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City

Wherever you live or work in Greater Kansas City, you're just a heartbeat away from your neighborhood Saint Luke's—and the best heart care.

At every Saint Luke's location, you receive the same high-quality care from the same doctors and nurses who've earned Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute a worldwide reputation for excellence.

From Kansas City's only heart transplant program to the nation's first heart hospital to a team of the region's top cardiologists and heart surgeons, it's obvious why Saint Luke's continues to be Kansas City's number one choice for heart care.

You only have one heart, and only one health system has had Kansas City's best interests at heart for 125 years. To find a doctor who's part of Saint Luke's, call NurseLine any time at (816) 952-6226.



**Saint Luke's Hospital
of Kansas City**
SAINT LUKE'S HEALTH SYSTEM

saintlukeshealthsystem.org

44th and Wornall



saintlukeshealthsystem.org

Saint Luke's Health System
P.O. Box 5810
Kansas City, MO 64171-5810



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Saint Luke's Health

JANUARY / FEBRUARY / MARCH 2009

FOR PATIENTS, NEIGHBORS, AND FRIENDS OF SAINT LUKE'S HEALTH SYSTEM

Murmurs of the Heart

Rosemary Iwersen is walking tall, thanks to an experimental heart valve available only at Saint Luke's

'Bathed in Blessings'
A triple-negative cancer turns into a blessing, thanks to a healing network at Saint Luke's

Mastery over MS
Steve Alden hopes Saint Luke's can help him break through multiple sclerosis

On Call “These valves hold the promise to change the practice of cardiology in the next five to 10 years.”

David J. Cohen, M.D., Interventional Cardiologist, Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute
See “Murmurs of the Heart,” page 8



“Once patients show signs and symptoms of aortic stenosis, their long-term survival is compromised. If they can have a successful valve replacement, their prognosis becomes normal once again.”

**David J. Cohen, M.D.,
Interventional Cardiologist**

See “Murmurs of the Heart,” page 8

Medical School: Harvard Medical School, 1986; Cambridge, Mass.
Residency: Brigham and Women's Hospital, 1989; Boston
Fellowship: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, 1994; Boston
Board Certification: American Board of Internal Medicine (Interventional Cardiology subspecialty)



“It's probably one of the most promising therapies we've had in years. Patients don't build up a tolerance to it, and it's not addictive.”

**Jennifer Elliott, M.D.,
Anesthesiologist**

See “Hope from the Deep,” page 12

Medical School: University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine, 1996; Kansas City, Mo.
Internship: University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1997; Kansas City, Mo.
Residency: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, 2000; Boston
Fellowship: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, 2001; Boston
Board Certification: American Board of Anesthesiology (Pain Management subspecialty)



“Patients at Saint Luke's who have a positive biopsy get the benefit of a broad range of expertise. As clinicians, we also gain from interacting with other disciplines.”

Arthur Elman, M.D., Radiologist

See “Bathed in Blessings,” page 16

Medical School: Marquette University, 1970; Milwaukee, Wis.
Internship: Barnes Jewish Hospital, 1971; St. Louis
Residency: Milwaukee County General Hospital, 1972; Milwaukee, Wis.; The Waltham Hospital, 1978
Fellowship: Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, 2006; Boston
Board Certification: American Board of Radiology



“Cognitive decline was once thought to be an inevitable part of growing old. It may not be either inevitable or permanent. Research is showing that the brain is remarkably responsive to training.”

Marilyn Rymer, M.D., Neurologist

See “Get Your Brain to the Gym,” page 18

Medical School: Washington University, 1970; St. Louis
Internship: U.S. Naval Hospital, 1971; Oakland, Calif.
Fellowship: University of California, San Francisco, 1972; San Francisco
Residency: University of Wisconsin Medical School, 1975; Madison, Wis.
Board Certification: American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology

Outstanding doctors, outstanding care

If you don't have a regular doctor, or you need a specialist, how do you make the best choice so you can trust you'll receive the best care?

One way is to choose a Saint Luke's Care physician. This voluntary group of doctors helps set medical standards throughout Saint Luke's Health System.

This growing organization is working to increase the quality of medical care and strengthen relationships between the health system and its physicians and patients.

Doctors who join Saint Luke's Care are medical staff members in good standing and agree to follow evidence-based best practice guidelines



for patient care. They have access to the latest, most up-to-date medical information.

To find a doctor who belongs to Saint Luke's Care, log on to saintlukeshealthsystem.org, click on “Doctors,” and choose the physician specialty or location you want to search. Saint Luke's Care doctors will be identified with a Saint Luke's Care logo next to their names. Or call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220. ✚

Saint Luke's Health

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Dry skin is no way to start a new year. Here's how to keep your body's largest organ in the pink

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SAINT LUKE'S HEALTH SYSTEM

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Kansas City's best—again

We never get tired of providing great care to Kansas City-area patients. **National Research Corporation (NRC) ranked Saint Luke's Hospital first for its Consumer Choice Award for high-quality health care services**, an award the hospital has received every year it's been presented in Kansas City.

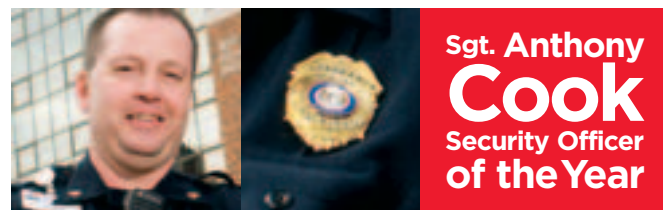
Each year since 1996, NRC has surveyed 400,000 consumers. Its Consumer Choice Award honors hospitals with the highest quality and image for overall health care services.

"This award is a testament to our dedicated employees and physicians and validates our vision, 'The Best Place to Get Care and the Best Place to Give Care,'" said G. Richard Hastings, President and CEO of Saint Luke's Health System.



To choose the best hospitals in the country, NRC performs an annual Healthcare Market Guide Ticker study. This study is the nation's largest and most comprehensive assessment of hospital performance and preference, with information on 3,200 hospitals.

Saint Luke's Hospital has received many other awards. In July 2008, *U.S. News & World Report* named Saint Luke's as one of its 2008 America's Best Hospitals. And the hospital was a 2003 recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. ✦



Security officer becomes lifesaver

At Saint Luke's, it's not just doctors and nurses who save lives.

Sgt. Anthony Cook was named Security Officer of the Year, in part for his quick actions in saving a heart attack patient while off duty.

The Greater Kansas City chapter of ASIS International (American Society of Industrial Security) honored Cook. Comprised of about 300 security organizations, ASIS is the world's largest organization for security professionals.

While at the Country Club Plaza last December, Sgt. Cook noticed a man in distress and rushed him to Saint Luke's Hospital. There, the patient went into sudden cardiac arrest. But thanks to Saint Luke's ready and waiting cardiac team, the man survived.

Cook has worked at Saint Luke's for 22 years in a variety of positions within the Security Department. David Schemenauer, Director of Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness at Saint Luke's, nominated Cook for the award.

"Anthony's leadership skills, work ethic, integrity, professionalism, and exceptional customer service make him an excellent choice for Security Officer of the Year," Schemenauer said. ✦

Volunteers provide peace of mind

Sherry Unruh knows firsthand the comfort a stranger can offer in times of need. In 2007, Unruh was a patient in Saint Luke's Center for Breast Care when volunteer Mary Lee offered reassurance while Unruh waited for her breast sonogram results.

"She sat with me for half an hour, helping me cope with the situation," said Unruh. "She was so tactful and graceful."

Saint Luke's Volunteer Patient Navigator Program offers hospitality and emotional support for patients awaiting mammogram results.

Launched in spring 2006, the Patient Navigator Program provides four volunteers for patients like Unruh who want to talk, want emotional support, or want peace of mind.

Unruh was so impressed with the service she received during a difficult time, she went through training and has now joined the program as a volunteer.

To learn about volunteer opportunities at Saint Luke's locations across the area, visit saintlukeshealthsystem.org or call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220. ✦

New leaders for Saint Luke's

Saint Luke's is in good hands with two seasoned leaders.

Julie L. Quirin recently became chief executive officer of Saint Luke's Hospital, and Janine Hron CEO of Crittenton Children's Center.

Quirin, formerly president and CEO of Saint Luke's South, transitioned into the new position at the end of 2008. She assumed the position formerly held by G. Richard Hastings, who since 1999 served in the dual role of CEO of both Saint Luke's Hospital and Saint Luke's Health System.

A search is underway for a new CEO at Saint Luke's South, which Quirin led since 2002. Hastings continues in his role as CEO of Saint Luke's Health System.

At Crittenton, Hron replaced Stephen Churchill, M.D., who retired in December 2008. Hron, who most recently was CEO at Spofford, is very familiar with Crittenton and Saint Luke's. She was Crittenton's Vice President of Community Relations from 1985 to 1990 and Saint Luke's Health System's Vice President of Marketing from 1990 to 1995.

Crittenton, which became a part of Saint Luke's in 1992, cares for the emotional health of children and families in the Kansas City area. It offers inpatient hospitalization, residential and outpatient treatment, and prevention services. ✦

✦ Spiritual care for all

Extending spiritual care beyond the Christian faith improves the hospital experience at Saint Luke's. **Rabbi Alan Cohen has joined Spiritual Wellness, serving a part-time role ministering to Jewish patients and supporting Jewish staff.**

Adding Cohen to the Spiritual Wellness staff sends the message that

all spiritualities are welcome at Saint Luke's, said Chaplain John Pumphrey, Director of Spiritual Wellness within the Saint Luke's Health System.

"Our chaplains represent different denominations, but we haven't had persons of different religious or faith traditions on staff until now," said Pumphrey.

Ordained in 1972, Cohen has served as a congregational rabbi for 36 years. He now serves as director of interreligious affairs for the Jewish Community Relations Bureau/American Jewish Committee. In this role, he spearheaded the Interfaith Project, which focuses on building bridges of understanding among faiths. ✦

Up & Coming



Weighing weight loss options

Get the skinny on gastric bypass, Lap Band, and non-surgical weight-loss solutions from John Price, M.D., or G. Brent Sorensen, M.D., from Saint Luke's Center for Surgical Weight Loss.

Tuesday, Feb. 3, March 3

6-7:30 p.m.

Embassy Suites Plaza
(near Saint Luke's Hospital)
220 W. 43rd St.
Kansas City, MO 64111

Tuesday, Feb. 10, March 10

6-7:30 p.m.

Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
Barry Medical Park Conference Rooms
5830 N.W. Barry Road
Kansas City, MO 64154

Tuesday, Feb. 17, March 17

6-7:30 p.m.

Saint Luke's South
Conference Rooms A & B
12300 Metcalf Ave.
Overland Park, KS 66213

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

A pulse on heart health

Valentine's Day traditionally evokes heart-felt feelings. This year, take your heart seriously by learning about cholesterol and blood pressure from Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute cardiologists. You can also get a free cholesterol check.

Tuesday, Feb. 24

9-10 a.m.

Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
Barry Medical Park Conference Rooms
5830 N.W. Barry Road
Kansas City, MO 64154

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Running wise

Lace up those sneakers for the 14th Annual Jewish Community Center Indoor Triathlon. The triathlon is sponsored by Imagine Your Potential, a Jewish Community Center and Saint Luke's South partnership.

Cost: \$35 for JCC members;
\$52.50 for nonmembers

Sunday, Feb. 22

7 a.m.

Register or get more information:
Call (913) 327-8010 or visit www.jcckc.org.

Prepared for an emergency?

Find out what type of care you'll receive during an emergency from Alie Scholes, M.D.

Tuesday, March 3

2-3 p.m.

Saint Luke's Hospital Foundation
Conference Room
4225 Baltimore Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64111

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Goodbye dieting guesswork

We've all been there: dieting and exercising to shed pounds, but left frustrated when the weight remains. Now Saint Luke's metabolic testing services take the guesswork out of dieting. Metabolic testing shows exactly how many calories you need to consume and burn to lose or maintain a healthy weight. The test measures oxygen consumption—the more you use, the more calories you burn and muscle you build.

Cost: \$50

Wednesday, March 4

Cushing Memorial Hospital
711 Marshall
Leavenworth, KS 66048

Monday, March 9

Crittenton Children's Center
10918 Elm Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64134

Friday, March 20

Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit
100 N.E. Saint Luke's Blvd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086

Tuesday, March 24

Wright Memorial Hospital
701 E. 1st St.
Trenton, MO 64683

Monday, March 30

Saint Luke's South
12300 Metcalf Ave.
Overland Park, KS 66213

Wednesday, April 8

Saint Luke's Hospital
4401 Wornall Road
Kansas City, MO 64111

Tuesday, April 14

Anderson County Hospital
421 S. Maple St.
Garnett, KS 666032

Monday, April 20

Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
5830 N.W. Barry Road
Kansas City, MO 64154

Wednesday, April 22

Hedrick Medical Center
100 Central St.
Chillicothe, MO 64601

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Get the scoop on colon cancer

How can you reduce your colon cancer risk? Learn about preventive strategies, symptoms, testing procedures, and available treatments from Kelley Young, M.D. And hear from a certified genetic counselor about how cancer risk assessments, genetic testing, and personalized cancer prevention plans benefit you.

Tuesday, March 10

9-10 a.m.

Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit
Conference Rooms A & B
100 N.E. Saint Luke's Blvd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Breathe easier

Does breathing come easy for you? Learn how normal lungs function, how lung disease affects breathing, and what techniques can help you breathe easier. Also, get a complimentary pulmonary screening.

Tuesday, March 24

9-10 a.m.

Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
Barry Medical Park Conference Rooms
5830 N.W. Barry Road
Kansas City, MO 64154

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

The path from prevention to recovery: Heart failure awareness

Learn about heart failure symptom recognition and management, the importance of exercise and nutrition, and the latest treatment options from Saint Luke's cardiologists.

Thursday, April 2

10 a.m.

Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
Barry Medical Park Conference Rooms
5830 N.W. Barry Road
Kansas City, MO 64154
Featuring Tracy Stevens, M.D.

Thursday, April 16

7 p.m.

Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit
Conference Rooms A & B
100 N.E. Saint Luke's Blvd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086
Featuring Andrew Kao, M.D.

Monday, April 20

10 a.m.

Saint Luke's Hospital
Broadway-Wornall-Millicreek Conference Rooms
4401 Wornall Road
Kansas City, MO 64111
Featuring Anthony Magalski, M.D.

Thursday, April 30

10 a.m.

Saint Luke's South
Wellness Conference Room
12300 Metcalf Ave.
Overland Park, KS 66213
Featuring Stephanie Lawhorn, M.D.

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Can you hear me now?

Please join Kristen Lewis and Ann Hatfield, both clinical audiologists at Saint Luke's Midwest Ear Institute, as they explore how the ear works, how hearing loss occurs, and the latest technologies to improve your hearing. Complimentary hearing assessments will be provided by Midwest Ear Institute.

Tuesday, April 7

2 - 3 p.m.

Saint Luke's Hospital Foundation
Conference Room
4225 Baltimore Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64111

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Preparing for surgery

As you grow older, you are more likely to develop medical problems that require surgical treatment. While there are some risks associated with any surgery, there are special considerations when treating older adults. Please join Kris Hampshire and Donna Skouse, registered nurses, as they discuss safety measures and precautions taken during surgery to ensure unwanted events, information about anesthesia, and steps you can take to ensure you are doing your part.

Tuesday, April 14

9 - 10 a.m.

Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit
100 N.E. Saint Luke's Blvd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Preparing for an emergency

Find out what you need to know to be ready to receive emergency department care. Amy Brummer, Manager of Emergency Services at Saint Luke's South, will lead a discussion about information you can provide that is useful in any medical emergency.

Tuesday, April 21

10 - 11 a.m.

Saint Luke's South
12300 Metcalf Ave.
Overland Park, KS 66213

Register or get more information:
Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

Books & Boutiques

Best-selling author and contributing editor to ABC's "Good Morning America" Lee Woodruff headlines this second annual event. It benefits the Goppert Center for Breast Care at Saint Luke's South.

Cost: \$70

Tuesday, April 28

10 a.m.-3 p.m. (lunch at 11:30 a.m.)

Overland Park Convention Center
6000 College Blvd.
Overland Park, KS 66211

Register or get more information:
Call (913) 317-7559.

Women in Training

This eight-week program helps women of all ages start on a path toward improved fitness and a healthier life. 6:30-8 p.m. Cost: \$35



Mondays, March 30-May 18

Sponsored by
Saint Luke's South
12300 Metcalf Ave.
Overland Park, KS 66213

Tuesdays, March 31-May 19

Sponsored by
Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit
100 N.E. Saint Luke's Blvd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086

Thursdays, April 2-21

Sponsored by
Saint Luke's Northland Hospital
English Landing Park,
Parkville, MO 64152

To learn more or to register: Call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220 or visit saintlukeshealthsystem.org.

Innovations

Saint Luke's to lead heart and stroke research

The American Heart Association (AHA) wants heart patients to receive the best possible care, so it's enlisted Saint Luke's to help.

Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute is one of four research centers AHA chose for its Outcomes Research Centers initiative. This will create a national network for cardiovascular and stroke research to improve the lives of people with or at risk for heart disease and stroke.

Saint Luke's, Duke University, Stanford University, and the University of California will share \$14.5 million to study various treatments. Saint Luke's will use its funds to provide six physicians with advanced training in cardiovascular outcomes research.

John Spertus, M.D., Director of Cardiovascular Outcomes Research, and David J. Cohen, M.D., Director of Cardiovascular Research, will lead Saint Luke's AHA center. Their research team will study ways to measure and improve angioplasty for patients and how to inform patients of their outcomes and choices.

"We expect to recruit exceptional, highly motivated individuals from top academic institutions throughout the country for these new fellowships," Dr. Spertus said. "By supporting their training in Kansas City, we will enhance the brain trust of our region."

The funds also forged collaboration between Saint Luke's, the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine, and the University of Kansas Medical Center. The new outcomes research training program will be directed by Saint Luke's Mikhail Kosiborod, M.D., MPH, and KU's Edward Ellerbeck M.D., MPH. ✦



Angina patients get relief through COURAGE

Good news for coronary artery disease patients: You may soon have better treatment options for chronic angina.

Aggressive medicine and angioplasty can alleviate pain and discomfort by bringing much-needed oxygen-rich blood to heart muscles. Angina, or chronic chest pain, is caused

when your heart doesn't get enough blood and oxygen.

John Spertus, M.D., Director of Cardiovascular Outcomes Research, was one of the researchers who discovered this through COURAGE, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Cooperative study.

COURAGE compared two management approaches for patients with chronic angina. Some patients underwent aggressive medication plus angioplasty. Doctors inserted stents into artery walls to keep the blood flowing more easily. The second approach involved aggressive medication and lifestyle intervention.

Doctors wanted to learn how to best prevent heart attacks and deaths in non-emergency cases. COURAGE showed that it's safe to postpone angioplasty for patients with mild angina, but angioplasty can offer patients with severe angina a better quality of life.

These results appeared in a recent *New England Journal of Medicine* and created the current standard in assessing quality of life. ✦

Donate an umbilical cord, save a life

Umbilical cords' stem-cell-rich blood can help treat such debilitating diseases as leukemia, sickle cell anemia, and others.

Now, mothers delivering babies at Saint Luke's Hospital have the option to donate cord blood. This could potentially benefit hundreds—if not thousands—of area patients, said Bill Ward, MT(ASCP)DLM, Director of Cellular Therapy Services.

Cord blood is "the granddaddy of all cells," said Ward. "It's so rich in blood-forming stem cells because these cells are naïve. Or, they aren't reactive as others because they've been protected by placenta walls."

Ward approached the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank to set up a partnership. The bank especially liked the ethnic diversity Saint Luke's could provide: 40 percent of babies delivered at Saint Luke's last year were minority or mixed race. Stem cell diversity means better opportunities to find good matches for patients who need treatment.

Saint Luke's began collecting cord blood Dec. 1, 2008. The noninvasive procedure is safe for both mother and baby: Blood is extracted from the cord after the baby is delivered and the cord cut. The blood is then tested for contaminants, frozen, and shipped to the St. Louis bank. ✦



More FREEDOMS for MS patients

People living with multiple sclerosis may soon break free from daily treatment shots.

A new oral medication shows promise of reducing relapses and is now available through a Saint Luke's clinical trial.

FREEDOMS, a two-year program sponsored by Novartis, will include more than 2,000 MS patients in 200 study centers worldwide. Multiple sclerosis is the leading cause of neurological

disability in young adults, affecting an estimated 2 million people worldwide.

Researchers believe inflammatory T-cells damage the protective coating that surrounds brain and spinal cord nerves. Faulty electrical signals from the damaged neurons hinder muscle movement, coordination, balance, and cognition.

However, initial results show the oral medication offers greater improvement than current injected medicine.

To be considered for the trial, you must be 18 to 55 and have relapsing, remitting MS. Participants will receive study-related care and medication for up to two years at no cost.

For more information, call (866) 788-3930. ✦



Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit adds da Vinci

Who says art collectors are the only folks who can appreciate da Vinci?

Saint Luke's East-Lee's Summit doctors recently performed their first prostatectomy using the new da Vinci® Surgical System. The hospital is one of only a handful in the area, and the only one in eastern Jackson County, to offer this minimally invasive, state-of-the-art procedure.

Using the da Vinci Surgical System, the surgeon operates while seated comfortably at a console viewing a 3D image of the surgical field. The surgeon grasps the master controls below the display, while the system seamlessly translates hand, wrist, and finger movements into precise, real-time movements of surgical instruments inside the patient.

Many surgical procedures performed today using standard laparoscopic tech-

niques may be performed more quickly and easily using the da Vinci Surgical System. It helps doctors improve clinical outcomes and redefine standards of care.

For patients, the system ensures reduced blood loss and need for transfusions, less post-operative pain and discomfort, faster recovery and return to normal daily activities, and less scarring. Saint Luke's Hospital also has two da Vinci systems. ✦



Murmurs of the Heart

Having 'nothing to lose' turned into a big gain for Rosemary Iwersen, thanks to an experimental heart valve available only at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute

Light filters through decorative glass bottles and casts pools of color on stacks of books, past issues of the *Smithsonian* and *New Yorker* magazines, and programs from operas, plays, and concerts. The Brookside home of Rosemary Iwersen reflects the many interests of the 86-year-old woman.

But three years ago, her life started to narrow. She stopped her regular walk to Loose Park to admire the roses. Taking more than 20 steps robbed her of breath and tightened her chest with pain. This made it hard to attend the cultural events she so adored, as well.

"My condition was severely limiting what I could do," said Iwersen, a tall, stately woman whose voice is soft and girlish.

She complained to Aaron Grantham, M.D., an interventional cardiologist at Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute.

He listened to her heart and heard the swooshing sound that signaled aortic stenosis. The aortic valve that controls blood flow out of her heart had narrowed to the point where blood was backing up into her lungs. Tests revealed a buildup of calcium deposits, causing her valve to become more like a dam than a passageway.

As Iwersen's heart had strained to pump blood through the narrowed opening, it had enlarged and diminished in efficiency, causing congestive heart failure.

Drugs could help her heart pump more efficiently, but only surgery could fix the problem.

The catch: Iwersen might not survive it.

"Once patients shows signs and symptoms of aortic stenosis, their long-term survival is compromised. If they can have a successful valve replacement, their prognosis becomes normal once again," said Saint Luke's interventional cardiologist David J. Cohen, M.D. "But for patients in

their 80s with other medical conditions, there may be a 10 percent to 20 percent chance of having a major complication of surgery or even dying."

There was, however, an experimental procedure.

On trial

Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute was testing an artificial heart valve that doctors could insert through



Just do it Rosemary Iwersen's six children were incredulous when she told them she had gotten an experimental device to open her narrowed aortic valve. "Gosh, why did you do that?" they asked. She told them, "I couldn't have gone on with my heart valve like it was. If you have an opportunity to something about it, do it."

an artery in the leg without invasive surgery. The Heart Institute's expertise in using catheters to solve heart problems prompted the FDA to include Saint Luke's in the PARTNER (Placement of AoRTic TraNscathetER) Valve Trial. (See sidebar.)

Its aim is to assess the safety and effectiveness of the SAPIEN valve for patients with severe aortic stenosis.

"These valves hold the promise to change the practice of cardiology in the next five to 10 years," said Dr. Cohen, co-lead investigator with Michael Borkon, M.D., a cardiothoracic surgeon at Saint Luke's.

Dr. Cohen believes these valves can reverse the narrowing process and eradicate symptoms, like congestive heart failure.

Iwersen fit the criteria. Her valve problem came from aging, not a congenital defect. She hadn't had a heart attack and her kidneys were healthy. Was she willing?

Iwersen eyed the list of side effects.

"The first one was death," she said. "That didn't scare me. I couldn't have gone on with my heart valve like it was. I had nothing to lose."

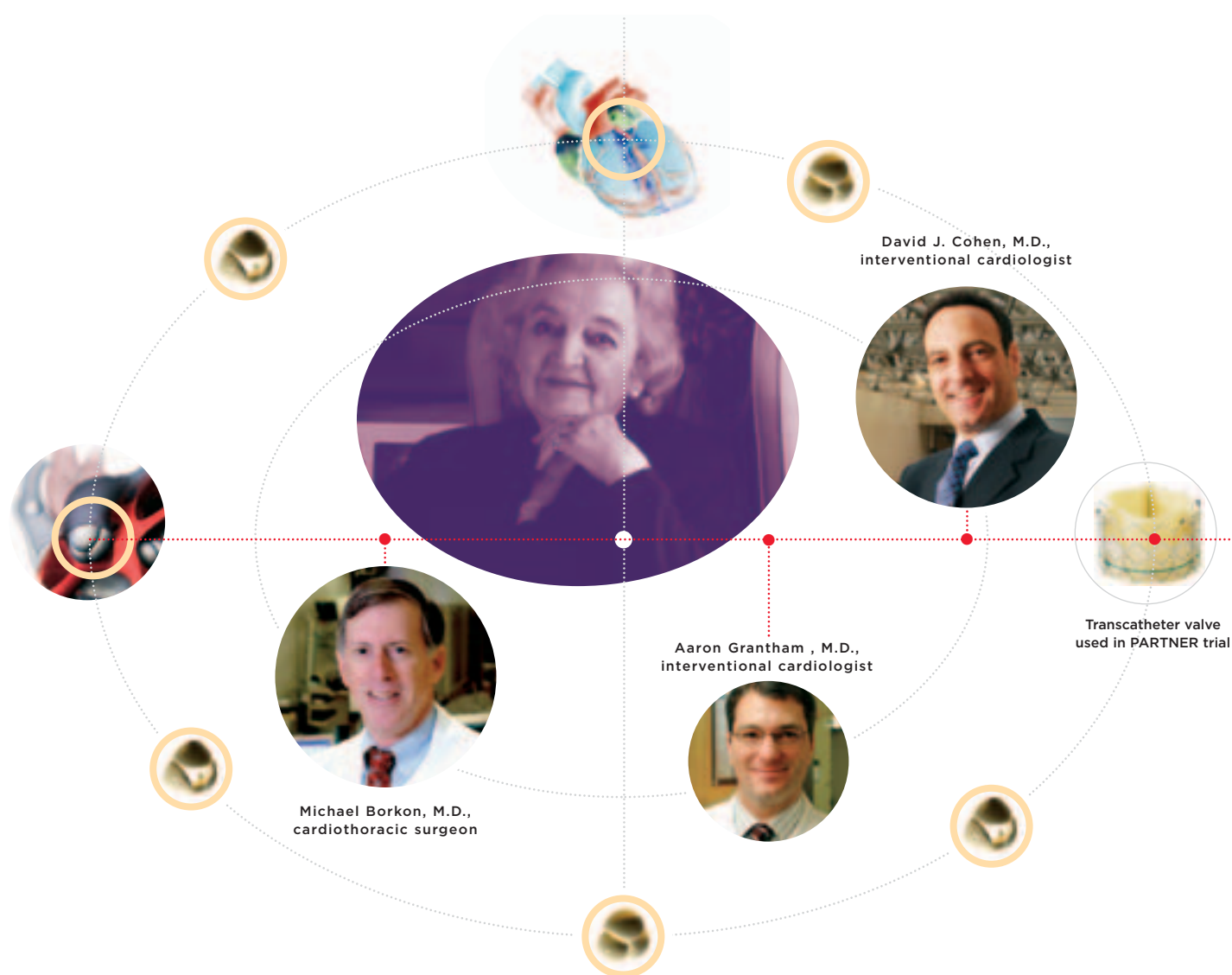
Second try

Iwersen became the second person to get the SAPIEN valve in September. Her medical team included two interventional cardiologists, a cardiac surgeon, a cardiac anesthesiologist, and an echocardiographer to assess images.

As staff pushed her into the operating room, she remembers announcing, "Here comes Rosemary." That was all she remembers about the procedure.

After her femoral artery was open, Dr. Cohen threaded a small balloon catheter to her aortic valve and inflated the balloon to open her existing valve. Next, he inserted a larger, pencil-sized catheter on which the valve was crimped. He then threaded it into place.

Saint Luke's PARTNER (Placement of AoRTic TraNscathetER) Valve Trial



The entire procedure took about two hours. Iwersen's next memory was hearing someone tell her it all went well.

"I was glad to wake up," she reported. "I didn't experience much pain or discomfort afterward either. Everyone I encountered from the admissions clerk to the doctors to the nurses made my stay as pleasant as possible."

She left the hospital three days later.

Rosier future

Within a month, Iwersen started to feel better. She doesn't tire as easily and has more energy. She can stand up longer, which means she can cook her signature meat loaf and peanut butter cookies again.

"This has improved my spirit, too," she said.

A daughter who lives in Hawaii is coming to visit. First on the agenda is the Loose Park rose garden. +

Valve Job

A new, minimally invasive treatment for aortic stenosis gives hope to those who might not survive conventional surgery

More than 200,000 people every year need new heart valves, but only half actually receive them. Many, like Rosemary Iwersen (See main story.), aren't ideal candidates for the open-heart surgery required to repair or replace them.

Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute is one of 20 centers in the United States testing an artificial device to help people whose aortic valves have narrowed, a condition called aortic stenosis.

The PARTNER (Placement of AoRTic TraNscathetER) Valve Trial brings a new option for those whose condition makes conventional surgery too risky, according to Katie Safley, Clinical Research Coordinator for the trial.

So far, six Saint Luke's patients have received the device among the nine patients enrolled in the study. The aim is to enroll 1,040 patients in the United States and Canada. About half will get either conventional open-heart surgery or medications, depending on whether they can undergo surgery. The other half will receive the SAPIEN valve.

The mortality rate of patients who got the valve in a prior feasibility study was 7.4 percent within 30 days of the procedure, reports Safley. The expected mortality rate for a similar population who received conventional surgery would be closer to 20 percent.

To be eligible for the study, you must have cardiac symptoms caused by aortic stenosis or such other conditions—like advanced age or kidney disease—that increase your risk of complications or prevent you from having surgery.

For more information, call Safley at (816) 932-0218. +

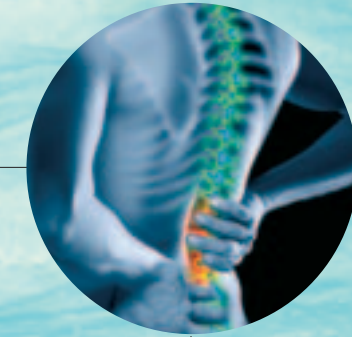
Katie Safley,
Clinical Research
Coordinator

High risk, high hopes

By the time most people show symptoms of aortic stenosis, they have a 50 percent chance of dying within two years, according to Katie Safley, Clinical Research Coordinator for the trial. She hopes the PARTNER Valve Trial will document that the new device can extend the lives of those with the condition.



A deadly tropical sea snail
is giving Glenn Crawford a reason to live



Hope from the Deep

It's 14,115 feet straight up and back down again. Was it any wonder, then, that when Glenn Crawford reached the top of Pike's Peak that August 2003 day and started down his legs were a little wobbly?

Maybe just a bit surprising, given that the 43-year-old had played football at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School and in college. Plus he routinely jogged five miles a day.

A few weeks later Crawford was unable to stand for more than a couple minutes. This time it wasn't his legs but his back.

"My lower back felt as though there were hot coals burning inside," he recalled.

Crawford worked as a branch manager for the Kansas City office of an electrical distributor, a job that let him use his M.B.A. That October, he opened his office one morning to find someone had slipped some papers under the door.

"I bent over to pick them up, and *whoosh*," Crawford recalled.

This time the pain was in both his back and his leg. It coursed like lighter fluid through veins, burning through his body right down to his toes.

Pain that wouldn't quit

Crawford underwent emergency surgery for cauda equina syndrome. The name literally translates as "horse tail"—so called because it destroys nerves at the base of the spine. Crawford was suffering from a compressed spinal cord and spinal stenosis.

"Glenn had a severe narrowing of the spine, which causes

nerve damage and, as a consequence, nerve pain," said Jennifer Elliott, M.D., of Saint Luke's Pain Management Center.

The pain wouldn't stop. Shortly after surgery, when Crawford inched his way with his new walker to his younger son's fourth-grade football game, he could barely keep from collapsing.

"I hurt beyond belief," he said.

Narcotics by the dozen

That was only the beginning. Crawford quickly "graduated" to methadone and morphine, both narcotics, to try to kill the unyielding pain. They didn't.

A year later, surgeons implanted a spinal-cord stimulator. The electrodes were supposed to create a tingling sensation that neutralized the pain. They didn't.

"I couldn't get the sensation to travel beyond my knees, where the worst pain was," Crawford said.

After a year, he gave up on the stimulator. He also started to give up on finding relief.

"You know the filter God gave us between our brains and our tongues? Mine didn't work anymore," Crawford said. "Every negative thought that came into my brain came out of my mouth."

The pain raged on. Dr. Elliott tried implanting a pain pump. The medications in the pump helped somewhat, but not enough. Crawford still had to pop his methadone and morphine pills: six of each, a dozen each day.

By October 2007 the pain in his lower back suddenly took a

sharp turn. The intensity was too much. Janet, Crawford's wife, brought him to the Emergency Department at Saint Luke's Hospital, where he was admitted.

Would it be the pain or the narcotics that would kill him? Crawford thought surely it would be one or the other.

"Then Dr. Elliott came into my room and said, 'I have good news. I found another medication we can try,'" Crawford said. "If it works, you can get off the narcotics."

A wave of relief

Dr. Elliott had learned of a new medication therapy that acted somewhat like the offensive line of a football team: It blocked the part of the nerve that sent pain signals to the brain. Unlike a nerve block, which inhibits all signals and can make patients feel dazed and lethargic, this new medication could limit itself to pain impulses only.

It was also deadly—to fish.

The new medication that now fills Crawford's pain pump is made from the venom of a sea snail known as *Conus magus*. What kills fish also kills pain.

"It's probably one of the most promising therapies we've had in years," Dr. Elliott said. "Patients don't build up a tolerance to it, and it's not addictive."

What it was, for Crawford, was liberating. Over the course of 12 weeks, he was able to divest himself of his 12 daily

narcotic pills, one by one, till there were none.

"I started to feel free again," he said. And to feel less pain.

"Before, Glenn walked stooped and slowly, with a cane," Dr. Elliott said. "Now he can now walk upright. It has totally transformed him."

Crawford is still not able to work; even yard work is too overwhelming. But he can do other important things, like taking younger son, Sam, to school every day and picking him up.

High hopes

Meanwhile, the tiny sea snail has become an icon of optimism.

"Even when you think there may be no hope for improvement, you have to try," Dr. Elliott said. "Glenn's case really opens your eyes to what's possible."

Pike's Peak is one summit Crawford might never reach again. But he's overcome something even more insurmountable: despair.

"I've gone from being deathly afraid to being alive," Crawford said. "I'm looking forward to 2012, and seeing Sam graduate from high school." ✦



A sea change in pain treatment Venom from a tiny sea snail is killing the chronic pain that was Glenn Crawford's for five years.

Mastery over MS

As a person with multiple sclerosis, Steve Alden got used to reaching for the wall when he tried to walk. Now he's hoping he can help break through one

Steve Alden had noticed the odd occurrences for years—his constant fatigue and lack of depth perception, his tendency to trip, that strange tingling sensation in his fingers. And how words were starting to elude him, especially adjectives.

Alden was diagnosed with Secondary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis, or SPMS, in 1995, when he was 43. It's an advanced stage of MS, but Alden wonders whether all those symptoms meant he'd had an earlier form of MS for years.

Having SPMS is difficult enough, but here's the kicker: No available drug specifically treats this stage of the disease. Medications administered for earlier stages are not always effective.

But that may change.

Double-blind for twice the control

Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute is now testing a new drug designed specifically to delay the progression of SPMS.

Alden is one of the participants in the trial, which is known as MAESTRO.

What he doesn't know is whether he's actually getting the drug or a placebo. Neither do the other members of the trial team, including Christine Boutwell, M.D., the Saint Luke's investigator for the trial.

"It's a double-blind trial," Dr. Boutwell explained. "Neither the participant nor the doctor knows. That makes it a more rigorous scientific study."

Trial by hope

The test drug is designed to prevent the patient's immune system from attacking itself.

"Most MS patients have the relapse-emitting phase of the disease," said Dr. Boutwell. "But after about 15 years, 50 percent of patients will develop SPMS. The medication that can reduce the number of relapses doesn't work on SPMS because the patients aren't having relapses." That's why so much is riding on the success of the MAESTRO trial.

For Alden, the trial has meant the chance for a treatment that might offer some relief from his symptoms—the nerve pain that no one can see but he can acutely feel, to the point where even the hair on his legs hurt.

But there's another reason why he wanted to be part of the trial.

"It was a choice of either progressing with no hope or taking some action," said Alden. "This is a one-in-50-billion chance that I might be able to help other people with MS."

No cane; now he's able

Alden is one of 510 patients taking part in the nationwide two-year study. He comes to Saint Luke's for an IV infusion every six months. He received his first infusion in January 2008; it took all of five minutes.

Alden had already decided he wouldn't dwell on whether he was actually getting the drug or the placebo.

"MS patients grasp at any straw that may help them," he said. "I purposely have not done any research on the drug, so

that whatever I feel after an infusion, I actually feel. It's not just something I read."

Within two weeks of his infusion, Alden did feel a change.

"My balance got a lot better in a hurry," he said. "I felt like I didn't have to be close to the wall."

Before that, Alden's precarious balance had meant he wouldn't walk without his cane, and he wouldn't walk down stairs. Instead, he would sit on the top stair and slide down the rest.

Among the first walks Alden took after his January treatment was with Sugar Bear, one of three dogs in the Alden household. For once, only Sugar Bear was tethered, on her leash; Alden left his cane at home.

Now he's not even sure where he put his cane, it's been so long since he needed it. He's walking where he wouldn't have dared to walk before, and at a faster gait.

As for stairs, "I now walk up and down them, and I use both legs," he said.

Tracie Dobbie, R.N., B.S.N., sees—and hears—a marked improvement.

"He's more confident now in his walk," said Dobbie, the clinical coordinator for the trial. "Cognitively he's sharper, too. He follows conversations well."

Beginning of a happy ending?

When Alden had to quit his job as a respiratory therapist because of his MS, he became a volunteer at a local animal shelter. He brings many dogs into his and his wife's home in Raytown, socializing them so that they'll be more readily adoptable.

"There are a lot of happy endings," he said.

Perhaps the same will hold true of the MAESTRO trial.

In the meantime, Alden happily continues to be a "trial rat," as he describes himself. (As an adjective, the word might be "hopeful.")

"If patients are concerned about being in a drug trial, they need to remember that any medication they're on that's helping them had to go through trials, too," Alden said. "As a trial rat, I feel I'm doing some good for somebody."

Including Steve Alden. ✦



Walking the talk Steve Alden has been able to walk without assistance, despite his Secondary Progressive MS, since he became a participant in a nationwide drug trial that Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute is taking part in.



'Bathed in Blessings'

A triple-negative cancer turned into a positive for Darrell Sublett, thanks to a vast network of healing at Saint Luke's

Darrell Sublett had a simple choice to make: see her regular doctor for her annual mammogram next month or have it this month at her workplace? Her decision may well have saved her life.

The 51-year-old woman works as a legal administrative assistant at Husch Blackwell Sanders. The law firm has an on-site Health Enhancement Coordinator from Saint Luke's Health System who acts as a health coach for the firm's 2,000 employees. (See sidebar.)

Every October, the firm brings SOPHIE (Sophisticated Images) to the office, so employees can have mammograms on the job.

Sublett opted for convenience. The test took only 10 minutes. When the Saint Luke's Center for Breast Care called to say her films showed a suspicious lump, she wasn't alarmed. A previous mammogram had showed something similar. It turned out to be a benign cyst.

This time, though, she wasn't so lucky.

Negative personality

After further tests suggested cancer, Arthur Elman, M.D., a radiologist with Specialists in Cancer Care, performed a biopsy on Sublett's suspicious tissue.

"When Dr. Elman asked me to come in to talk about the results, that's when I got that heavy feeling," said Sublett, the mother of two teenage children. "My understanding was: Mail is good news. A phone call is not."

Dr. Elman met with her that same day. He explained that her cancer wasn't fueled by estrogen or progesterone, nor did it show the HER2/neu gene.

These "triple-negative" cancers are about twice as likely to occur in African-Americans. They also tend to be more aggressive and harder to treat. They don't respond to any of the hormone therapies like tamoxifen or to Herceptin that targets the HER2/neu gene.

"Am I going to die from this?" she asked, softly.

"You're in good shape," Dr. Elman told her. "Early detection gives people better outcomes. Your experience would have been a lot more challenging if you had delayed screening."

Sublett knew little about breast cancer. No one in her family or circle of friends has had it.

"I felt overwhelmed," she said. She wouldn't for long.

Collective wisdom

Every Monday, a Tumor Board meets at Saint Luke's. It's made up of all those involved in breast cancer care at Saint Luke's: diagnostic radiologists, pathologists, surgeons, oncologists, radiation oncologists, high-risk specialists, and even a clinical trials coordinator.

"Patients at Saint Luke's who have a positive biopsy get the benefit of a broad range of expertise," Dr. Elman said. "As clinicians, we also gain from interacting with other disciplines."

The Monday after her diagnosis, the board discussed Sublett's case. Her treatment plan emerged from these meetings and her discussions with her surgeon, Tammy K. Neblock-Beirne, M.D.; her oncologist, Shamila Garg, M.D.; and her radiation oncologist, Susan Smith, M.D.

She would have a lumpectomy and an aggressive course of chemotherapy given every two weeks instead of three. She would also get a new form of targeted breast radiation that takes one week instead of six. This would allow her to complete radiation before starting chemotherapy, another plus for aggressive cancers.

With her plan in place, the Breast Center scheduled her for a lumpectomy the following week.

The average time between breast cancer diagnosis and surgery in the United States is one month, according to one study. Darrell's took just two weeks.

With the speed at which Sublett's tumor was growing, every day counted. The lump visible in the mammogram measured one

centimeter. Four weeks later, when she underwent a lumpectomy, it was even larger.

Care full

Sublett felt comforted not only by the speed at which her treatment was organized, but also by how much support was available to her.

Whenever she had a concern, there was a resource to help. When she worried about how to share the diagnosis with her son and daughter, a social worker counseled her and gave her literature to share with her kids. She got a wig through the Missys' Mirror program.

"Saint Luke's network of support is vast and wide and deep," Sublett said. "I felt like part of a circle of caring and of healing."

She tolerated the regimen well and completed treatment in April. "We were able to keep on schedule and give her the full recommended doses," Dr. Garg said. And Sublett never required hospitalization.

Soup to balloons

Family, friends, and co-workers buoyed Sublett's spirits. They brought food, donated money, and offered prayers and words of encouragement.

She drew energy from their acts of kindness.

"Did I feel uncomfortable? Yes. Did I feel nauseous? Yes. Did I feel pain? Yes," Sublett said. "But at no time did I ever feel sad or defeated."

Although Sublett had been estranged from her ex-husband, his family embraced her with their support. And, her ex-husband came back into the lives of their two children.

"Who would imagine that you would get diagnosed with something that threatens your life and that you would emerge bathed in blessings?"

Sublett's experience has inspired others. This year, twice as many people as last year signed up for the mobile mammogram at her office. ✦



Uplifting experience Darrell Sublett's co-workers threw a party to celebrate her graduation from chemotherapy. It ended with a balloon release. "My spirit soared as I let go of the darkness of chemo," she said.

Health at work, health on the job

From chair massages to exercise classes, on-site health coaches help employees stay fit and fabulous

Carolyn Marney is an employee benefit. And more than few employees at Husch Blackwell Sanders, where she works as a Health Enhancement Coordinator, value her more than paid vacations or free parking.

A Saint Luke's Health System employee, Marney serves as the health coach for Husch Blackwell Sanders. She arranges on-site health screenings, leads exercise classes, and counsels individuals on

wellness for the firm's 2,000 employees. She makes it easier to live well, and, for a few employees, she's made it easier to stay alive by arranging on-site mammograms and prostate cancer checks. (See main story.)

Employees who once insisted they hated exercise are now in the front row of her on-site classes. She's helped employees lower their blood pressure, lose weight, and avoid medication.

"Life is short. We need to make the best of it," Marney said. "If you feel good and take care of yourself, that helps."

Her "Choose to Lose" program helped 43 people in the firm's Plaza office drop 445 pounds. "You are the best benefit we have," said one participant.

More than 20 companies in Kansas City have Health Enhancement Coordinators, according to Denise Lambert, Director of Employer Relations at Saint Luke's.

Employers benefit from the program as well. In the Kansas City region, health costs have increased by 43 percent from 2002 to 2007. At Husch Blackwell Sanders, costs were up just 23 percent.

And cricked necks were down. Marney organizes chair massages, too ✦

Get Your Brain to the Gym

As Pat and Bob Clune discovered, Saint Luke's new Brain Fitness Center makes it possible for the brain to stay young



Where memories are made... sharper

Bob and Pat Clune are the first graduates of Saint Luke's Hospital's new Brain Gym. They have better memories to show for it.

of growing old. It may not be either inevitable or permanent," said neurologist Marilyn Rymer, M.D., Medical Director of Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute. "Research is showing that the brain is remarkably responsive to training."

The Clunes' exercises were designed to stretch the brain, much as you would muscles and ligaments, to keep it limber. In one, they heard a rapid series of "micro sounds" and had to quickly determine whether the tone went up or down. If they clicked incorrectly, they heard a *clunk*.

"We heard a lot of clunks at the beginning," said Pat. "As we progressed day by day, the tests got more challenging."

And the *clunks* got fewer.

"You're graded after each test, and they compare your scores with the ones for the weeks before," Pat said. "It takes a few weeks, but then you start to feel confident."

Some tests were more challenging than others. The most

Staying in mental shape

During their eight-week program, the Clunes' workout lasted for two hours a day, four days a week. Midway through each session, they took a 15-minute break for meditation.

The Brain Gym's form of meditation is aimed at lowering stress levels by inhibiting the production of adrenaline and other engine revvers, and enhancing the release of melatonin and other soothers. As part of their post-program homework, the Clunes received a CD with these same relaxation and breathing techniques to practice at home.

Like all members, Pat and Bob also received a fitness assessment by one of Saint Luke's physical therapists and a nutrition assessment by a registered dietitian.

In early November, Pat and Bob became the first graduates of the Brain Gym. "I feel more confident now than I used to,"

Every workday, John Corbaley does what most trainers do at their gyms: He gets the equipment ready for his members.

But instead of barbells and treadmills, his equipment consists of a computer monitor, mouse, and earphones. Corbaley is not a personal trainer. He's a speech pathologist.

Welcome to the Brain Fitness Center, part of Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute, and the only one like it in the country. Launched in the summer of 2008 for people who want to become more mentally fit, the program has quickly earned the moniker Brain Gym.

"A growing body of evidence shows that with the proper training, your memory can be as good as it was 10 years ago," said Corbaley. "It's also possible to delay, and in some cases, prevent memory loss."

Memory gets a workout

Some Brain Gym members are recovering from brain injuries from a stroke or other illness, and some have a mild form of diagnosed memory loss. But many, such as Pat Clune and her

husband, Bob, are injury-free when it comes to the brain. They're here to give their gray matter a workout.

They're not interested in running a marathon. But they would like to have the kind of memory that keeps their minds running sharply. Bob, 82, had noticed that at times he was not sure of how to get to places he'd been driving to for years from their home in Leawood. He and Pat, 79, signed up for the two-month Brain Gym program that began in September 2008.

"We ended up going to the first memory class a week before it started, so we knew we needed it," Bob confessed, with a laugh.

Mind bending and stretching

Bob and Pat are in the group known as the "worried well," people north of 50 who want to keep at bay those "senior moments" of forgetfulness and mental slackness. The Brain Gym is physical proof that regaining and retaining such mental acuity is not merely wishful thinking anymore.

"Cognitive decline was once thought to be an inevitable part

"I feel more confident now than I used to."

—Brain Gym member Bob Clune

daunting one for both the Clunes was the grid, which involves finding pairs of matching syllables within a 30-square grid on the monitor. It's similar to the old-time card game of Concentration.

"The goal is to change the brain's functioning from user mode to acquisition mode," Corbaley explained. "When we're children and teenagers, we're in acquisition mode, always learning. After college, the brain starts to fall into user mode."

To recapture that mental acquisitiveness, most adults have four choices. They can:

1. Learn a new sport
 2. Master a foreign language
 3. Return to college full time
 4. Complete the Brain Fitness program
- ✓ Corbaley, 58, has done all four.

Bob said. "Pat said she sees that in me, too. When you don't have to worry about forgetting something, it really helps."

Pat has noticed a difference in her own mental acumen as well as her husband's.

"The joy for me is seeing him experience a level of sharpness he didn't have before," she said.

They're still breaking a mental sweat even though their course is completed, performing the take-home exercises Corbaley gave them.

"We'll definitely work on them," said Pat. "We don't want to lose what we worked so hard to learn." ✦

Saint Luke's Brain Fitness Center is located at Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City. For information on joining the Brain Gym, call (816) 932-6220, or search "brain fitness" on saintlukeshealthsystem.org.

Two minutes with... Natalie Key, M.D.

A Lifetime of Care

Saint Luke's internists specialize in preventive medicine to keep adults healthy for all stages of their lives

What don't most people know about internal medicine?

Many people think internists are doctors who specialize in treating the body's internal organs. But I call myself a general practitioner for adults—similar to a pediatrician who specializes in treating children.

Internists are experts in primary care and hospital medicine. We handle everything from preventive care, such as a pap smear or bone density test, to hospital-based care, such as a patient with repeated hospitalizations as a result of congestive heart failure.

How do internists benefit patients?

As a primary care doctor, I treat everything from infected fingers and sore throats to patients with severe diabetes or those recovering from liver transplants. My job is to streamline my patients' care. I make sure patients see a specialist when needed, monitor their medications, and perform diagnostic tests. I'm like the quarterback of the health care team.

How do you help patients safeguard their health?

I stress the importance of annual physi-

cal exams to all my patients. Preventing illness is key, but medical advances have made it much easier to make an early diagnosis. That's a lot more likely



Primary care Natalie Key, M.D., recently joined Saint Luke's Internal Medicine as one of 16 internists—doctors who specialize in treating adults.

For more information about Dr. Key, or to find a Saint Luke's Medical Group physician in your neighborhood, call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220.

to happen if you're seeing a doctor regularly. Early diagnosis, followed by proper care, can be the key to managing an illness.

Why did you choose internal medicine?

Originally, I wanted to be an anesthesiologist, but then I worked for an internist/pediatrician during my fourth year of medical school. After that experience, I changed my focus in medical school to internal medicine. I became board certified in internal medicine in 1998.

Internal medicine lets me take care of families and establish long-term relationships with my patients. It's so rewarding to work with my patients and get their health under control over a long period of time.

What did you do before coming to Saint Luke's?

I taught internal medicine residents at the University of Kansas for nine years. While teaching was rewarding, I now have much more contact with patients, which is what I love about this job. Saint Luke's is a great health system, and the patients are at the center of all we do. ✦

Picture of Health

Itchy, red, flaky, scaly—dry skin is no way to start a new year. Here's how to keep your body's largest organ in the pink

Got an itch? You're not alone. In fact, most people experience dry skin this time of year. "Dry skin, or xerosis, can be a symptom of more serious or chronic underlying conditions, such as hypothyroidism, diabetes, or psoriasis," said Kristi Shaumeyer, M.D. "However, in most cases, it's temporary and completely harmless."

Skin Deep

You can ditch your itch with these tips:

Cause and effect. Your skin may be dry if it:

- Feels tight, especially after you've been in water
- Appears shrunken or dehydrated
- Looks red or feels rough
- Itches, sometimes intensely
- Flakes, scales, or peels
- Develops fine lines or cracks. (Severe cases feature deep fissures that bleed)

Usually the malady flares in winter, when forced heat systems suck all the moisture out of the air. If left untreated, that itchy discomfort can lead to bigger problems, including infections, eczema (skin inflammation), folliculitis (inflammation of hair follicles), and cellulitis (an infection of the deeper skin tissues).

Bathhouse rules. Keep showers warm and short. Hot water can strip your skin's lipids, leaving it vulnerable. Consider bathing and shampooing every other day or less often. Don't rub your scalp vigorously. Use antibacterial soaps sparingly, or switch to nondrying, nonsoap cleansers.

Grease is the word. Oil-based lotions trap your skin's natural moisture more effectively. Pay attention to your lower legs, abdomen, and upper arms, where dry skin appears most often. And don't forget your feet—they need

heavy-duty, glycerine-based creams. Exfoliate periodically to let the moisturizers really sink in, but not too often or you'll irritate your skin.

Block a punch. Ultraviolet (UV) rays don't take a winter break. In fact, snow compounds the intensity. Sun-damaged skin is more prone to complications.

You can find over-the-counter facial moisturizers with sunscreen, but apply a full-spectrum block on all exposed skin 30 minutes before outdoor activity. And don't forget the sunscreen lip balm.

Get sensitive. Buy clothing detergents and dishwashing liquids made without irritating dyes or perfumes. Look for "made for sensitive skin" labels.

Chill. Keep your thermostat set in the 68- to 75-degree range. Higher temperature settings force furnaces to run longer, further drying out your home.

Damp it out. Invest in a good-quality humidifier. One that attaches directly to your furnace pumps moisture throughout, but those handy vaporizers you dig out during a cold can help your skin as well.

Dr. Shaumeyer is now accepting new patients at Saint Luke's Medical Group-Barry Road. To make an appointment with Dr. Shaumeyer, or to find a Saint Luke's Medical Group physician in your neighborhood, call NurseLine at (816) 932-6220. ✦

