

## HEALTH

# New lab provides arthroscopic surgery training

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

HOUSTON — The Thomas E. Cain, M.D., Arthroscopic Training Laboratory has been created at the Baylor Sports Medicine Institute in Houston.

"This state-of-the-art facility is the only one of its kind in this region of the United States," said Dr. Harold Kohl, director of research at the sports medicine institute. "It's designed as a training and teaching lab for surgeons, residents and fellows to acquire hands-on experience in learning more about arthroscopic techniques."

As recently as 15 years ago, a torn anterior

cruciate ligament or other knee injury meant major surgery followed by lengthy rehabilitation. Today, with advances in arthroscopic surgery, people with some knee injuries can be back on their feet in a matter of days.

Physicians will be able to use the new Cain Lab to further develop arthroscopic procedures and refine their approach to the operation.

Arthroscopic surgery, which has become the procedure of choice for many knee injuries in the last five years, offers advantages over traditional surgery.

It requires only a small incision to guide a miniature camera through the injured area. Surgeons then perform the operation by watching a video monitor and manipulating the instruments inside a knee or shoulder.

This minimally invasive approach is highly successful and helps patients recover faster. It has been most visible in college and professional athletics, where it has saved athlete's careers.

The Cain Lab, located in Smith Tower at the Baylor Sports Medicine Institute Research Center, will assist Baylor surgeons in training residents and fellows and serve as a regional

training center for other surgeons and institutions.

The laboratory, made possible in part by generous contributions from The Methodist Hospital and Smith and Nephew Endoscopy, is named in memory of Dr. Thomas E. Cain, former professor in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Baylor.

Cain practiced orthopedic medicine in the Houston community for 33 years and spent 20 of those years as a primary team physician for the Houston Oilers. He was an innovator in the area of arthroscopic surgery.

## Frivolous lawsuits hurt minorities

*By Dr. Gregory A. Antoine  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

WASHINGTON — The late Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, prolonged her fight to survive burns over 75 percent of her body earlier this year because of the availability of artificial skin. Former star athlete Bo Jackson is not a cripple thanks to hip joint replacements.

And tens of thousands of other African-Americans are today leading healthy, productive lives because of silicone-based medical innovations such as heart pacemakers, brain shunts and corneal implants.

The availability of medical implants that save and prolong life is nothing short of miraculous. But these miracles may soon be available only to those people with the time and money to travel to other countries to get them. Medical breakthroughs and the materials to make them are disappearing in the United States.

Why? Because product liability lawsuits and the escalating cost of insurance are making it too expensive for companies to continue to make them. And if the current legal climate continues everything from birth control pills and heart pace makers to certain childhood immunizations could be affected.

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Many suppliers of raw materials for these products are worried about the fast growing number of lawsuits being filed against manufacturers of medical devices. And their fears are causing them to conduct their business differently.

Some companies are severely restricting the sale of raw materials to medical device manufacturers. Other companies are not willing to provide these materials to manufacturers at all.

And who can blame them? Look at what happened to the Dow Corning Corporation.

Several years ago, thousands of lawsuits charged that Dow's silicone breast implants caused connective tissue disease. Defending against so many lawsuits forced the company into bankruptcy. Then plaintiffs' lawyers went after similar manufacturers despite overwhelming scientific evidence showing no association between silicone and disease.

The whole affair has sent chills through companies whose products such as the lens'

implants that fight the blinding effects of glaucoma are also made of silicone.

Healthcare in many poor and minority neighborhoods has historically been limited. Dollars are often limited for anything but emergency care; the choice of doctors is limited and opportunities to form a lasting doctor-patient relationship is often limited as well.

Now there may be limits on devices that address acute health problems in the African-American community such as glaucoma, diabetes, breast and prostate cancer, and hypertension. Doctors simply may not have access to lifesaving or life enhancing medical devices because of lawsuits. And the result could further widen the gap between those who can afford the best medical services and those who can't.

In the African-American community, the silicone gel controversy affects both men and women. Among women, the unavailability of breast implants eliminates an important choice following breast cancer surgery. The removal

of a breast and its potential damage to a woman's self-esteem is further complicated when the variety of safe choices she has to maintain her appearance is reduced.

Similarly, testicular implants are popular among African-American men recovering from prostate cancer. And the same self-esteem issues apply, with the implants offering men choices and ways to feel good about themselves. Yet the availability of these implants as well will be severely limited because of the silicone controversy.

The future may require a trip to Europe or other overseas countries to receive these medical devices. Those with the time and money to make such a trip will get what they need; everyone else will have to do without.

Not many years ago, diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, cancer, diabetes and glaucoma ran rampant in the black community. Since then health education, early intervention and modern medical breakthroughs have made great strides to reverse the trend. But the battle is far from over.

And if lawsuits continue to take their toll on the makers of implants and other silicone-related medical devices, the tide could turn again. This time doctors will have fewer tools to fight the battle than ever before.

## Q & A tidbits on children's nutrition

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

**Q: How do I get my child to eat more fruits and vegetables?**

**A:** Remember "five-a-day." It's important to teach kids to eat five servings of fruits and vegetables. Make these nutritious treats accessible to kids. Reserve a low shelf in the refrigerator for fruits and vegetables so they can open the door and easily grab them. Also, you can prepare some special tasty treats with fruits and vegetables that kids will be excited about eating.

Keep in mind, kids may also like a tasty dip for fruits and vegetables. Yogurt, cottage cheese, cream cheese and peanut butter are all healthy offerings.

If you have the time, plant a garden with your child. Let them help care for the plants, harvest the vegetables, wash and prepare them. They may be more willing to eat fruits

and vegetables if they get their hands dirty helping them grow.

Teaching children the importance of eating fruits and vegetables will help them to become healthy, strong adults.

**Q: Are there any healthy foods I can give to trick-or-treaters this year?**

**A:** Absolutely. Small boxes of raisins, granola bars, peanut butter crackers, low-fat cookies, and sticks of sugarless gum are good. "Non-food" items, such as, crayons, small puzzles, pencils and erasers will also work.

In addition, when your kids bring home a bag full of Halloween candy, you may want to set a timeline for how long that candy remains in the house. Make a deal with your kids that the goodies will be removed after about a week. Eating too much candy on a regular basis can sometimes cause children to develop bad eating habits. Consuming too

many sugary foods can affect a child's appetite. If they do not have a good appetite, they may not regularly eat the fruits, vegetables and meats they need to grow up healthy and strong.

**Q: I have heard that breast-feeding is healthy for both the baby and the mother. Is this true, or just a**

**myth?**

**A:** It is true. Mothers who breast-feed benefit in many ways. If a woman breast-feeds, her risk of pre-menopausal breast cancer is reduced, and her risk of bone fracture from osteoporosis later in life may be reduced as well. Hormones (See Nutrition, Page 9)

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