

what's happening

Maine Medical Center
Portland, Maine 04102

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FBR doctor advocates screening of all mothers to identify neural tube risks

A Scarborough pediatrician and medical research scientist has proposed that a blood test be offered to all pregnant women to help identify babies with spinal cord defects before they are born.

The proposal—in the August issue of *Journal of the American Medical Association*—was made by James Haddow, M.D., MMC staff member and associate director of the Foundation for Blood Research in Scarborough, in collaboration with James N. Macri, Ph.D., a researcher in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, State University of New York at Stonybrook.

The two scientists say that such a screening program would identify the two infants with spinal cord and brain defects that occur statistically in every 1,000 births. It also would help identify multiple pregnancies, prematurity and other high-risk situations and would serve to correct frequent errors in gestational age.

But neural tube defects—spina bifida and other complications of the vital nerve column normally protected by the vertebrae—is the principal target of the screening proposal.

"If we assume 150,000 live births in New England per year," the doctors said, "between 210 and 335 neural tube defects might be anticipated annually." Half would be spina bifida, which they described as a birth defect characterized by incomplete development of the vertebrae and resulting damage to the spinal cord or neural tube. This damage usually causes partial or complete paralysis of the lower limbs and body. Neural tube defects including spina bifida and anencephaly are among the most common major birth malformations in the U.S.

Haddow's laboratory—the Foundation for Blood Research in Scarborough—screens serum samples from northern New England for elevated levels of a protein that is the "marker" for neural tube defects. About 20 percent of

Maine's mothers-to-be are now offered the test by their physicians and the screening is done at the Scarborough laboratories. The organization also conducts a counseling program for parents whose risk of producing a child with spinal cord problems is determined by laboratory methods or through genetic research.

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August 22, 1979

Donor blood near 'critical' level

The American Red Cross Blood Services—Northeast Region announced this week that the blood supply in Maine and Massachusetts "is approaching critical levels."

There is an urgent need, Red Cross said, for platelets and whole blood of all types. They said August is the third highest transfusion month of the year.

MMC Blood Donor Committee chairman Bill Gousse said the Red Cross has specifically asked for A-negative and O-negative donors, but that all types are needed. He said the Portland Red Cross blood bank on Forest Avenue will welcome MMC donors on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.



LATEST E.A.C. PROJECT is financing the purchase of these picnic tables, now placed on the lawn near the S.M.R.T.I. entrance for use of employees at lunch-time. Among the first to use them were, from left, Karen Bunker and Terry DiDonato, Accounting; Lynn Lagerstrom, Social Services, and Susan Spear, Accounting. (A/V Photo)

Isabel Stiles, 85 last week, is proud of her 6,500 hours as Volunteer at MMC

She has been working for this institution since before WWII. She has seen many changes in the physical and administrative structure of the hospital. She was the first unit clerk in SCU, and recorded the Unit's first 12 patients in 1958. She is Isabel Stiles, and she celebrated her 85th birthday last week.

Mrs. Stiles proudly displays her 6500 hour pin on the collar of her Volunteer jacket. She spends 12 hours a week in a tiny office in SCU. "I can't do enough for this hospital," said Mrs. Stiles. "It has given me so much."

A native of Canada, Mrs. Stiles came to Maine in 1921, and has lived in the Portland area ever since. She first became involved in the hospital before the days of Pearl Harbor. "I started helping to make bandages and later decided to go through the Red Cross Nurses Aide Program. We used to come into the hospital on Fridays to get our assignments. Then one weekend, Pearl Harbor was bombed, and I knew where I was needed," said Mrs. Stiles.

Mrs. Stiles went on the hospital's payroll in 1945. "I was in charge of the solution and gauze room, which was located where the present mail room is. That was back when the hospital put up all its own sterile solutions."

In 1959, about a year after she began working in SCU, Mrs. Stiles went on a tour of Europe. At the time she was to make her three week trip, her husband was ill, so she was accompanied by a dear old friend.

"I picked up so many interesting stories along the way. I wrote them all down so I could tell my husband Ernie when I returned home," said Mrs. Stiles. She recalled the bus tours and her personal chats with the various tour guides throughout Europe. "I remember one bus tour through London. We passed St. Paul's Cathedral and the statue of Queen Anne, who was rumored to have been an alcoholic. Unlike most other English statues, Queen Anne's did not face the Church, but several shops across the street. To add to the tale, the guide sang us this tune:

"Anne, Anne, we've done you wrong,
We've left you in the lurch,
Your face is towards the Gin shop
Your back is towards the Church!"

Mrs. Stiles not only has been to Europe, but to Bermuda, California, Florida, and she says she has flown over or been in almost every State. "I like to find out about a place before I visit it. I love history and more traveling has allowed me to see history rather than just read about it."

But, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 8 a.m., Mrs. Stiles rides the Metro to MMC. "My hours at MMC have been most rewarding, and have kept me from being lonely. I love my work here."



10-week Yoga class schedule begins

A Yoga class sponsored by the EAC, starts Sept. 12 and will run for ten consecutive weeks. The sessions will be held from 7 to 8:15 p.m. in the Radiotherapy waiting room.

A registration fee of \$20 will be collected at the first class. It is recommended that participants wear loose clothing and bring a small mat to supplement the larger mat which will be provided. For further info, contact the instructor, Pat Packard, at 839-6928.

SCREENING, from page 1

Dr. Haddow cited "good cooperation" in Maine with obstetricians in office practices, but conceded that testing an entire population of pregnant women "would impose considerable stress on existing pre-natal management, and that a close working relationship between all program participants is important because the screening process forms the basis for excluding a woman from the high-risk category or moving her through a series of diagnostic maneuvers."

Dr. Haddow described the process this way:

Screening results, he said, would be positive in about 5 percent of the first blood serum samples. About half of these would be found normal in the second serum sampling. The remaining half would then be examined by ultrasound, and about half of these would be found normal, with either multiple pregnancies or erroneous gestational age. The mothers remaining would then be candidates for amniocentesis—examination of the fluid that surrounds the unborn fetus. Of these, statistically, one mother in 20 would be carrying a child with a neural tube defect.

"If all mothers-to-be were screened," Dr. Haddow said, "about 80 percent of all neural tube defects would be identified."

The doctors said identification of neural tube defects "can lead to but two possible conclusions—therapeutic interruption of the pregnancy or preparation for management of a serious medical problem.

"The overriding concern of any prenatal neural tube defect program should be to provide accurate information on which the family may make its decision," they concluded.

UM Trustee Elkins on 3 sub-committees

ALAN M. ELKINS, M.D., chief of psychiatry and director of the Community Mental Health Center at MMC, has been named to three standing committees of the University of Maine board of Trustees. Dr. Elkins will serve on the educational policy committee, the student affairs committee and the subcommittee on public broadcasting.

The appointments were announced this week by Francis A. Brown of Calais, Trustee chairman.

How do you save energy? WH wants to know

For the past few weeks, WHAT'S HAPPENING has been featuring articles on bike riding, car pooling, trash-fired steam generators, and just about anything that might spark people to conserve energy. We wanted to find out if our efforts had paid off, so we asked people, "how do you conserve energy?" Well, we got a few far-out answers, but most people we talked to seemed to be sincere in their attempts to conserve energy. Here are a few of the comments:



IRENE DARLING, Seamstress:

"I have a good sized home, and I have been able to shut off some of the rooms I don't use in the Winter. I don't cook as much, I use as few lights as possible, and I do laundry once a week, rather than a few items as I need them. Also, I try to drive as little as possible."



JOAN CUTURE, RN, Patient Accounts:

"We own two cars, but have only been using one of them. I ride back and forth to work with another employee. Inside my home, I have been using my oven less, and turning out lights behind me."

HOWARD LEHRER, Social Services:

"Of course I have been car pooling, and I recently contracted to have the cap of my house insulated. When you own a four-family house, that burns 3,000 gallons of oil a year, you have to do something!"



LESLIE GRIMES, RN, Outpatient:

"I've always been energy conscious. I had my house side walls insulated, and also had aluminum siding put on. I keep my heat down as low as possible in the winter, and I have been driving fewer miles."



Annual Fund moving toward \$140,000 goal

The MMC 1979 Annual Fund campaign is moving forward these days toward its goal of \$140,000. Mrs. Emerson H. Drake is chairman of the effort which last year raised a total of \$126,439.

The Annual Fund, which provides financing for a variety of special projects and unbudgeted, but vital, purchases, was established in 1971 and attracted \$29,641 in donations that year. Its growth and support over the years, said Development Committee Chairman L. Robert Porteous, "remains as a tangible measure of the high regard in which the institution is held."

Porteous' comments have been printed in a small brochure that is being used as a fund-raising tool by Mrs. Drake's Annual Fund committee. He said the campaign "will provide the mechanism by which members of the Medical Center community and friends of MMC everywhere may express their faith in the institution and assume their share of its increasing responsibility to the people of our state and region."

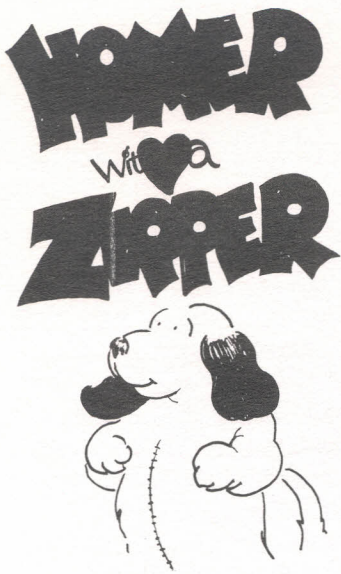
Vice Chairmen of the 1979 Annual Fund Campaign are Mrs. Sidney Wernick, MMC Corporator, and Dr. J. Howard Hannemann, director of the Radiation Therapy Division, Department of Radiology.

Illness takes O.R.T. school staff member

Mrs. Beverly L. Alley, executive secretary for the Operating Room Technology program, died August 10 following a brief illness. She had been employed Maine Medical Center since 1972, and would have completed seven years with the ORT School in October.

She was the wife of Richard K. Alley, 8 Pleasant Avenue, Cape Elizabeth, a native of Portland and a graduate of the South Portland schools, South Portland High School and Westbrook College. She was a past president of the Portland Jaycee Wives and the First Congregational Church of South Portland.

A delegation from MMC attended the services last Tuesday.



'Homer with a Zipper' is MMC coloring book

A cartoon coloring book—aimed at helping children about to undergo open-heart surgery—has been published by the hospital under financial sponsorship of the Department of Nursing.

"Homer with a Zipper" written by Jennifer Sherwood, R.N., and illustrated by Portland artist Middy Chilman, is the story of a puppy with a heart defect. It deals with his hospitalization and the tests he must undergo, including a heart cath, and the process of learning to cough ("it would make him get better much, much faster a special nurse said,") the visits by the surgeon and the anesthesiologist, the trip to the O.R. for open-heart surgery and the stay in the recovery room.

The author, Miss Sherwood, is a former nurse in MMC's Pediatric Department, and is now a nursing instructor at Westbrook College. The coloring book will be used in the pre-operative program for young open-heart surgery patients. It was produced by the MMC Print Shop with preparations by Public Relations and Audio/Visual Services.

A/V photographer has teaching post

David Higgins, A/V photographer whose work has lived in this and many past issues of WHAT'S HAPPENING, will leave MMC at month's end to assume a teaching post in Conway, N.H. Dave will be a teacher of graphic arts and in the technical-vocational program at Kennett High School.

He'll have classes in printing, photography, composition, layout and design, and will help students with a monthly newsletter and with printing for a number of nearby non-profit organizations. Dave also hopes to coach the school's cross-country ski team.

Employed by the MMC Audio-Visual department for the past four years, Dave completed his work for a bachelor of science degree in vocational education at the University of Southern Maine last spring. He had been enrolled in the night program for a total of six years, working days in a variety of jobs including the USM Media Center and the MMC A/V department.

marketplace

WANTED: A home for a 3 yr. old light tan dog. House trained and good natured. Call 774-3451.

FOR RENT: Cottage, 2 bdrm., LR, w/frpl., DR, kitch. Oil fired hot water heat. 1½ car garage. Near ocean. \$300/mo. Call 883-6772.

FOR RENT: Cottage, 3 bdrm., LR w/frpl., glassed in porch. \$350/mo. Call 883-6772.

FOR RENT: House, 3½ rms., and bath, carpets, parking, all util. included. \$275/mo. Sept - June. Call 934-4165.

FOR RENT: Apt. 4 rooms & bath, carpets, parking, all util. included. \$275/mo. Sept - June. Call 934-4165.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING is published every Wednesday at Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine, for members of the Hospital community and for friends of the institution throughout Maine and northern New England. Comments, questions and suggestions may be addressed to the Editor, Public Relations Dept., MMC, Portland, Me., 04102.

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FOR RENT: Apt. 4 rooms and bath, carpets, parking, dishwasher and disposal, frpl., all util. included. \$275/mo Sept - June. Call 934-4165.

FOR RENT: Rooms near MMC, ½ bath, share pleasant house with professional woman and son. Non-smoking, responsible male preferred. \$150/mo. Call 772-0050 after 5:30 p.m.

FOR RENT: Charming old Cape, rural setting, 18 miles from Portland. 6 rms, stove & refrig. Avail. soon. \$275/mo. plus util. Call 929-3795.

FOR RENT: 4 bdrm. fully furnished So. Freeport home from Oct. 15 - April 15. Looking for a professional person, prefer non-smoker. Call for appointment - 865-3314.

FOR SALE: Yellow and black lab puppies, will be ready around the first of Sept. Call Mary at 892-8281.

FOR SALE: 2 bowling balls w/case \$10. each. Call 799-8895.

FOR SALE: 1975 Datsun B210, 4 door, mechanically sound, clean, good mpg. Call 829-5238.

FOR SALE: 26" Columbia 10 speed. Like new. Make an offer. Call 829-5238.

FOR SALE: Electric, ceramic-top 30" stove, large oven. \$175. Call 773-1924 eves.

FOR SALE: Swivel chair, black recliner, ping pong table, Magnus organ, hair dryer, elec. clock, mail box, window w/metal glides. Call 657-4681 days.

FOR SALE: Portable dishwasher, 5-cycle, 8 mos. old, \$150. Call 282-7105.

FOR RENT: Room, kitchen privileges, Cape Elizabeth residential area. Call 799-2928.

FOR SALE: 2 yr. old ranch house. 2 bdrms., country kitchen, L.R., daylight basement. Vinyl siding, fenced lawn. So. Portland. Reduced to \$36,900. Call 774-2735.

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