

MEDICAL
BRIEFS

Lymphoma

Lymphoma Research Foundation and The University of Michigan Medical Center present "Ask the Doctor about Lymphoma" with a special focus on radioimmunotherapy 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, June 26. Radioimmunotherapy recently received FDA approval.

Dr. Mark Kaminski, a lymphoma expert and a professor of Internal Medicine at the U-M Medical Center, will discuss the following topics about radioimmunotherapy treatments: antibodies and how they are administered, radiation safety issues, the common side effects associated with antibody treatment, and information about ongoing research in radioimmunotherapy.

The presentation will take place at The University of Michigan Medical Center, 1500 E. Medical Center Drive, Sheldon Auditorium, Ann Arbor. Please RSVP by Wednesday, June 12 to (734) 936-5310. Enter from the second floor of the Main Hospital or the second floor of the Maternal Child Health Center.

Childbirth Education

St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia will offer "Childbirth Education," a series of three classes designed to teach expectant mothers and their partners the Lamaze method for labor and delivery, including relaxation and breathing techniques.

Expectant mothers are encouraged to pre-register early during pregnancy. The three-week series of classes meet 9 a.m. to noon in Classroom 1, Saturday, June 15-29. The cost for the series is \$55.

Pre-register by calling (734) 656-1100 or (800) 494-1615 for out-of-area callers. For directions or additional information, visit www.stmarymercy.org.

Drive a BMW

The public is encouraged to stop by the Ann Arbor BMW dealership 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 19 to drive one of 18 specially marked cars as part of a national event called "The Ultimate Drive."

For every mile test-driven, BMW will donate \$1 to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, which supports local cancer research at the U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center. A special ceremony honoring a local "hero" in the fight against breast cancer will begin at 12:30 p.m.

The Auto-Strasse dealership is on Auto Mall Drive off Jackson Road. For more information, call toll-free (877) 4-A-Drive.

Medical studies

Bonmont Hospital needs people 18 and older with high blood pressure to volunteer for research studies of new medications. All study-related health care is provided at no charge to participants.

The hospital also needs volunteers 18 and older with high cholesterol for a research study on treating the condition with diet or a diet-medication combination. All study-related health care will be provided at no charge. Participants will be compensated for their time and travel.

Call the Division of Preventative and Nutritional Medicine in Birmingham toll-free at (888) 807-8939.

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 Databook (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) 901-2576

WRITE:
Observer & Eccentric Newspapers
(Specify Databook, Newsmakers or Briefs)
Attn: Susan Steinmueller
605 East Maple
Birmingham, MI 48009

FAX:
(248) 644-1374

E-MAIL:
steinmueller@oe.hmc.com



What you can do...

- Try to avoid exposure to mosquitoes, and take measures to prevent getting bit by mosquitoes when outdoors.
- Apply an insect repellent containing DEET.
- Wear protective clothing, including long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Keep in mind that mosquitoes are commonly found near tall grass, weeds and bushes, and that they breed in standing or slowly-moving water.
- Safeguard your house by making sure all doors and windows have screens that fit tightly.
- Replace old and damaged screens.
- Remove standing water from gutters, boat covers, flower pots, bird baths and other containers in your yard.
- Remind neighbors to take precautions.
- Report areas with heavy mosquito activity to your county health agency.
- Do not handle a dead bird with bare hands. Use either gloves or a plastic bag and then wrap in two plastic bags before disposing.
- To report dead birds to health officials or obtain additional information, call:

Oakland County Health Division -
(877) 377-3641,
www.co.oakland.mi.us

Wayne County Department
of Public Health -
(734) 727-7445,
www.waynecounty.com

Michigan Department of
Community Health -
(Michigan West Nile Virus Hotline),
(888) 668-0869,
www.mich.state.mi.us

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER

stafford@oe.hmc.com

Concern about West Nile virus mounted last week after discovery of an infected dead bird in Livonia.

Infected birds, particularly crows, are the most sensitive indicator of the virus' presence in a region, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health.

But the state agency and county health officials urge residents to focus on preventive measures, rather than panic, particularly since risk of infection is very low.

"Less than one percent of the mosquito population is infected, and the chances of getting the virus are very slim," said Sandra Collins, public health information manager, Wayne County Department of Public Health. "We want people to maintain their regular summer activities, but just exercise a little extra precaution and avoid mosquito exposure."

The virus, which was identified in 1999 in the United States and in August 2001 in Michigan, is transmitted to humans and other animals through mosquito bites. Mosquitoes become infected with West Nile virus when they feed on birds carrying it. The virus is not transmitted from person to person.

Most humans infected with the virus either have no symptoms or suffer only mild illness, Collins said, adding the chances of becoming severely ill, if infected, are "less than one percent."

Symptoms and illness

In fact, Centers for Disease Control studies show one in four infected persons have only mild illness characterized by fever, headache and body aches. In some cases, symptoms include skin rash and swollen lymph glands.

Symptoms would likely occur three to 15 days after an infected mosquito bite, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health.

If infected, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems, are at a higher risk of serious illness.

West Nile virus can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, and meningitis, an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord.

Symptoms associated with encephalitis include headache, high fever, a stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions and muscle weakness. Those who experience severe or unusual headaches or signs of encephalitis should seek medical care immediately.

Treatment is non-specific for the virus. In severe cases, hospitalization, intravenous fluids, airway management, respiratory support and prevention of secondary infections may be required. There is no vaccine for West Nile virus. In a few cases, mostly among the elderly, death may occur.

West Nile virus outbreaks have occurred in Africa, Egypt, Israel, Asia, Romania, Russia and France.

Avoid mosquitoes, other precautions

"The message that really needs to get out to the general public is the same as last year - you need to avoid areas with mosquitoes," said Ron Grimes, administrator for environmental health services, Oakland County Health Division.

Mosquitoes populate areas with heavy concentrations of weeds, tall grass and bushes. They lay eggs in standing or slow-moving water.

"You should also try to avoid the outdoors when mosquito activity is high, which is dawn, dusk and the early evening hours," Collins said, adding, "It's better to be safe than sorry."

When going outdoors, wear protective clothing, such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and use of an insect repellent containing 35 percent DEET.

Special care should be taken when applying insect repellent to children because of their hand and mouth habits, so be sure to follow manufacturer's guidelines. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends insect repellent with 10 percent DEET for children, said Collins.

To safeguard your house, make sure all windows and doors have tight-fitting screens and replace those with tears, holes or damage.

To stop mosquitoes from breeding in your yard,

Please see **VIRUS, C9**

Memory impairment

U-M study shows estrogen can help menopausal women

For each woman, the physical and emotional signs of menopause, a stage in a woman's life when her periods end, vary. While going through this natural aging process, women may experience many common symptoms including hot flashes, skin and hair changes, bone loss, mood swings, anxiety, insomnia and even minor impaired memory due to a reduction of the female hormone, estrogen, in the body.

A pilot study completed by the University of Michigan Health System demonstrated that with long-term estrogen replacement therapy there may be the potential to change one of the common symptoms that occurs during aging. The study has shown that long-term and consistent use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can help improve certain cognitive areas, particularly non-verbal or spatial memory and attention.

Because estrogen receptors are located throughout the brain, the hormone can affect the brain's functions in multiple ways, one of which is memory.

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According to Dr. Yolanda R. Smith, assistant professor and research investigator in the U-M Division of Reproductive Endocrinology, other studies also have suggested that estrogen does affect memory, especially in post-menopausal women. Most of these studies, however, have been based on short-term use of estrogen replacement and measured a woman's memory during treatment.

"When women go through peri-menopause, estrogen levels will vary in their brain and then eventually become much lower than what they were during their reproductive years," she says. "The lower levels affect different neurotransmitter systems in the brain and they can potentially affect cognition and mood."

Unlike other studies of its kind, the U-M study focused on the effects of long-term estrogen replacement therapy. It looked at women, all 60 years of age or older, who had been using estrogen since menopause. The group was then compared to another group of women who had never used estrogen any time during or after menopause.

The women in the study were tested with a comprehensive neuropsychological testing battery, which measured different memory functions including verbal and non-verbal memory. The researchers also

Please see **ESTROGEN, C7**