered a massive heart attack.



Dimitri Bonville rests while stem cells are extracted from his blood.

"In the past, heart muscle was thought to be irreversibly damaged," said Grines, director of Beaumont's cardiac catheterization laboratories, who developed the treatment for Bonville. "Everyone thought once those cells were dead there was nothing you could do."

However, laboratory studies have shown that stem cells from the blood can help bring new life to damaged hearts.

On Feb. 17, Bonville began a four-day regimen of Neupogen to stimulate the production of stem cells in the blood. Doctors harvested his stem cells with a special blood collection machine and using a heart catheter transplanted the stem cells into an artery that supplies blood to the front of the heart.

The operation lasted less than 60 minutes.

Five days later, a defibrillator was implanted in his chest to control the irregular heartbeats he is now susceptible to as a result of the damage caused by the heart attack.

"We're hoping these patients with massive heart attacks will live a more or less normal life," said Grines.

HOPEFUL

Before the accident, Bonville, an 11th-grade student at Almont High School, was involved in wrestling, soccer, baseball and football. He also had a passion for snowboarding.

"We'd like to see him do some of that stuff again," said Tammara Bonville. "There are no guarantees, but we're very hopeful."

The procedure will now be offered to other Beaumont patients who show no chance of recovering damaged heart muscles. "Patients won't have the side effects of medication," said Grines. "Since it's their own cells, they won't reject them."

When the heart is injured, it goes through a process of progressive deterioration, becoming weaker and weaker until a person needs a heart transplant. A stem cell transplant represents a fairly noninvasive way to regenerate the heart muscle. "Whether you're 16, 60 or 70," said Timmis.

"Our hope is that we can prevent the deterioration and have some improvement in heart function," he added. "This is an area of research that's truly in its infancy. We have an awful lot to learn. Dimitri is a bit of a pioneer. And I think it's important to emphasize the

PLEASE SEE HEART, C7

Liver recipient urges more organ donations

BY JULIE SHOWN
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Michael Hagan knows he wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for his liver donor.

"I feel the real hero in this story is the donor family," said Hagan, a Bloomfield Township physician who spoke Tuesday, March 11, to the Plymouth A.M. Rotary Club.

Hagan told his story of spending 12 years as an emergency physician and then contracting hepatitis B, most likely from a patient. He needed a career change, so went into administration with St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac.

Hagan received his liver transplant several years ago at the University of

Michigan. He shared the story of his life-saving operation, and encouraged Rotarians and their loved ones to sign up to become organ donors.

Hagan felt symptoms of liver failure, and was told there was an 80 percent chance he had less than 18 months to live. He was placed on the transplant list.

Michigan has some 2,369 people awaiting a transplant, he said, with the national figure over 80,000. Michigan is ranked near the bottom in organ donation.

"They actually advised me to go out of state," Hagan said. "It was a very difficult time."

He spent about two years on the list, at one point preparing for surgery and learning the donor organ was unacceptable.

"The doctors told me I had probably less than two weeks to live."

He's done well since surgery, with fatigue his only problem. Hagan takes antirejection medications.

SEEKING INFORMATION

He learned his donor was a 21-year-old woman with a healthy liver. "So the prognosis was pretty good for me," Hagan wanted to learn more about the young woman and her family.

He wrote a letter through the Gift of Life but didn't receive a reply. He learned the donor was from Sparrow Hospital in Lansing.

Hagan, past president of Birmingham-Bloomfield Families in Action, was con-

vinced to home some six months by a seizure reaction to medication. During that time, he wrote and called those who had offered prayer and encouragement.

Five years ago, Hagan had lost a son. A reporter at the *Lansing State Journal* he knew was aware he'd been on the waiting list. She told him of a Lansing woman who had been on a ventilator for five days after being shot.

Hagan went to the state library in Lansing to check back issues. He found the likely donor's name. He then joined Gift of Life, for which he continues to volunteer, and founded an American Liver Foundation chapter here.

When he read in a Detroit paper that

PLEASE SEE ORGAN, C7