Second chance at life

‘Miracle’ team to the rescue
Second chance at life

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News and information to help you get and stay healthy

Healthy Living

UPMC Altoona
Lessen your risk of tick bites and Lyme disease

Staying safe OUTDOORS
As you enjoy summer leisure activities outdoors, he also recommends that you:

• Check your insect repellant’s concentration of diethyltoluamide (DEET). Adults should use no more than a 30 percent concentration and young children about 10 percent.

• Apply DEET-containing insect repellent to clothing and exposed skin. Avoid areas around the eyes and mouth, as well as the hands of young children.

• Wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be seen more easily.

• Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and long pants for protection.

• Tape the areas where pants and socks meet.Ticks crawl upward, in search of thinner skin around the ears, neck, and scalp.

• Examine yourself and have another person check hard-to-see areas for ticks once you’re back indoors. Removing an attached tick can be done at home, and pet stores and pharmacies have products to aid in removal. However, a pair of pointy-nosed tweezers works well.

If a tick is removed from your skin within 24 hours, the chance of contracting Lyme disease is low; however, observe the area for a rash which expands to a bull’s-eye appearance and feels warm to the touch, but is rarely itchy or painful. Additional symptoms include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes, Dr. Bouchard says.
A team saved Norman Tucker’s life on Dec. 23 when he suffered sudden cardiac arrest at an Altoona wholesale outlet.

“It’s a true miracle,” says his cardiologist, George Jabbour, MD, of UPMC Altoona Blair Medical Associates Cardiology, referring to how many of the right people were near Norm to administer proper aid when he collapsed.

“For each minute a person’s heart is without oxygen, the odds of survival decrease 10 percent,” Dr. Jabbour says. “Generally, a patient with sudden cardiac arrest out of the hospital setting has a low chance of survival — about 90 percent of patients die.”

A team of ‘ANGELS’

Norm calls those who assisted him “my angels.” Store employee Lee Queen and customer Mary Prorok, RN, performed CPR while employee Tim Garlick called 911. Another customer, Don Krug, used an automatic external defibrillator three times to shock Norm’s heart back into rhythm. By happenstance, Don had received AED training the day before and retrieved the defibrillator from his car to assist Norm.

Hollidaysburg Ambulance personnel responded quickly; they tell Norm he was talking to them while they wheeled him into the ambulance. Coincidentally, a hospital perfusionist, Jeff Price, saw Norm being treated, called UPMC Altoona and then returned to the hospital to provide the heart catheterization and heart surgery teams with additional warning of Norm’s condition and pending arrival.

Norm and his daughter, Dawn Swalga, both of Duncansville, spent several months piecing together the sequence of events, reaching out to all the good Samaritans and UPMC Altoona staff members whose combined expertise kept Norm alive.

“I am so thankful for the care my dad received at UPMC Altoona,” Dawn says. “The surgeon was more than willing to answer my questions. The nursing staff in the Cardiothoracic ICU was wonderful with my dad and in helping us understand each step of his recovery process. He couldn’t have asked for better care, and there really is no way to thank everyone for everything they did.”

Making the most of ‘SECOND CHANCE’

About six months into what Norm calls his “second chance,” he’s graduated from UPMC Altoona’s outpatient cardiac rehab program and works with Dr. Jabbour to maximize this second opportunity through healthy lifestyle habits and informed health care decisions. One of those decisions was to have a defibrillator/pacemaker implanted to help regulate his heart and automatically shock it back into beating, if needed.

“It’s humbling how many people came to my aid,” Norm says. “From all the people at the store, Hollidaysburg Ambulance, heart catheterization team, cardiac surgery team, follow-up care in the Cardiothoracic Intensive Care Unit, laboratory people, rehab experts, and so many others I am not aware of — I am very grateful and I owe my life to the timely, expert care I received and continue to receive.

“I will do my best to live fully each day and enjoy each moment with my wife, my daughters, and grandson. Everyone who helped and treated me gave me more time,” he says. “It’s a precious gift.”
More and more people are taking prescribed aspirin and other medications that impact their blood clotting ability. To improve care for these patients before, during, and after surgery, especially in trauma cases, UPMC Altoona has obtained a blood analyzing instrument called a Thrombelastograph® Haemostasis Analyzer system, also known as TEG.

TEG provides valuable information about a patient’s blood components and helps clinicians decide on treatments, such as what blood products a patient receives via transfusions.

“Our new TEG capability is improving care for a broad spectrum of patients at UPMC Altoona,” says trauma surgeon A. Tyler Putnam, MD. “Its use includes many of those patients with the most common life threatening conditions. It is also helping to conserve one of our most valuable resources—blood products.”

‘Success story’
The instrument assesses a patient’s coagulation equilibrium and is useful during cardiothoracic, vascular, and trauma procedures, says Simon Lampard, MD, chief of UPMC Altoona’s Trauma Service.

According to Dr. Putnam, “This is a real success story for our patients and the UPMC Altoona team. The Emergency Department, the Trauma Service, the ICU, the operating room, and especially the lab have all been involved in making the addition of this new technology a success.” Other departments are considering the use of TEG to help improve patient care.

The TEG instrument allows UPMC Altoona to participate in a national study led by the UPMC research team in Pittsburgh evaluating the transfusion of plasma to hemorrhaging patients in the pre-hospital setting (see related story).

Gift facilitates purchase
The instrument’s purchase was made possible through a $50,000 donation from Gail and Michael Irwin of Altoona in honor of their daughter-in-law Melissa and her husband (their son) Brian Irwin. Melissa was cared for by Dr. Lampard and the UPMC Altoona trauma team, receiving the most advanced blood transfusion techniques available at UPMC Altoona for a life-threatening liver condition which only affects expectant mothers.

UPMC Altoona trauma experts are teaming with researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and UPMC Presbyterian as an extension of a multi-center trial involving patients who suffer traumatic injuries with uncontrolled bleeding. Paramedics will administer plasma to these patients while they are still being transported by helicopter to the hospital.

Uncontrolled bleeding is one of the leading causes of death following a traumatic injury because it can lead to multiple organ failure. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, the University of Pittsburgh, and UPMC, the Pre-hospital Air Medical Plasma Trial (PAMPer) is intended to build on past research findings that early transfusions can lower mortality and reduce the total amount of blood transfusions required.

“I believe it is a great opportunity for us to contribute to our community by advancing valuable new research into saving the lives of trauma patients in our region and the nation,” says trauma surgeon A. Tyler Putnam, MD, lead PAMPer researcher at UPMC Altoona.

Because patients who have suffered these kinds of injuries are likely unable to consent to participation in the trial, PAMPer is being conducted under a federally authorized exemption from informed consent process that includes a means to opt out of inclusion. To obtain an “opt out” bracelet, contact Meghan Buck, project assistant, at buckml@upmc.edu or 412-864-1599. More information is available at www.pamperstudy.com.
Primary care physicians encourage immunization for patients of all ages.

If you’re keeping a checklist of topics to discuss with your primary care doctor at your yearly visit, it may be worthwhile to include a review of your immunization records.

William Olstein Jr., DO, of UPMC Huntingdon Family Physicians tells his patients that vaccines are extremely important because they help prevent deadly diseases that could spread rapidly.

Vaccines work by introducing a person’s immune system to a disease in a controlled setting, stimulating the body to produce immunity to that disease and protecting that person from that disease in the future.

Schedules vary. Many vaccines given to children protect them for their whole lives. Other vaccines require multiple doses or need to be repeated at regular intervals. Some vaccines are recommended for everyone and others for just those who may have a higher risk of contracting the disease, or those who would have more difficulty fighting off a disease due to weakened or compromised immune systems.

“Immunizations are such a simple thing that allows us to prevent major diseases. Millions of lives have been saved with vaccines,” Dr. Olstein says.

He encourages patients of all ages to follow the latest recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and their doctors.

Protect yourself to protect others.

“Our job as physicians is to educate patients on why we give vaccines and keep patients up to date,” Dr. Olstein says.

“By building your own immunity, you are also protecting those around you by decreasing their chances of acquiring the disease. If everyone was immune, we would be one step closer to eradicating the disease.”

His office also gives vaccinations to children and adults planning to travel outside of the United States, and he reminds travelers to plan ahead for travel vaccinations that are suggested or required when visiting other countries.

“Do some research, listen to your doctor, and get your shots,” he says. “It’s very important and beneficial to your health and everyone else’s.”

James Mansberger, DO, says he’s always been a kid at heart, and he takes a fun, interactive approach in his style of pediatric care at Children’s Community Pediatrics in Huntingdon. Don’t be surprised if he starts talking like the cartoon character “Scooby-Doo” or hands over his stethoscope to a curious toddler.

“I try to make the kids who come to see me as comfortable as I can so that I can get the best history and exam possible,” says Dr. Mansberger. Growing up in Huntingdon County, Jamey Mansberger had originally pictured himself as a family doctor, but he eventually narrowed that vision to pediatrics. He earned his undergraduate degree at Penn State University and then worked as a technician in research labs at Dartmouth College’s Geisel School of Medicine. While there, he did research on sudden infant death syndrome and spent volunteer hours at the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock. He earned a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed his internship and residency in internal medicine/pediatrics at Geisinger Medical Center. He is board-certified in both specialties.

Private practice.

He worked at Mount Union Medical Center for three years before opening a private practice, Pediatrics and Beyond, where he provided health care to both adults and children. He has continued to care for patients at J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital.

Last March, Dr. Mansberger’s practice joined Children’s Community Pediatrics, which is part of Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

“I am really excited to be part of an organization with such a high standard of care and an excellent reputation,” he says.

Dr. Mansberger enjoys spending time with his wife, Elizabeth, and their two children, Samantha and Xander. He is involved with his local church and mission outreach, and also sings with a group of local physicians called “The Singing Doctors.”
Regain Control over your Bladder

Physical therapy can strengthen pelvic muscles

Incontinence affects an estimated 17 million Americans of all ages, although it is more common in women and older adults. Unfortunately, embarrassment prevents many people from seeking treatment for this common medical condition.

For local women, treatment is now available through the UPMC Altoona Outpatient Physical Therapy Department, located at Station Medical Center. Holly Strobel, DPT, an outpatient physical therapist, recently received advanced clinical training in pelvic health therapy.

As a specialist in pelvic health, she is trained to treat urinary incontinence and organ prolapse, both common conditions. “Many women experience these issues,” Holly says. “Help is available. It’s not necessary for any woman to suffer.”

Start with your doctor

Holly suggests that women with urine leakage during daily activities, pelvic pain, frequent urination, and other problems see their primary care physician first. The physician must refer the patient for physical therapy. The most common form of urinary incontinence is stress incontinence. Stress incontinence results in leakage of small amounts of urine when there is increased pressure on the bladder. It is typically caused by weakness and lack of support in the muscles of the pelvic floor. Activities such as coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercise, or lifting heavy objects apply pressure to a full bladder, which can result in leakage. This type of incontinence can occur due to pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, injury or trauma, surgery, or lack of exercise.

In addition to stress incontinence, other forms of incontinence can also be caused by weakening of the pelvic floor muscles. Physical therapy works to strengthen those muscles.

Change your habits

When patients come to Holly, she determines which factors could be contributing to their incontinence. She educates patients on what foods and drinks in their diets may be irritating their bladders and provides advice on how to change behaviors that may make symptoms worse. During physical therapy, she works with patients on methods to identify and correctly use the pelvic floor muscles and on exercises to strengthen them.

“Many people don’t want to talk about urinary incontinence, but they should,” Holly says. “Physical therapy can help you regain control over your bladder.”

How the Urinary System Works

Urine is stored in the bladder until it is eliminated from the body through a tube called the urethra. Urine flow and leakage normally are controlled by sphincter muscles, which tighten and close around the neck of the bladder and urethra.

When urination begins, bladder muscles contract to squeeze urine out of the bladder, and sphincter muscles relax to allow the urine to pass. When urination is completed, the bladder relaxes and the sphincter contracts.

The muscles of the pelvic floor attach to the bottom of the pelvic bones and run front to back, forming a bowl-like structure that lifts to support the internal organs and control the sphincter muscles. The pelvic floor muscles also work to strengthen the lower back, stabilize the pelvic bones, and help with sexual function.
Spring FOUNDERS EVENT

The UPMC Altoona Foundation held its spring Founders Club event on May 10 at Barneywood in Hollidaysburg. The celebration welcomes supporters of UPMC Altoona to gather and network. Our Founders Club now has over 100 members.

Funds donated by the Founders members were used to purchase medical equipment for UPMC, including a state-of-the-art patient transfer chair for stroke and medical intensive care patients. Also, the adult dental clinic received digital dental x-ray equipment that reduces patient exposure to radiation while providing enhanced images.

“The Founders’ generosity and support is having a profound impact on patients’ lives,” says Tim Balconi, president of the UPMC Altoona Foundation.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP formed by UPMC Altoona and The Bob Perks Fund

The Bob Perks Cancer Assistance Fund, which supports cancer patients across several central Pennsylvania counties, recently received a $10,000 grant from the UPMC Altoona Foundation.

In 2015, the Bob Perks Cancer Assistance Fund granted over $60,000 to cancer patients in Blair County, many of them referred by UPMC staff. The organization provides cancer patients with funding for basic necessities so they can focus on treatment and recovery.

“Our partnership with the Bob Perks Cancer Fund is a good way for our hospital to assist patients beyond the medical care that we provide,” says Jerry Murray, president, UPMC Altoona and UPMC Bedford Memorial.

Medical laboratory students RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

The UPMC Altoona Foundation recently presented scholarships of $500 each to six medical laboratory science students training in the hospital laboratory.

“These students complete a year of clinical training to become medical laboratory scientists, spending 40 or more hours per week participating in lectures and rotations throughout various disciplines in the laboratory. The program is rigorous, with many of our students having already completed a bachelor of science degree,” says Joe Pufka, director of UPMC Altoona’s Laboratory Services department. “The scholarships are helpful to our students who are self-funding their education.”

Guardian Angel RECEPTION

The Guardian Angel program allows patients to recognize a nurse, doctor, staff member, or volunteer who made a difference during the patient’s stay at one of UPMC Altoona’s locations.

Since the Guardian Angel program began in 2014, 337 staff members have become Guardian Angels, with 35 of them nominated more than one time. Additionally, 27 departments have been nominated, with 19 of those departments receiving more than one Guardian Angel nomination.

On March 18, our Guardian Angels were invited to a reception to celebrate their nomination.

BLANKETS for babies

Miss Pennsylvania Preteen recently visited UPMC Altoona to deliver two baskets full of blankets for newborn babies in Maternity.

Knowing she wanted to do something special for families while their newborns are still in the hospital, Jenna Hall followed the motto, “Help keep the babies warm.” She collected blankets from her high school peers, family, and friends.

“I hope the families find some comfort in these special blankets and know that they were collected with love,” Jenna says.

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BullEx® BullsEye™ fire extinguisher TRAINING SYSTEM

“The Foundation is pleased to fund the hospital’s new BullEx BullsEye Laser-Driven Fire Extinguisher Training System,” says Tim Balconi, president, UPMC Altoona Foundation. The BullsEye helps staff learn the proper operation of a fire extinguisher in their actual work environment.

“Every staff member is required to know the acronym P.A.S.S. — Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep — and be proficient in the use of a fire extinguisher,” says Shawn Leslie, safety manager of UPMC Altoona. “The BullsEye fire extinguisher training device is a benefit to our training efforts. The machine simulates a fire and is highly engaging to use.”

The BullEx machine is portable and will be used for training throughout UPMC Altoona.
and the scanning room. Everyone who comes in contact with the machine is screened: staff, patients, nurses, and cleaning crew. All patients—inpatient and outpatient—will be screened over the phone and again when they arrive in the department. We review all previous surgeries to ensure that the patient is safe to enter the scanning room; for example, we check for metal implants. The workers who installed the machine had to be screened as well, even checking their eyes for any metal from past construction jobs.

We must be aware of day-to-day items that can be pulled by the magnet: name badges, jewelry, hair pins, belts, etc.