

Rx briefs

Booth at Spree

St. Mary Mercy Hospital will have a booth at the Livonia Spree Carnival, June 24-29, at Livonia's Ford Field (Lyndon and Farmington roads).

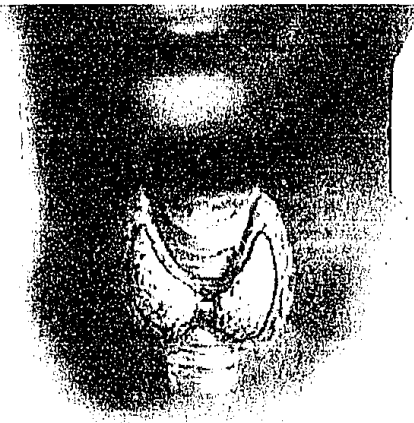
Golf benefit

The Emily Ann Griffin Foundation will host the 2nd Annual Golf Classic Sept. 19 at Whispering Willows Golf Course (20690 Hemlock Road) at 2 p.m. with a shotgun/scramble format. All proceeds will be used to buy hearing aids and equipment for special needs children.

Registration deadline is Sept. 5. For information on registration, to make a donation or to sponsor a hole, call (734) 524-0469. The event will also feature dinner at the Italian American Club and an auction.

Prostate support

Beaumont Hospital offers the "Prostate Support" group, a gathering of men with prostate cancer and their families. Join the group 7-9 p.m. July 1 at Beaumont Hospital, first floor administration building (3601 W. 13 Mile Road) Royal Oak. Call (248) 551-6692 to register.



Silent sickness

Inherited disease Hypothyroidism drains energy

BY KATHIE O'DONOHUE
CORRESPONDENT

Looking back, Kevin Kitzke of Canton says he should have anticipated the possibility of developing thyroid disease, because both his grandmother and his father had it.

A competitive runner in high school whose performance began to deteriorate, Kitzke said, "I thought I was just lazy and kept telling myself I wasn't trying hard enough."

Diagnosed nine years ago at age 34 with Hashimoto's disease, a type of hypothyroidism, Kitzke was surprised no one thought of it sooner. "In high school, I experienced extreme fatigue and I remember girls asking me if I phoned my eyebrows. (Difficulty regrowing hair is one symptom of the disease). I had itchy skin, cold intolerance and severe brain fog. I felt like I was moving in slow motion."

Treated with Synthroid, a thyroid replacement hormone, Kitzke immediately noticed improvement when he devel-

oped tremendous hunger - something he hadn't experienced for a long time. Kitzke now has children and plans to have baseline thyroid testing done soon in case they inherit thyroid disease.

RUNS IN FAMILIES

A butterfly-shaped organ at the base of the neck, the thyroid gland influences the metabolic rate - or energy utilization - of all the cells of the body. Hypothyroidism occurs when the levels of thyroid hormones are too low and the functions of the body slow down significantly.

Dr. Vicki Collins said thyroid disease "usually runs in families and is caused by antibodies against the thyroid gland. In some people, the body thinks the thyroid is foreign tissue."

Collins, of Farmington Family Physicians PC, said hypothyroidism is more common in women than men and that most people diagnosed are over 40. Blood tests, specifically the TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) and T4 test are used in diagnosis. "People usually

complain of fatigue, the inability to lose weight, coarse hair, constipation, heavy menstrual periods, and I see carpal tunnel syndrome as well," said Collins.

Treatment with thyroid hormone is usually lifelong. Collins said, as the thyroid gland tends to decrease in activity over time. Before supplementation was available, "Hypothyroidism could be a fatal condition," she said. "It is such a serious disease if not treated, though it may be viewed as minor because it can be easily treated."

DEBILITATING DISEASE

Plymouth resident Lidia Alvarado also has hypothyroidism and said it is "a condition that causes profound individual and family dysfunction. If I had had an arm and a leg amputated, (others) would have understood that I was unable to do certain tasks and made allowances."

One may look perfectly healthy while suffering from debilitating thyroid disease, she added.

Alvarado first noticed symptoms after

giving birth; she was unable to lose weight and became increasingly tired and slow. A teacher, she eventually had to cut her schedule to part time and was once restricted to bed for months after a bout with the flu.

Though her route to proper diagnosis and health was a circuitous one, Alvarado now takes natural Armour thyroid replacement hormone and feels alive again.

Beaumont endocrinologist Dr. Charles Taylor and his associates see 20,000 thyroid patients every year, half of whom have hypothyroidism. It's a common disorder; 5-10 women experience hypothyroidism for every man.

One in 4,500 children are born without a thyroid gland, something routinely screened for at birth nationwide. Once born mentally retarded and referred to as cretins, these infants are now treatable from birth.

"There is a very significant relationship between thyroid and pregnancy," Taylor

PLEASE SEE HYPOTHYROIDISM, C7

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