

## Good News for Sickle Cell Sufferers

By Larry Lucas

A drug already in use for other diseases has been found highly effective in reducing painful crisis episodes in adults with sickle cell anemia.

Hydroxyurea, manufactured by Bristol-Myers Squibb, was given daily to volunteer patients in 21 medical centers across the country in a clinical trial. The study showed that the medicine cut painful episodes—and hospital admissions for those episodes—in half. Hydroxyurea also reduced by half the incidence of acute chest syndrome—a life-threatening complication whose symptoms include chest pain, fever and an abnormal chest x-ray.

The drug is not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration, but because it is approved for other purposes, sickle cell patients can get it with a doctor's prescription.

According to Dr. Claude L'Enfant of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, "This is a significant advance in the treatment of adults with sickle cell ane-

mia. Although it is not a cure, hydroxyurea therapy is the first effective treatment for this serious illness and may greatly improve the quality of life of sickle cell anemia patients."

Sickle cell anemia is an inherited disease most prevalent among people whose ancestors come from Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean area, and India. About 72,000 African Americans suffer from this disease—as well as a growing number of people of other races or of mixed race. In addition, one in 12 African Americans carries the sickle cell trait. If people with this trait marry, their children are likely to inherit the disease.

In patients with this disease, red blood cells take on a sickle shape and become rigid. Scientists think hydroxyurea prevents the cells from becoming rigid, reducing the pain as the sickle-shaped cells try to squeeze through tiny blood vessels.

This breakthrough illustrates how drug research can not only save and improve lives—it can



save healthcare dollars, too.

Each time a sickle cell patient has to go to a hospital or emergency room because of a pain crisis, it costs hundreds—often thousands—of dollars. Add that to the wages and productivity lost when sickle cell patients can't work because of pain episodes, and you have a whopping bill. This new drug, plus others still in testing for sickle disease, should cut this bill—and also cut the suffering of people with sickle cell disease.

*Larry Lucas is Associate Vice President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America in Washington, DC.*

## Good Cholesterol Level Can Spot Heart Problems

CHICAGO - The easiest way to determine the risk of heart attack or stroke may be to measure the level of "good" cholesterol in the blood, researchers said Tuesday.

Currently, people worry about their ratio of low-density cholesterol — the "bad" type — to high-density cholesterol — the "good" kind, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.

But researchers at Montreal General Hospital found in a follow-up study of 3,678 participants from a 1970s-era survey, that the ratio of high-density cholesterol to total cholesterol in the blood was just as accurate in predicting future risk of heart problems.

A higher level of good cholesterol seems to prevent bad cholesterol from forming fatty deposits that block arteries and veins, the most common cause of heart disease.

Determining the level of bad cholesterol in the bloodstream is more difficult than measuring for good cholesterol, which makes a test with the latter preferable, study author Steven Grover wrote in the medical journal.

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# HEALTH

## Health District To Hold Drive-Thru Flu Vaccination Clinic

With the winter holidays just around the corner, amongst many exciting activities and upcoming fun, it is often the time of year that many people begin to think more about their health and what they can do to keep themselves in good health.

Unfortunately, much of the time they wait until it is too late. This is especially true with the always dreadful - flu. Most documented cases of the flu occur between November and April, which is why the Clark County Health District is encouraging Nevada residents

to get a head start on early flu vaccinations and be safe - rather than sorry.

To help the community maintain their good health, the Health District will be holding their annual Drive-thru flu vaccination clinic. Never having to even get out of your car, has made getting vaccinated easier than it has ever been before. The Health District invites you to get your flu vaccination on Saturday, October 7th or 21st

from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. The clinic is to be held in the parking lot of the Health District, located at 625 Shadow Lane (across from Valley Hospital).

A minimal fee of seven dollars will be required and senior citizens with a Medicare card (presented at the time of vaccination only) will not be charged anything. More information may be obtained by calling the Health District at 383-1351.

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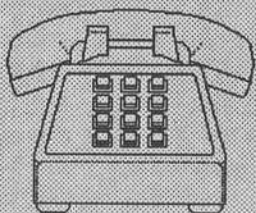
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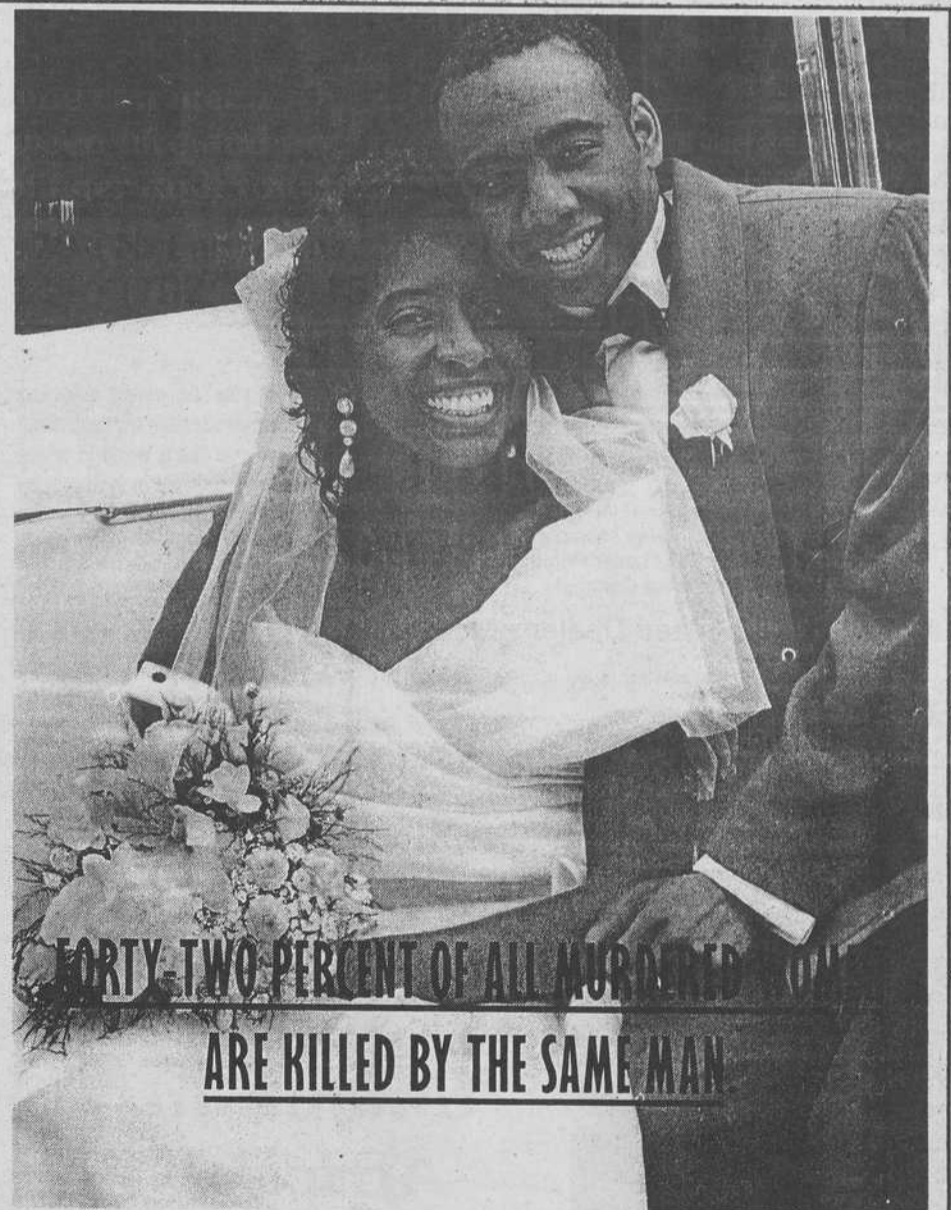
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