

Rx Briefs

■ Grief support

Saint Joseph Mercy Hospice (formerly Hospice of Washlenaw) will present a five-part grief recovery series on live consecutive Thursdays beginning Sept. 19. Sessions held 7-8:30 p.m. at the Senior Health Building, Elderwise Room 2414, on the campus of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Superior Township.

The group's goals are to understand how grief affects you emotionally, spiritually and physically; learn how to deal with anger, guilt and loneliness; and to take steps to recover from grief and grow because of it.

The series is open to the public at no charge. Registration is required. Call Saint Joseph Mercy Hospice at (734) 327-3409.

■ Volunteers sought

Heartland Hospice of Southfield, which serves terminally ill patients and their families in the tri-county area, including Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, is looking for caring and dedicated individuals to train as hospice volunteers.

Volunteers provide companionship for the ill, support for the caregivers, and do administrative clerical tasks. They must be good listeners. Training classes are offered throughout the year at different times and locations.

Call Mary at Heartland Hospice, (800) 770-9859.

■ Flu clinics

Businesses or organizations that want to help their employees remain healthy this year still have time to schedule a flu clinic at their work location. The Voluntary Nurse Association (VNA) Flu-Busters have a limited number of openings for on-site clinics from mid-November through next January. The cost is \$15 per shot, with a minimum of 25 participants required. Pneumonia shots are available at \$25 per shot.

For more information or to schedule a clinic, call Kay Renny at (248) 967-8751 or visit www.vna.org.

According to a study in the March 12, 2001 issue of Archives of Internal Medicine, published by the American Medical Association, vaccinating healthy, working adults could reduce average health costs by \$13.66 per person vaccinated.

■ Infection/heart

Doctors can help prevent bacterial endocarditis in patients with valvular heart disease by reminding them to take antibiotics before dental procedures, according to a recent report in Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association. Bacterial endocarditis is an infection in the heart's inner lining or heart valves. It is caused by bacteria in the bloodstream. Most prone to the infection are people with valvular heart disease, which includes congenital heart disease, mitral valve prolapse and artificial heart valves. Taking antibiotics before procedures likely to cause bleeding - such as dental cleaning - can often prevent infection.

One way to remind doctors to access and discuss infection risk with their patients is by printing the infection risk and stating whether antibiotics are indicated on the echocardiogram report physicians receive. It is a low-cost intervention.

Very special people staff life-saving Survival Flight



PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE BRODA/OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Above, Elaine Philipson (front left), pilot Chris Landis (back left) and paramedic Chris Wagner (back right) assisted by two other EMS staffers unload a stretcher. Top right, a Survival Flight lands at the University of Michigan Hospital.

Christine Broda found her exciting fly-along for this story a rewarding and fitting close to her summer internship at the Observer and Eccentric.

BY CHRISTINE BRODA
STAFF WRITER

Seated at long tables in the city-like cafeteria of the University of Michigan Healthcare Center, the nurses sharing coffee and bagels before the beginning of their 12-hour shift were no different from any of the other medical professionals at the Ann Arbor-based hospital.

Except for the electric blue flight suits.

And while most U-M medical employees work in the university's expansive, multiple facility complex - nationally known as a leading level-one trauma center - these particular nurses are accustomed to carrying out their life-saving duties in the 4-foot by 6-foot interior of a Bell 430 helicopter.

The name badges may identify them as ordinary nurses, but members of this group are in a class all their own. Easily recognized wherever they go by their characteristic jumpsuits and unique mode of transportation, they are the men and women of Survival Flight.

AMBULANCE IN THE SKY

Survival Flight is the University of Michigan's air medical transport pro-

gram, providing critical care helicopter and fixed-wing patient transport services to the state of Michigan.

On any given day Survival Flight nurses - specialists in the care of critically ill or injured patients - may transport a patient from one hospital to another, respond to a critical emergency call or visit former patients in the hospital.

Despite the unpredictable working conditions and extreme environment in which she is expected to operate on a daily basis, flight nurse/paramedic Elaine Philipson said she wouldn't exactly consider herself elite.

"At the end of the day, I'm still a nurse, just like any other nurse out there."

The truth is Philipson's nursing responsibilities are quite unlike those of other registered nurses.

As part of an individual flight team that consists of one other nurse and a pilot, Philipson - like the rest of the Survival Flight nurses - is also trained as a paramedic and can perform most of the same procedures as a doctor working in an emergency room, although she is expected to do so while traveling 150 mph and 2,000 feet above the ground.

"It's hard for people to understand what we do, what goes on up there," she said. "There are so many variables. You have to problem solve and brainstorm... It's very rewarding because there's nothing routine about it, but it can be very emotionally tough. Sometimes you can't save them all."

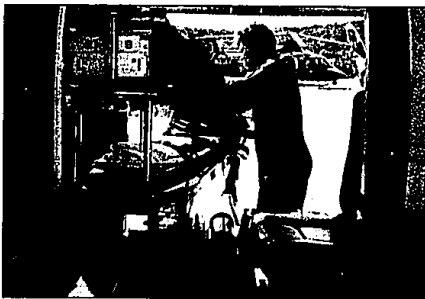
EVERYTHING BUT THE X-RAY

According to Survival Flight medical director Dr. Mark Lowell, his nurses are the most diversely trained in the nation.

"Each patient is a totally different scenario, a totally different mindset," he said. "I know of no other flight program that presents as much of a challenge."

Survival Flight is typically called to the scene of an accident when there is "the potential for life-threatening

PLEASE SEE SURVIVAL, C6



Nurse/paramedic Chris Wagner checks equipment on one of the life-saving U of M helicopters.

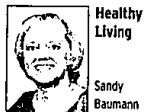
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Dr. Mark Lowell
Survival Flight medical director

Hey, kids: Back-to-school weight gain can be avoided

As the carefree days of summer, sunlight and fun change into the season of hectic school days and homework, the battle of the bulge often begins for students, from elementary school age or college freshmen.

The causes for the ensuing weight gain range from reduced time for physical activity, to increased access to high-fat and high-sugar foods in school cafeterias and vending machines, to stress-related eating. Below are some strategies for maintaining



weight:

LIMIT SUGARED BEVERAGES

When you drink a high-sugar beverage, including soda pop, juice boxes, or sweetened iced

tea, the sugar moves rapidly into the bloodstream. In response to elevated blood sugar, the body releases insulin. Insulin then reduces blood sugar, leaving a student hungry and inattentive at school.

Moreover, each 20 oz. serving of regular soda pop contains 250 calories - which is equal to an eighth of the 2000 total daily calories recommended for students ages 8 to 12.

Soda pops containing caffeine amplify the potential for weight gain. Caffeine causes the release of

norepinephrine in the brain, which increases the secretion of insulin and leads to more hunger.

In addition, caffeine is a diuretic. It can cause excretion of water-soluble B-vitamins, which are needed for a healthy nervous system. Some symptoms of B-vitamin deficiency include anxiety, depression, irritability, and personal stress. These, in turn, may stimulate stress eating.

Switching to water as a beverage not only prevents weight gain associated with soda pop, it also helps the brain work more effec-

tively.

ENGAGE IN FUN ACTIVITY

Students frequently relax from the pressures of school by watching TV or playing computer games.

Often, a better antidote for school stress is an after-dinner walk, some rollerblading, or a session of shooting basketball. Fun physical activity, especially if it is shared with others, raises

PLEASE SEE WEIGHT, C5