

Rx briefs

Brain cancer

The Hermlin Brain Tumor Center at Henry Ford Hospital is pioneering a new drug delivery system to benefit patients with leptomeningeal metastasis, a cancer that has spread to the lining that surround the brain and spinal cord. The implanted drug delivery system allows for precisely timed delivery of chemotherapy into the spinal fluid. The system requires a one-day hospitalization for surgical placement of a small pump implanted in the abdominal region, a catheter that delivers medication to the spinal fluid and a catheter to measure spinal fluid chemotherapy levels. To learn more about the study, call (313) 916-8662.

Resource guide

Where do you go when you are unemployed and need to see a doctor? What do you do about locating rent or utility assistance when you no longer get a paycheck? A new publication called the "Where to Turn Guide," available through The Information Center, Inc., can help find answers to these questions and others.

Made possible with funding from SBC Michigan, the guide is packed with resources to help those who are unemployed or just looking for resources in Wayne and Monroe counties. Resource categories include unemployment information, job services, health care, financial assistance, and counseling services.

The Information Center, Inc., The Family Resource Place, based in Taylor, is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the national goal of the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems: bringing people and services together. To obtain your free copy of the Where to Turn Guide, call The Information Center, Inc. at (734) 282-7171.

Medicare counseling

Senior citizens with Medicare questions and concerns can get assistance through Beaumont Hospital's Department of Older Adult Services. The department's staff of trained volunteers can provide counseling on Medicare, long-term care insurance, and insurance plans that supplement Medicare. Call toll-free (800) 328-2248 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday for an appointment with a Medicare counselor.

Colon cancer

The Michigan Cancer Research Consortium Community Clinical Oncology Program at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital is participating in a research study headed by the Mayo Clinic that tests a prototype stool assay system for detecting DNA alterations that occur with colorectal neoplasia. The study will test the presence of pre-cancerous and cancerous cells indicative of colon cancer.

Eligible individuals participate in an enrollment visit, have their blood drawn, collect and mail three whole stool samples to Mayo Clinic, and undergo a colonoscopy. Eligibility criteria include:

- Between ages 50 and 80. If female, must be post-menopausal. (Beginning June 1 the age criteria will include only those ages 65-80.)
- No colorectal exams in the past 10 years.
- No recent stool testing.
- No prior colorectal surgery.

For more information, please call the Michigan Cancer Research Consortium's toll-free study line at (877) 590-5995.



BY RHEE SHUGLUND
STAFF WRITER

"Give so others can live."

Those five words, part of the Gift of Life Michigan's new campaign, speak volumes — of bravery, compassion, healing, gratefulness, altruism and, most significantly, the beginning of new life.

As of March 1, 2003, there were 2,369 Michigan patients waiting for a transplant, and behind each number, there is a face, a family, a story.

April is Michigan Donor Awareness Month.

According to the Gift of Life Agency in Ann Arbor, last year 2,267 organ donors yielded 551 transplanted organs. While Michigan residents are increasingly adding their names to the donor register (487,265 in 2002), more are needed to provide happy endings to the stories of those waiting for an organ.

"Well, I just feel it's the greatest gift you can give someone. I feel very fortunate that I was able to get the gift of life, or I wouldn't be here today," said George Kopp of Livonia, who received a liver in 1998.

Kopp had acquired hepatitis C from a blood transfusion years before. "It took a long time for the hepatitis C to do the damage. The liver transplant was the only thing that saved me," he said.

For 18 months prior to his transplant, which took place at University of Michigan Hospital, Kopp took medications to stabilize his condition.

Four years later, Hawkins received a new

heart at Henry Ford Hospital. Because his condition was so unstable, he was hospitalized for four months prior to the transplant. During his wait, he was literally tethered to a host of life-saving machinery, including three leads from a pacemaker.

"When you get a new heart you have that all taken out and thrown away," he said.

Hawkins continues to feel good. "Before I went in (for the transplant) my electrical system was so bad that if I walked 100 yards I was exhausted. Sometimes I would faint. My heart would beat at 200-300 beats a minute," he said.

"I'm very lucky. My heart has been doing quite well. I just made a change in medication."

Like Kopp, Hawkins writes a letter every year to the donor family in care of Henry Ford Hospital. He has never received a response. And like Kopp, he is active in the Gift of Life program, stocking the Canton Secretary of State office with brochures and talking to people in line for their driver's license about becoming an organ donor.

"Your percentage of dying in a car accident is small, but if everyone signed up as a donor, you wouldn't have so many deaths of people waiting for transplants.... People

live his condition. It was 18 months full of medical problems, he said. He received his transplant Dec. 5, 1998; however, he did not regain consciousness until mid-January due to a reaction to an immune suppressant drug. Once the drug was changed, his body no longer fought to reject the new organ.

"I feel a lot better than prior to the surgery," he said of his current condition.

Today, Kopp is active in the Gift of Life program and writes a letter once a year to the donor family in care of Gift of Life. He has not heard back. He understands. His celebration began with someone else's grief.

"The hardest part of the transplant was knowing that someone had to die so you could live," he said.

HEART TO HEART

For the past 15 years, Ronald Hawkins of Canton has enjoyed life thanks to a family who donated a loved one's heart.

In 1984, at age 39, Hawkins had a heart attack while playing golf. He was taken to University of Michigan Hospital and given medications to stop the attack and open his arteries. However, Hawkins' heart attack continued to progress and eventually damaged his heart's electrical system.

Four years later, Hawkins received a new



Mary Rowley and her mother, Kathy Glowacki, enjoyed a trip to Disney World in January. "If it wasn't for your kidney, I wouldn't have been able to go," Glowacki told her daughter.

April is Michigan Donor Awareness Month

The number of organ and tissue donors set new record volume levels for 2002, according to Gift of Life Michigan.

"Gift of Life is proud to announce that for the second year in a row new volume records were set for the recovery of organ donors and tissue donors," said Thomas M. Beyersdorf, executive director of Gift of Life in the agency's February publication. "This is the first time since 1986 that two consecutive record volume years were achieved." In 2002, Michigan had 2,267 organ donors and 742 tissue donors.

Currently waiting for a transplant in Michigan as of Feb. 1, 2003:

- Kidney, 1,782
- Heart, 84
- Lung, 87
- Liver, 388
- Pancreas, 90

On Monday, April 7, all Secretary of State branch offices in Michigan will be promoting organ and tissue donation to their employees and customers. Volunteers will greet visitors and answer questions about organ and tissue donations.

Commonly asked questions about donation:

What can I donate?

Organs and tissues that can be donated include: heart, kidneys, lungs, liver, intestines, pancreas,

corneas, bone, skin, heart valves, tendons.

Do I need to tell my family about my decision to be a donor?

Yes, your family must give consent before donation takes place.

How is consent obtained?

Organ and tissue donation will not begin without permission from the donor's legal next of kin. In order of priority are: spouse, adult son or daughter, parent, adult brother or sister, and legal guardian.

Is there an age limit for donation?

No, almost anyone can become a donor, provided the family has granted permission and the donor meets medical criteria.

Are there any costs to my family for donation?

No, it costs nothing to donate and no costs are passed on to donor's family or estate.

Will my religion approve of donation?

Most major religions approve of organ and tissue donation, and consider donation a benevolent gift.

Can normal funeral arrangements be made?

Yes, donation will not disfigure the body or change the appearance for an open-casket.

Will doctors work as hard to save my life if they know I am an organ and

tissue donor?

Yes, the No. 1 priority at the hospital is to save your life. Organ and tissue donation can be considered only if death is imminent and your family has given their consent.

What is the Gift of Life Agency?

The Gift of Life Agency (GOL) is a full-service organ and tissue recovery organization that acts as the intermediary between donors, physicians and hospital staff. The GOL provides all services necessary for organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

How do I add my name to the registry?

You can fill out a postage-paid card (obtained from Gift of Life) and register by mail. You can also register online through the Michigan Department of State's Web site at www.aos.state.mi.us.

What is the Michigan Organ and Tissue Donor Registry?

The Registry is a confidential, 24-hour-a-day, computerized database that documents your wishes regarding organ donation.

Source: Gift of Life brochure, Organ & Tissue Donation saves lives. For more information call the Gift of Life Agency at (800) 482-4888 or visit www.giftoflife.org.



George Kopp received his transplant Dec. 5, 1998.

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