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THE NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

advancing health



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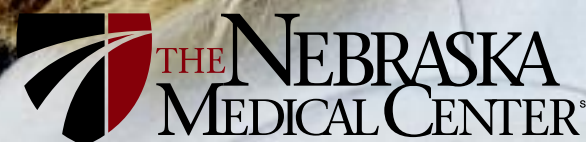
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SERIOUS MEDICINE. EXTRAORDINARY CARE.

New Medical Therapies Improve Symptoms of ALZHEIMER'S



New medical therapies introduced over the past 10 years are making great inroads in helping individuals manage the symptoms of dementia, and many more are in research stages.

The Nebraska Medical Center, one of the country's leading research centers, is beginning a clinical trial to study a new drug called leuprolide that medical experts believe

could slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia.

"It is believed that regulatory hormones may play a role in causing damage to nerve cells in the brain, which may encourage the development of Alzheimer's," says Daniel Murman, M.D., neurologist at The

Nebraska Medical Center. "Leuprolide suppresses the levels of regulatory hormones that may be driving the Alzheimer's process."

To participate in the study, you must be older than age 65, have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and be on a stable dose of dementia drugs. You may continue your current drug therapy while participating in the study.

Dementia is a mental disorder that affects our ability to think, speak, reason, remember and move. While there are many types of dementia, Alzheimer's affects more individuals than any other, occurring in roughly 10 percent of people by age 65. By age 85, that number climbs to 30 percent.

Some of the early symptoms of dementia include short-term memory loss that affects daily living functions, like remembering people and directions, problem-solving, balancing the checkbook, misplacing items or sudden mood swings.

"Early diagnosis and treatment is the key to managing your symptoms and slowing the progression of these symptoms," says Dr. Murman, who specializes in geriatric neurology. "Ignoring the symptoms can compound your problems."

Seeking medical help also can identify other medical problems that may be causing symptoms similar to Alzheimer's, he says. Approximately 5 to 10 percent of people show memory loss, confusion and other signs of dementia due to a potentially reversible illness such as metabolic problems, depression, drug intoxication, thyroid problems or vitamin deficiencies.

Other aspects of your health also should be managed well to minimize their impact on symptoms of dementia. ■

fitness & nutrition

TOO SICK TO EXERCISE?

Regular exercise can help you prevent or limit cold symptoms. But should you work out when you feel sick?

It's safe to exercise if:

- you have a head cold. Exercise may relieve your stuffiness. But take it easy, and postpone an intensive session until you feel better.

You shouldn't exercise if:

- your symptoms are below the head. Symptoms that should sideline you include achy muscles, fatigue or a hacking cough.
- you have a fever, are vomiting or have diarrhea.


FRUITS AND FLAVONOIDS: A GREAT MIX

Fresh fruits are a smart pick because they are low in calories and high in vitamins, minerals and fiber. But did you know that many fruits also have flavonoids? These antioxidant compounds have been shown in studies to help reduce both the effects of bad cholesterol and the risk of cancer. Some fruits with flavonoids include berries, apples, grapefruit and oranges.



Visit www.NebraskaMed.com for more fitness and nutrition tips.

Also, sign up to receive monthly tips with *Advancing Health Online*.

 For more information about the Alzheimer's study, or to receive a free Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet, please call 800-922-0000.

New Heart Transplant Program Offers Patients Lifesaving Options

The Nebraska Medical Center recently completed its first heart transplant in its new heart transplant program. Mark Maeder, a 34-year-old Papillion, Neb., man, is recuperating at home and doing very well since receiving the lifesaving heart transplant in September.

"We have one of the most experienced and highly regarded cardiac centers in the state," says Kim Duncan, M.D., chief of cardiothoracic surgery at The Nebraska Medical Center. "The heart transplant program expands our ability to provide even greater options to heart patients and brings us closer to becoming the most comprehensive cardiac center in the region. Our goal is to become a regional provider for heart failure, ventricular assist and transplant services by working with other cardiac centers in the region to take the sickest cardiac patients and provide them cardiac replacement therapy."

The transplant team's short-term goal is to receive Medicare certification, which requires 12 transplant cases in a 12-month period with survival rates of 73 percent for one year and 65 percent for two years. Eventually, the team

hopes to add pediatric heart transplantation to the program.

Lead transplant surgeon Mohammad Quader, M.D., says the fact that we are a major transplant center means all of the support services to create a world-class cardiac program are in place. "This step promises to take us to a new level of excellence in cardiac care," says Dr. Quader.

In Nebraska, an average of 10 to 15 patients are waiting for a heart at any one given time. Nationwide, an average of 2,200 heart transplants are performed each year. As the population continues to age, the need for transplantation is expected to increase. One of the biggest obstacles to heart transplants is the shortage of available organs.

The one-year survival rate for heart transplant patients is over 70 percent and 10-year survival rates are approximately 50 percent, says Dr. Quader. "When a patient is listed for heart transplant, it is in essence, a last option," he says. "In that context, heart transplant is very successful." ■



SPECIAL EVENT
Register today!

Community Health Fair & Conference

Renew, Refresh, Revive

Saturday, March 11, 8 a.m. to noon

Happy Hollow Country Club

1701 South 105th Street

Refreshments Door Prizes Giveaways

Health Presentations



Take a morning to spend some time caring for your own health. This day of health and wellness is designed to help educate you about some of today's primary health issues. Registration is required. Please call 800-922-0000.

We Are Here for You 24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week

The Nebraska Medical Center allows you access to free health information whenever you need it and features:

- 7 days a week, 24 hours a day access
- bilingual
- physician referral
- class or seminar registration
- a "call-me-back-later" feature through our website

800-922-0000

Help for Women with Depression

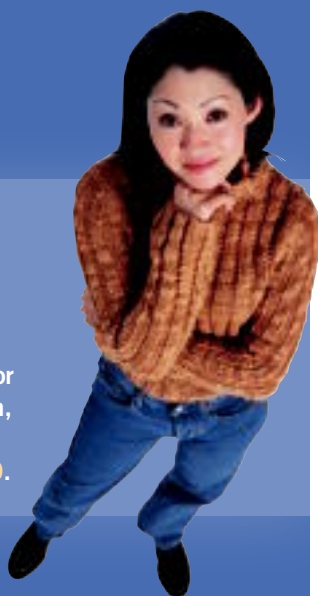
Depression is a pervasive and impairing illness that also is very treatable. Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men.

The Nebraska Medical Center is offering the "Insight" program to assist women in managing stress, improving self-confidence, enhancing communication, learning coping skills and establishing a network of social support. A group of five to eight women meet with a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist for two hours weekly for 15 weeks starting the week of January 23. "The self-knowledge gained through the 'Insight' program enables women to function more effectively in their daily lives," says Debra Knop, R.N., M.S.N., program coordinator. "Outcome data have demonstrated that women who have completed the program, even up to a year later, have increased self-esteem, are more hopeful and have less depressive symptoms."

The program is for women who have mild to moderate depressive symptoms, have suffered from a major depressive illness in the past or are "at risk" for depression. The "Insight" program is not intended to replace any current treatment for depression but to enhance any current treatment plan.

JOIN OUR PROGRAM!

For more information about how you can get help for depression, call 800-922-0000.



health & wellness

PROGRAMS

Health and Wellness Club Calendar Club activities are open to all interested individuals age 50 and older. Health and Wellness Club (H&W) members enjoy occasional discounts and special offerings. **For more information or to register for the following activities, call 800-922-0000.**

Zoo Walking Club

Fridays, 9 a.m.; meet at the main gate
Must be a zoo member.

Third Thursday Art Encounter Club

Third Thursdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Feb. 16, March 16
Free to Joslyn members; H&W Club members pay museum admission. Enjoy guided tours of Joslyn's permanent collection and special exhibitions.
Feb. 16: Illuminating the Word: The Saint John's Bible; French Donjons: Castle of Coucy, Medieval Life in Miniature.

March 16: Jun Kaneko: Madama Butterfly; Illuminating the Word: The Saint John's Bible; French Donjons: Castle of Coucy, Medieval Life in Miniature

Club Bowling League

Tuesdays, 9 a.m.
Westlane Bowling Alley
151 North 72nd Street
Fee: \$5; no reservations required.

Visualizing Literature: Book Club for Art Lovers

Meets four times annually, 10:30 a.m. to noon or 1 to 2:30 p.m.
Joslyn Art Museum conference room
Feb. 14: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
A series of moderated book discussions designed to explore connections in the literary and visual arts. Discussions are led by Joslyn docents and wrap up in the galleries to discover thematic links between the book and artworks on display.

Free to Joslyn members; H&W Club members pay museum admission. For more information, call Joslyn Art Museum at **402-342-3300**.

Free Blood Pressure Screening

Second Fridays, 8:30 to 9:45 a.m.
Oakview Mall, JC Penney Wing

Vigor Tone, Mightier Bone

An ongoing, supervised strength and weight training class geared toward seniors. It meets on *Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 to 11 a.m.*, at the Student Life Center on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus, 40th and Jones Street. For more information, please call **402-559-2030**.

Tai Chi

A gentle and slow motion exercise that increases overall fitness, coordination and balance. The class meets for six-week sessions at the Bloomfield Forum Retirement Facility, 9804 Nicholas Street. To register, please call **402-559-2030**.



Get the Facts on Flu! Get the latest facts on this year's flu virus and vaccine. Is the avian flu a real threat to you and your family? To get the answers to your questions, go to www.NebraskaMed.com.

Newborn Intensive Care Unit Provides Highest Level of CARE

The care of a baby so tiny it could fit in the palm of your hands takes extraordinary skill, experience and tender care. With more than 1,400 years of combined neonatal intensive care experience, the nurses at The Nebraska Medical Center's Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) are up to the task.

"The experience our nurses bring to neonatal medical care is extremely valuable," says David Bolam, M.D., neonatologist and medical director of the NICU. "They play a critical role in improving our ability to diagnose problems quickly and accurately and in providing effective medical management of a baby's care."

It's a job that nurses like Lyn Hall, R.N.C., clinical nurse specialist, who has worked in neonatal intensive care for some 31 years, finds especially gratifying.

Expanding the NICU

"The bedside nurse plays an integral role in integrating the care of the baby with the family and probably has the greatest impact on the baby's outcome next to the baby's family," says Hall.

The Nebraska Medical Center recently opened its newly designed and expanded NICU that is more than triple the size of the former NICU. "The new NICU has been designed to embrace a family-centered environment tailored to support the developmental needs of premature infants," says Susan Adams, R.N., director of Women's and Infants' Services.

Private Rooms

Instead of one large open room unit, the new center features large private rooms for each infant with dedicated family spaces as well as separate areas for education, relaxation and overnight care by parents before discharge. Each room is equipped with state-of-the-art technology

and includes special features to control light and noise, which have been shown to have a significant impact on an infant's development.

Reducing Noise Levels

For instance, noise has been found to be a critical component in a baby's healing process. The new NICU's walls, ceilings and floors have been designed with acoustic materials that dampen noise and limit continuous sound levels to less than 50 decibels. Each room also features cycled light to replicate the natural circadian day/night cycles of a baby.

Babies' rooms are equipped with developmental positioning products that simulate the uterine environment. But even more important is the role of the parents, who are encouraged to hold and participate in skin-to-skin kangaroo care with their baby and to be involved in the baby's care as much as possible.

Complex Care

The Nebraska Medical Center's NICU is the only NICU in the region designated as Level IIIC that provides extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO). Level IIIC units care for the most complex

and critically ill patients and have continuously available personnel (neonatologists, neonatal nurses, respiratory therapists), as well as on-site access to pediatric medical subspecialty consultants, major surgery performed on-site and ECMO for medical conditions.

The NICU is supported by its own Neonatal Transport Team—a group of nurses highly trained in the transport and care of premature or ill newborns. The team has more than 33 years of experience and is the only air neonatal transport team in Omaha with an on-site 24/7 specialty nurse team. ■



Kidney Disease and Cholesterol Clinical Trial

Volunteers with chronic kidney disease are invited to participate in a research study. Doctors are looking at the effects of lowering cholesterol in patients with chronic kidney disease. Eligibility includes: age 40 or older; history of chronic kidney disease; dialysis patients. Please call The Nebraska Medical Center at **800-922-0000** to learn more.

Prostate Cancer Clinical Trial

The Nebraska Medical Center Department of Radiation Oncology is conducting a clinical study for patients with prostate cancer receiving external beam radiation therapy. We will study an investigational medical device designed to assist in the positioning of the prostate prior to radiation therapy. Once aligned, the location of the prostate may be tracked continuously throughout delivery of radiation delivery. To learn more, call The Nebraska Medical Center at **800-922-0000**.



What New Pap Guidelines Mean to You

The American Cancer Society recently issued new guidelines on the frequency of receiving Pap tests. Visit www.NebraskaMed.com/pap to find out how the new guidelines affect you.



For more information on the new NICU at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit www.NebraskaMed.com.

Which Is It: Heartburn or Chest Pain?



You've just eaten dinner and now you have a burning sensation in your chest. You attribute it to heartburn. Before you shrug it off too quickly, you may want to give it closer consideration. There's a chance that your chest pain could be a warning sign of a heart attack. Knowing the difference could save your life.

“Women and individuals with diabetes are more likely to experience atypical symptoms during a heart attack,” says John Cimino, M.D., cardiologist at The Nebraska Medical Center. For instance, women may experience mild chest discomfort or a burning sensation in the chest, fatigue or shortness of breath, back or jaw pain and nausea or vomiting.

Diabetics on the other hand, may have no pain at all or they may experience a heartburn-like sensation, shortness of breath or flu-like symptoms.

Common heart-related warning signs for men include more typical presentations such as sudden pressure, tightening, squeezing or crushing pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes and spreads to the back, neck, jaw, shoul-

ders or arms; chest discomfort accompanied by shortness of breath, sweating, dizziness or nausea; pressure or tightness in the chest during physical activity or when under stress.

On the other hand, the burning sensation associated with heartburn often starts in your lower abdomen and may radiate to your chest and neck. If stomach acid backs up into the esophagus, it can leave a sour taste in your mouth—especially if you're lying down.

Heartburn is often triggered when extra pressure is applied to the sphincter muscle from excess weight, or by overeating or lying down too soon after a meal. Certain foods, as well as overindulgence in alcohol or caffeine, also can relax the sphincter muscle or increase production of stomach acid.

Take the Women and Heart Disease Quiz

Did you know that heart disease is the number-one killer of women and is likely to be more fatal in women than men? Test your knowledge about women and heart disease.

Take our interactive heart disease quiz online at www.NebraskaMed.com/heartquiz.



online

call

Call 800-922-0000 to receive your free brochure, "Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs."

"If your heartburn doesn't go away after taking medications such as Maalox or prescription medications, you should consider seeking medical advice," says Dr. Cimino. "Time is of the essence if you are having a heart attack. Thirty percent of people who have a heart attack never make it to the hospital and die."

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense—where there is no doubt what is happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before seeking help. Other indications that you may be experiencing a heart attack and should seek emergency help include: if the "heartburn" seems worse or different than normal, especially if it occurs during physical activity or is accompanied by one of the symptoms mentioned above.

Heartburn isn't the only digestive symptom that can cause chest pain. A muscle spasm in your esophagus may have the same effect. The pain of a gallbladder attack also can spread to your chest. Initially, you may notice nausea and an intense, steady ache in the upper middle or upper right abdomen—especially after a fatty meal. The pain may shift to your back or right shoulder. ■

q & a...

Is there a new vaccine for meningitis and who should receive it?

Nedra Marion, R.N.

Manager, Department of Healthcare Epidemiology

Meningococcal disease is the third leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2 to 18 years old in the United States. Meningitis is an infection of fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Of the 2,600 people who will get meningococcal disease each year, about 10 to 15 percent of these people will die. A new meningococcal vaccine was recently introduced called MCV4. Although both MCV4 and MPSV4 work well and protect 90 percent of those who receive them, MCV4 is expected to provide better, longer-lasting protection than MPSV4. MCV4 is the preferred vaccine for at-risk people ages 11 to 55 and for all children at their routine pre-adolescent visit. For those who have never received MCV4 previously, a dose is recommended at high school entry. The meningococcal vaccine is also recommended for anyone at increased risk for meningococcal disease, such as college freshmen living in dormitories, military recruits or individuals with terminal complement component deficiency (an immune system disorder), those traveling to countries that have an outbreak of meningococcal disease or those who may have been exposed during an outbreak of meningitis. To find out more, go to NebraskaMed.com/meningitis.



Is hormone replacement therapy safe for me?

Frank DeVries, M.D., obstetrician/gynecologist

Many women continue to be wary of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) as a result of misleading information released by the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study that found that women taking HRT experienced higher rates of heart disease and breast cancer. However, when experts compared data from the WHI study and the Nurses Health Study, they found that younger women who take hormones at the onset of menopause aren't at higher risk and could potentially see a cardiac benefit, whereas older women who begin HRT treatment long after menopause begins are clearly at higher risk. The bottom line: taking HRT for two to three years is safe and helpful to relieve symptoms of menopause for the majority of women. To be sure, discuss all of your options with your physician.

Want to LEARN more?
Need a PHYSICIAN REFERRAL?
Call us at 800-922-0000 or visit
www.NebraskaMed.com.



Cancer Center Offers Personal Care 24/7

Living with a cancer diagnosis or the many life changes that come with an organ transplant can be a stressful and frightening period in your life. At a time when individuals feel their most vulnerable, patients at the Peggy D. Cowdery Patient Care Center at The Nebraska Medical Center have found a silver lining in their experience—convenience combined with an extraordinary level of personalized, comprehensive care.



“We get to know our patients on a more personal level,” says Margie Langer, R.N., B.S.N., staff nurse at the Cowdery Patient Care Center. “Many of these patients we see anywhere from several weeks to several years or more. We get to know them and their families, and that, in itself, is a comfort to the patient.”

The center provides many services to these patients that would normally require an inpatient hospital stay such as blood and IV infusions, chemotherapy as well as biopsies, bone marrow biopsies, spinal taps and other procedures. “This is much more convenient for the patient,” notes Langer. “They can have family and friends accompany them and it allows them to schedule their visits around their own busy schedules.”

The Cowdery Patient Care Center is open for scheduled treatment appointments during the day and evenings and seven days a week, 24 hours a day for urgent needs referred by a physician. “Our oncology and transplant patients do not need to go to an emergency room for the unique needs of those medical conditions,” says Ruth Caddy Vyhliidal, R.N., manager of the center, “but are referred directly to the treatment center, which is staffed by nurses experienced with oncology and transplant complications.”

Oncology patients who receive chemotherapy treatment at the center also benefit from a personal case manager, a nurse who becomes the patient’s primary contact throughout the entire treatment process. The case manager serves as the primary liaison between patients and the physician and provides patient education, coordinates tests and procedures, follows up with patients and is accessible to them on a daily basis to provide support and information.

“Our goal is to provide personalized and comprehensive medical services to our patients that are convenient, comfortable and easily accessible and are provided by experts that know them and understand their needs,” says Vyhliidal. ■

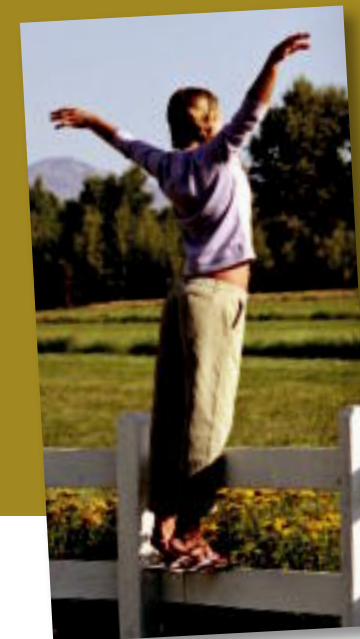
CUTTING-EDGE CANCER
TREATMENT AT THE
NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

Novalis® Shaped Beam Surgery

Learn more about Novalis shaped beam surgery—one of the most sophisticated and highly precise radiation treatments offered today, available only at The Nebraska Medical Center. Novalis delivers a carefully shaped and highly precise dose of high-energy radiation to treat tumors in traditionally difficult to reach areas such as the brain as well as the pancreas, lungs, liver and prostate. In many cases, it provides an alternative to invasive surgery and allows doctors to treat tumors on an outpatient basis.



To find out more about Novalis, call **800-922-0000** to receive your free brochure.



Learn more about our cancer and organ transplant services at www.NebraskaMed.com.

Ken Stinson Honored with Star of Courage Award

Determination. Hope. Courage. These are words cancer patients know well. The Nebraska Medical Center honors their fight, their victories and their defeats each year with the Star of Courage Award.

This year's recipient, Kenneth E. Stinson, chairman of Peter Kiewit Sons', Inc., is a longtime community leader and philanthropist. Six years ago, he was touched by a disease with the potential to strike one of every six men—prostate cancer.

Stinson came to The Nebraska Medical Center for treatment—a logical step for a man who became aware of the high quality of care while serving on the hospital board of directors.

"That knowledge brings you confidence," says Stinson. "That's why I was very confident in the kind of care I was going to receive when I found out I had prostate cancer. There are areas of tremendous expertise that we have affiliated with the medical center that all Nebraskans should be proud of. It's an extraordinary place."

Even after his diagnosis, Stinson pressed forward and maintained an active presence in the community. "His unwavering spirit provides an example to others battling similar circumstances," says Mike Geis, executive director, Office of Development at The Nebraska Medical Center. "His persistence and vigilance in advancing his company and this

community in spite of his quiet battle to overcome cancer provide inspiration beyond measure."

Stinson received his award on October 22 at the Qwest Center Omaha at The Nebraska Medical Center's annual "A Celebration of Courage—A Breakfast for Cancer Survivors." ■



Ken Stinson



Take the next step. Learn more about preventing cancer at www.NebraskaMed.com

Targeted Cancer Therapies Improve Outcomes

A woman diagnosed with breast cancer has many more treatment options than ever before. Evidence is mounting that newer forms of treatment called targeted therapies, used in combination with traditional treatments, are improving outcomes for breast cancer patients.

"These drug therapies are having a significant impact on our ability to fight breast cancer and are widely used in treatment regimens," says James Talmadge, Ph.D., a research specialist at The University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Today doctors classify breast cancers into specific categories, treat them with traditional chemotherapy and surgical techniques and then add targeted therapies to the mix. Targeted therapies refer to drug treatments that attack tumors

without harming healthy tissue and are categorized based on the method in which they attack the tumor.

For the past 10 years, women whose tumors are hormone-receptor positive, meaning they are fueled by the hormones estrogen and progesterone, have been treated with a hormonal drug called tamoxifen. The drug works by reducing estrogen's ability to fuel cancer growth. More recently, a new class of drugs called aromatase inhibitors have been found to be significantly more effective than tamoxifen in reducing the relapse of breast cancer.

"This is significant since most women will develop breast cancer later in life when they are postmenopausal," says Dr. Talmadge. "These comparatively low toxicity drugs can potentially help 50 to

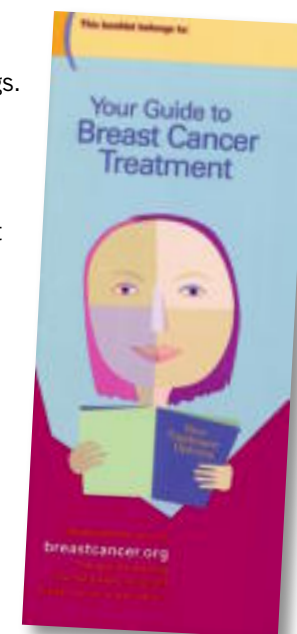
80 percent of postmenopausal women who are estrogen-receptor positive."

New hope also has arrived for women who develop an aggressive class of cancer tumors that produce too much of a gene called HER-2. These women tend to be younger and until recently, had little or no options after completing chemotherapy. That was until the monoclonal antibody drug Herceptin was introduced which works by slowing or halting the growth of cancer cells with large amounts of HER-2.

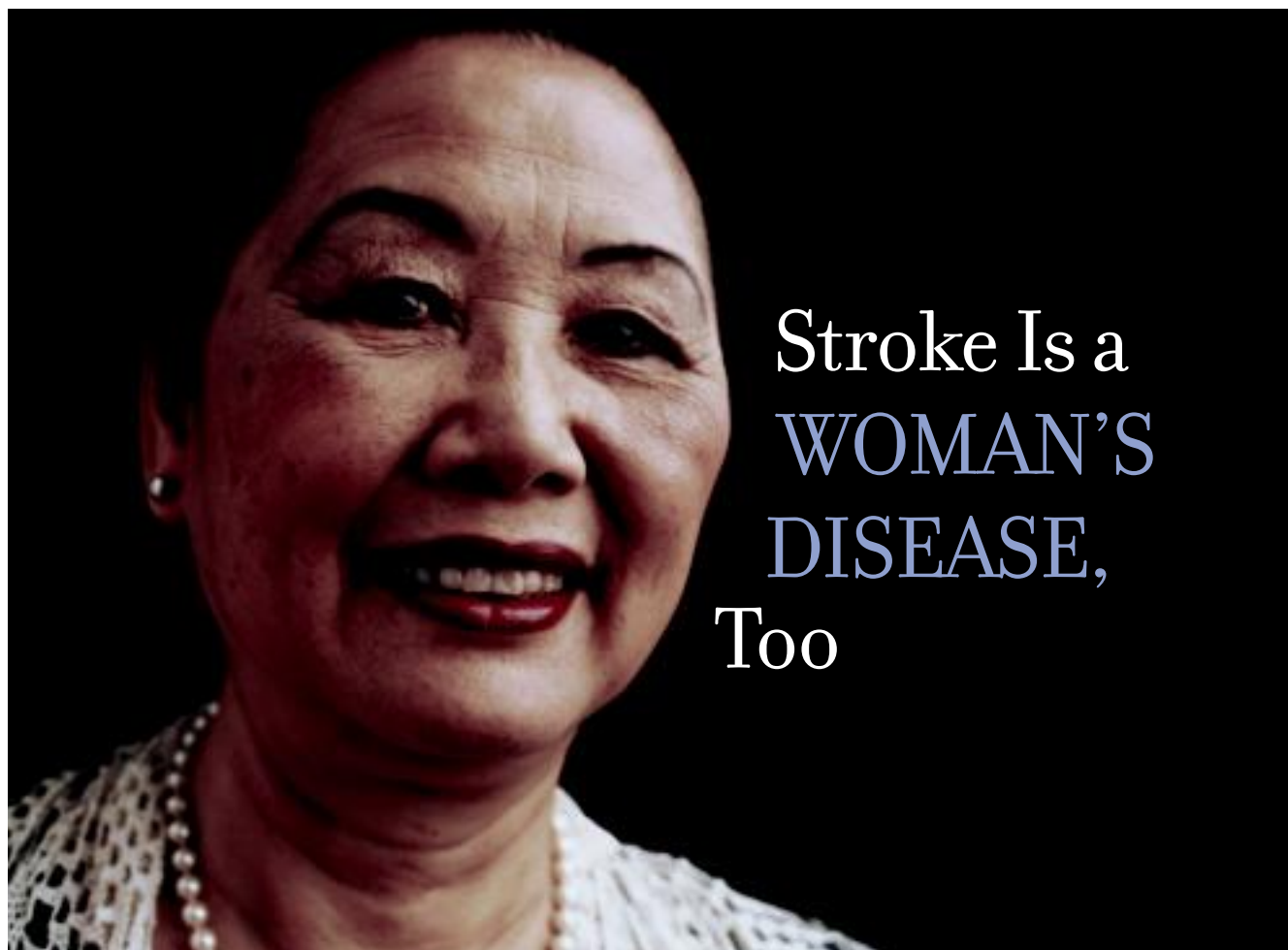
"When combined with chemotherapy, this antibody has been quite effective at treating tumors, and patients are less likely to have recurring cancer," says Elizabeth Reed, M.D., oncologist at The Nebraska Medical Center.

Another class of drugs not limited to a specific type of tumor are anti-angiogenesis drugs. These drugs work by inhibiting the formation of new blood vessels that feed tumors and thereby prevent their growth.

Dr. Talmadge says he expects to see more success in the development of vaccines to prevent and treat cancer in the future. ■



For a free breast cancer brochure, call us at 800-922-0000.



Stroke Is a WOMAN'S DISEASE, Too

If you're a woman, you're used to taking care of the health needs of the rest of your family. Yours can wait, right? Wrong. Increasingly, we're finding that women are just as susceptible to many of the diseases we associate with men such as heart attacks and stroke. For some time now, we've known that coronary heart disease, which causes heart attack, is the leading cause of death for

American women. Heart disease is also more likely to be fatal in women and is more likely to leave women severely disabled.

The news is not so good when it comes to strokes either. Recent evidence indicates that women have more severe first strokes, at an older age than men, and remain more disabled. In the United States, stroke is the third-leading cause of death.

According to the American Heart Association, in 2000, women accounted for 61.4 percent of U.S. stroke deaths.

In both diseases, women tend to develop the condition about 10 years later in life than men, generally after menopause. "We don't know exactly why, but everyone traditionally thought it was related to the loss of the protective benefits of estrogen," notes Pierre Fayad, M.D.,

neurologist at The Nebraska Medical Center. "The fact that women develop these diseases later in life, may account for the fact that they are more severe and more fatal. Women also tend to lack the same degree of support systems."

This does not mean that younger women are excluded from being at risk for stroke. "While stroke in younger women is less common, it can undoubtedly happen," says Dr. Fayad. "It can be related to various causes and unfortunately, because women have a higher risk of migraines, often strokes are missed and blamed on migraines."

There is also an increased risk for stroke in women with atrial fibrillation—an irregular heart rhythm in which the two upper heart chambers quiver instead of beating effectively, says Dr. Fayad. Blood that isn't pumped completely out of the chamber can pool and form clots that may travel to the brain, causing a cardioembolic stroke. Atrial fibrillation can be treated with anticoagulants (blood thinners), which reduce the likelihood that blood will clot by up to eighty percent. Women who are at increased risk for a cardioembolic stroke may benefit from the use of preventive anticoagulation treatment, says Dr. Fayad.

Although still preliminary, recent evidence shows that post-menopausal women may also benefit from taking aspirin daily, says Dr. Fayad, providing as much as a 24 percent reduction in the development of ischemic stroke. ■

reduce your risk

Some of the primary risk factors for stroke are ones that you can control. And by taking control now, you may be able to reduce your risk for stroke. These include:

- **High blood pressure**—High blood pressure is one of the most important risk factors for stroke. Women have an increased risk of developing high blood pressure if they are obese, have a family history of high blood pressure, are pregnant, take certain types of birth control pills or have reached menopause.
- **Tobacco smoke**—Women who smoke have an increased risk for ischemic stroke and subarachnoid hemorrhage. Women smokers who use birth control pills also have a higher risk of stroke than nonsmokers who use them.
- **High blood cholesterol**—High blood cholesterol increases a woman's risk for stroke. Studies show that women's cholesterol is higher than men's from age 45 on.
- **Physical inactivity and overweight**—Various studies have shown that lack of physical activity indirectly increases the risk of stroke. Inactive people tend to be overweight, which can lead to high blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, diabetes and increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Diabetes mellitus**—Women with diabetes have up to two times the risk of stroke. People with diabetes often have high blood pressure and high cholesterol and are overweight, increasing their risk even more.

TO KNOW if someone is having a stroke, ask these three questions.

Ask the person to:

- 1 smile
- 2 raise both arms
- 3 speak a simple sentence.

Call 911 immediately if the person has trouble with these tasks.

Burning Feet, Dizziness and Fainting? It Could Be Neuropathy

Burning feet, heat intolerance, decreased sweating, dizziness and fainting, while all very different symptoms, they are all signs and symptoms of a possible autonomic and small fiber neuropathy. Autonomic neuropathies are caused by damage to the nerves that regulate the part of your nervous system that you can't control such as heart rate, blood pressure, perspiration and digestion. Damage to your autonomic nerves results in faulty communication between your brain and the parts of our body that your autonomic nervous system serves. Autonomic neuropathy is also one of the most difficult types of neuropathies to diagnose.

The Nebraska Medical Center recently opened the only Autonomic and Sensory Lab in the state to diagnose and treat individuals with autonomic neuropathy. "This lab will allow us to determine the presence of the autonomic and small fiber neuropathy and their severity," says Pariwat Thaisetthawatkul, M.D., neurologist and director of the lab.

Diabetes Is Most Common Cause

A number of conditions can cause damage to the autonomic nerves. The most common cause is diabetes mellitus, says Dr. Thaisetthawatkul. Approximately half of people who have diabetes mellitus will develop some types of neuropathy. The longer you have diabetes, the higher your risk. Risk is also higher for people who've had the disease for more than 25 years, who are older than 40 and who have difficulty controlling their blood sugar.

Other causes of autonomic failure or small fiber neuropathy include amyloidosis with abnormal amyloid protein accumulated in organs including periph-

eral nerves; autoimmune diseases in which your immune system attacks and damages parts of your body and nerves such as Sjogren's syndrome or paraneoplastic autonomic neuropathy; multiple system atrophy; hereditary sensory and autonomic neuropathy; primary autonomic failure and some rare inherited metabolic disorders.

Diagnostic Tests

Determining the specific causes of your condition is very important to develop an effective treatment plan. The Autonomic and Sensory Lab requires patients to participate in four to five noninvasive tests that measure your heart rate, blood pressure, how much you sweat, how your blood pressure and heart rate change with head-up tilt, and sensory levels in response to certain stimuli and maneuvers. "These tests are quite effective at helping us develop an accurate diagnosis, and initiating the most effective treatment plan," says Dr. Thaisetthawatkul.



If diabetes mellitus is the underlying source, better management of blood sugar may be needed. Individuals with an autoimmune disease may be treated with immunotherapy. Symptomatic treatment is also important. Pain and discomfort may be controlled through the use of medications such as nonnarcotic or narcotic pain relievers, antidepressants and seizure medications. Patients who have orthostatic hypotension such as a blood pressure drop when they stand up, need medications to maintain blood pressure. Patients who have heat intolerance may need to avoid situations that can exacerbate high body temperature. ■

Relief for Spinal Fracture

It can happen without warning. You fall, cough or merely bend over and feel a pain in your back. If you're a female 60 and older, you may have suffered a vertebral compression fracture.

Compression fractures are quite common among women who suffer from osteoporosis, a condition that causes bones to become so weak and brittle that even mild stresses can cause a fracture.

Vertebral fractures can be very painful, may heal slowly and for some, can become quite debilitating. Some individuals experience limited mobility and may require large amounts of narcotics to minimize the pain or may become completely bedridden. For these individuals, a minimally invasive, outpatient and virtually painless procedure called vertebroplasty may be the answer.

"This is a very effective procedure that has minimal side effects and can greatly reduce the pain and suffering these individuals experience," says William Thorell, M.D., neurosurgeon. "Patients feel better the next day, experience increased mobility and can resume normal activities. In elderly patients, we want to encourage mobility as much as possible, as immobility often leads to other complications."

Vertebroplasty is performed by using a needle to inject a cement-like material that acts as a bone mineral substitute into the compressed fracture. The cement solidifies and reinforces the fractured bone, helping to alleviate back pain and prevent further vertebral collapse. Patients often return home the same day.

Although vertebroplasty is safe and effective in most cases, the procedure should be performed only if a patient has back pain that significantly impairs mobility and quality of life, notes Dr. Thorell. Other possible causes of pain should be eliminated first.



To schedule an appointment with the Autonomic and Sensory Lab, call 800-922-0000.

Take Charge of Your Health! DON'T MISS OUT!

The Nebraska Medical Center is offering the following health information resources free of charge.

To receive your free information call us at 800-922-0000.

- Pedometer
- Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet
- Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs brochure
- Your Guide to Breast Cancer Treatment
- Novalis Beam surgery brochure

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Receive valuable health information on a monthly basis and get the latest updates on our classes and services relevant to your interests. Register under "Health and Wellness" at www.NebraskaMed.com.



Extraordinary Care Recognized by an Extraordinary Award

The Nebraska Medical Center has joined an elite group of hospitals nationwide by being recognized as a distinguished hospital for service excellence by J.D. Power and Associates, one of the world's leading independent marketing information firms. As the first hospital in Nebraska to receive this distinction, The Nebraska Medical Center joins a select group of hospitals nationwide that have demonstrated the ability to consistently deliver "an outstanding patient experience." This distinction is awarded to only the top 20 percent of acute care hospitals in the nation.

For more than three decades, J.D. Power and Associates has been a leader in surveying consumers and reporting their opinions and expectations. The annual study, comprised of a representative sample of more than 2,500 hospital inpatients across the country, establishes the benchmarks for service excellence.

J.D. Power and Associates surveyed more than 2,500 hospital inpatients across the country after discharge, focusing on five key drivers of patient satisfaction: dignity and respect, speed and efficiency, comfort, information and communication and emotional support.

The Nebraska Medical Center exceeded the national benchmark study score for overall patient satis-



faction. The hospital also performed especially well compared to the national study in the speed and efficiency with which the staff delivered care to their patients.

"The Nebraska Medical Center received this distinction by providing patients with a consistent, positive experience," says Glenn Fosdick, president and chief executive officer at The Nebraska Medical Center. "The caregivers, physicians and administrative staff can be proud of their contribution to the care and

health of their community. This award speaks volumes to the caliber of health care professionals and the kind of treatment patients find here at The Nebraska Medical Center." ■



advancing health

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