

MEDICAL BRIEFS

Mini-Med School

Men and women of all ages and backgrounds are invited to participate in the University of Michigan Health System's "Mini-Med School," a series of weekly lectures 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays, April 4-May 9. They won't end up with an "M.D." after their names, but they will gain a better understanding of women's health and illness issues.

Topics include teen pregnancy, endometriosis, depression, menopause, fibroids and osteoporosis. Lectures are geared to a non-technical audience. Students receive a book bag, syllabus and course materials.

Class size is limited, and enrollment is on a first-come basis. Tuition is \$60 per person, \$50 each for those who register with a friend or spouse, and \$30 for students and seniors. Tuition waivers are available. To pre-register, call the Women's Health Resource Center at (734) 936-8888.

Living with Parkinson's

Health Development Network at Botaford General Hospital will present "Living with and Understanding Parkinson's Disease," a seven-week educational series 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays, April 4 to May 16. Topics include goal-setting, self-management, medications, other therapies and staying healthy.

"This is the only hospital-based program of its kind in the state," said Deborah Orloff-Davidson, director of HDN. "It's really a program not to be missed for anyone dealing with the disease."

The cost is \$50 per family. Pre-registration is required. Classes will be held at the Health Development Network, 39750 Grand River Avenue in Novi. For more information and to make reservations, please call (248) 477-6100. The series is co-sponsored by the Michigan Parkinson's Foundation.

Women's Health Day

Just a reminder to mark your calendars for a day away from kids, pets and household chores. The Marian Women's Center of St. Mary Hospital in Livonia will present its sixth annual "Women's Health Day" 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, April 8, at the Holiday Inn-Livonia West on Six Mile Road and N-276.

Attendees can choose from topics in each of three sessions: "I'm Chubby and I Hate It," "I'm Chubby and I Love It," "I'm Chubby and I'm Proud." Other topics include eye surgery, happy and healthy feet, aromatherapy and therapeutic massage, and why "they" make you crazy. And keynote speaker Bobbie Staten, nurse and business woman, has an inspiring message on life, family, work and priorities for everyone: "I'm Going to be Happy When..."

Registration fee is \$30 (\$35 at the door) and is requested by Monday, April 3. The fee includes continental breakfast, lunch, exhibits and a fashion show by Casual Corner Group. Sponsorships available. Call (1-800) 494-1617.

We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer noteworthy information including Medical Database (opposing calendar events), Medical Newsletters (appointments/leave lines in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items, local health, physicians, substances). We also welcome non-medical items that health and fitness related stories. To submit an item to our newspaper, you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

CALL US!
(734) 963-2128

WRITE US!
Observer Health & Fitness
36222 Woodward Road
Livonia, MI 48150

FAX US!
(734) 963-2128

E-MAIL US!
rskoglund@oe.com



Safe Haven for Newborns

EMERGENCY ROOMS OFFER LOVING HANDS FOR UNWANTED BABIES



By RENEE SKOGLUND
STAFF WRITER
rskoglund@oe.homecomm.net

It's an act of desperation as old as time. Mothers - scared, ashamed, or in deep denial - abandon their newborns in garbage cans, in the woods and on the proverbial church doorsteps.

Last Sunday, a newborn boy was found in a garbage bag outside Grace Salvation Church in Detroit. He was taken to Sinai-Grace Hospital, where he was diagnosed with having "persistent fetal circulation" - a condition in which a newborn reverts to the circulatory pattern he had in the womb, said spokeswoman Barbara Lewis.

The newborn, just hours old when abandoned, was transferred to Children's Hospital on Monday evening. He was put on a heart-lung machine and remained in critical condition. Two years ago, near Christmas, a baby boy was brought to Garden City Hospital by the Dearborn Heights police after being left on the steps of St. Mel's convent in Garden City. Fortunately, he was in good condition and was released to the Family Independence Agency within hours.

"It was unbelievable. Those nurses treated that baby as if he was their own. The nurses wouldn't let the media near the baby," said hospital spokesman Terry Carroll.

Earlier this week, a county-wide "Safe Haven for Newborns" program was unveiled by county prosecutors' offices and hospital officials. The program allows mothers to leave their unwanted newborns at area emergency rooms without fear of prosecution.

Would the newest baby John Doe's mother have taken him to the nearest hospital emergency room had she known about the program? That she would not know, said Dr. Marcie Lozon. Maybe. Would he still have developed life-threatening respiratory problems? Maybe not. "He was gorgeous, full term. No one knows what caused his problem," said Lewis.

The elements
The fact is all newborns - big ones, little ones, full-term babies and especially premature babies - are subject to extreme health risks when abandoned. The six hours after birth is known as the "transitional period," said Dr. Marcie Lozon, director of Children's Emergency Services for the University of Michigan Health System. And the greatest risk is loss of body heat.

"Hypothermia is the most common reason (abandoned) babies die," she said. For newborns, maintaining a core body temperature is a complex neurological and circulatory process, she said. "In the face of environmental stress cold, even normal room temperatures - infants left lying unclothed could become cold, and that's a big stressor." If the hostile environment persists, an infant loses the battle to maintain body temperature. A cascade of consequences eventually leads to shock and ultimately death.

Dr. Marcie Dorsch, pediatrician at the Henry Ford Medical Center-Fairlane, had a short answer when asked about an abandoned baby's chances on a cold winter night: "Forget it." "A baby doesn't have much fat, she said, and "fat is what conserves heat in the body." To prevent heat loss, newborns are immediately dried off after birth and put into a warm environment. Quickly and thoroughly drying off the infant

is extremely important, Lozon emphasized.

It is the layer of subcutaneous tissue, the fat and fibrous tissue, that allows adults to maintain body temperature in the cold, said Lozon. Conversely, it is the lack of this tissue in infants, along with their body configuration of a large head and small body - more surface area as opposed to mass - that allows heat to evaporate more quickly.

Falling body temperatures affect heart rate. Normally, a newborn's heart rate is 140-160 beats per minute. But if he becomes too cold, both his heart rate and breathing slows down. "Below 100 beats is dangerous," said Dorsch.

Other risks
Newborns need glucose to survive and are usually fed within four hours of birth. At Garden City Hospital, nurses take a heel-stick glucose reading immediately after birth, then again one and two hours later. If glucose levels are low, "you don't have energy to push oxygen through the blood," said Claudia Westbrook, director of emergency services.

Also, because an infant's metabolic rate is much higher than an adult's, they consume oxygen and glucose at a higher rate, said Lozon. That's why they are fed frequently. If the brain is seriously deprived of glucose, seizures and permanent brain damage may result.

Infection is another problem. "You never know what they get the seed with," said Dorsch. "If they don't clamp the cord fast enough, the baby can bleed."

Infections also can be picked up as the baby travels through the birth canal. Common bacteria in the birth canal and vaginal infections are routinely seen in a doctor during pregnancy. In a suitable birthing setting, an emerging newborn's throat and nose are suctioned before the shoulders and chest are delivered. The birthing assistant would normally do some suctioning in order that the baby would not take a suction that out.

Fortunately, most full-term, healthy babies can sneeze and cough fluids out; however, premature babies don't have this strong reflex response.

There are numerous other problems that put an abandoned newborn at risk, said Lozon, including drug use by the mother, immature lungs, and possible congenital problems, which can involve the heart, always and body chemistry. Even jaundice, which affects over half of all newborns in the United States, is potentially dangerous. If not treated in a timely manner, high levels of bilirubin can lead to brain damage.

A plastic bag
Plastic bags do not keep a baby warm. They smother it. Plastic garbage bags are non-porous, and as an infant's oxygen supply becomes depleted, the bag fills with exhaled carbon dioxide.

"If you have a carbon dioxide build-up and oxygen is being depleted, carbon dioxide makes you sleepy and unresponsive. The baby may stop breathing," said Lozon.

Births within a hospital emergency room, especially involving mothers who have not had prenatal care or who have been involved in car accidents, can be emotionally trying for medical staff, said Westbrook. The "unknown factor" increases with an abandoned baby. "She may have delivered in the bathroom in a gas station."

In most cases, the only known factor is that the mother was desperate. "People who do this are so in denial and so horrified of sharing this with their family, they want to wipe it off the face of the earth," said Lozon.

Thanks to Safe Haven for Newborns, hospital emergency rooms can now offer a loving alternative.



PHOTOS BY TRACY GROSSMAN, HENRY FORD HEALTH SYSTEM
Offering safety: Dr. Leland Rapp, pediatric emergency physician, Henry Ford Medical Center-Fairlane (left), and George E. Ward, chief assistant prosecutor, Wayne County, announce the start of Safe Haven for Newborns at area hospitals.

Adult ADHD conference set at Oakland Community College

Restlessness, distraction and severe mood swings are just a few symptoms of attention deficit disorder, a disorder, which many adults have but often don't recognize.

The Michael Golde Memorial Conference Fund will present a one-day conference titled "Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and the Student: Impact, Diagnosis, Treatment and Resources," Friday, April 7, at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. Registration begins at 8:45 a.m., with the first session beginning at 9:15 a.m.

The conference is geared towards college-aged students affected by ADHD and their families, physicians, mental health professionals and educators.

Dr. Joel L. Young, medical director of the Rochester Center for Behavioral Medicine, and keynote speaker Dr.

Timothy Wilens, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, will join a panel of experts focusing on the following issues:

- Diagnosis and impact of ADHD and associated conditions.
- Contemporary treatment issues.
- Teaching and managing the ADHD student.
- Communications between educators and psychologists.
- Coaching the ADHD student.
- Educational Resources for the ADHD and learning disabled student.

After lunch, attendees can choose from one of three optional breakfast sessions on ADHD complication, counseling, coaching and educator training. The cost to attend the symposium is \$40 per person or \$25 per student. For more information, contact (248) 539-9857 or log on to www.rcbm.net.

Listen and dance

Hearing impaired children learn rhythm, pitch

The second annual "Hearing Impaired Listeners' Community Family Dance" will be held 1-3 p.m. Saturday, April 1, at the Pittsford Union Grange in Ann Arbor. The event is for deaf and hard-of-hearing children of all ages, their friends and family.

The dance is the brainchild of Marcie Brown, an audiologist, teacher of the hearing impaired, therapist and founder of The Hearing Teacher, an Ann Arbor-based organization that specializes in auditory-verbal services for infants and children.

"The idea is for the children and their parents to have fun, while doing what we teach them to do naturally, to listen and respond to speech and music. Appropriately pitch and rhythm is essential to understanding spoken language," said Brown. "When children who are deaf learn to listen to changes in pitch and rhythm by singing and dancing, they develop more natural-sounding speech."

The program, led by Peter Baker, will be based on simple traditional community dancing. It will feature New England-style live dance music provided by popular dance musician Debbie Jackson and friends. The musicians will play a variety of instruments, including piano, tubs, fiddle and the marimba.

During the break, children will have an opportunity to listen to the instruments and to "play" some of them.

The Pittsford Grange is located at 3337 Ann Arbor-Saline Road off I-94 (first exit west of State Street, 1/2 mile south of I-94), Ann Arbor, (734) 662-8936. For more information about the dance, contact Marcie Brown at (734) 741-8898. The cost is \$4 for an individual and \$7 for a family. "Scholarships" to be dance are available. "I don't want to turn anybody away," said Brown.