

# EXECUTIVE HEALTH NOTES

Summer 2006

ENTRUST YOUR HEALTH TO THE NAME YOU KNOW

## Lawyer Faces Facts

### *Mayo Clinic Executive Health Patient Receives "Surprise" Pacemaker*



*"I just can't say enough good about the whole experience. The care was generous and I never felt displaced, not for one moment."*

– Steve Parsons

For Steve Parsons, life is a matter of facts. As a lawyer, he collects the facts and argues them on behalf of his clients. In his personal life, he's straightforward about the facts regarding the depression he's dealt with for years. And, as a patient he listens to the facts and trusts

his physician's recommendations – even when that means making a fast decision to implant a pacemaker.

Parsons, 54, has been a patient at Mayo Clinic's Executive Health Program in Arizona for more than a decade. He's considered a relatively high-risk patient not only because of his family history and diabetes, but also because of his seven-foot, 300-plus pound frame.

"Because of my size, I don't do the stress test on a treadmill. They don't make them big enough," he jokes. "Seriously, a stress test for me equates to an injection that simulates stress on my heart. I've done the test before, but this time I got sick to my stomach almost immediately, before the point at which my heart was even stressed."

What Parsons found out was that the upper and lower chambers of his heart weren't communicating

– essentially he had no heart-beat. Within minutes, Gregory Altemose, M.D., a Mayo Clinic cardiologist who specializes in electrophysiology, entered the testing room.

"What we were seeing with Steve was an electrical blockage," says Dr. Altemose. "We were lucky we were testing him at the time because it happened completely out of the blue, unrelated to the stress test. When we questioned him later, we were able to determine that during previous unexplained periods of light-headedness and nausea, the same thing may have been happening."

Within 48 hours, Parsons spent the night in the hospital and left the next day with a 1½ inch incision in his chest and a new pacemaker. Parsons returned to Las Vegas to his family and to his high-stress career as one of the country's top insurance bad faith lawyers. Since the 1980s, he has repeatedly been cited by his peers as one of the country's top lawyers with his selection into the book *Best Lawyers in America*.

Parsons initially visited the Executive Health Program and Michael A. Covalciuc, M.D., after a Mayo Clinic-trained doctor and family friend urged him to seek a full medical workup to deal with his health history, high-stress job

and tendency toward depression.

"What I've found with Dr. Covalciuc is a true peer relationship," he says. "I don't go in and get a lecture. I get to have an honest discussion about trends and perspectives regarding my health. I'm not that great at reporting on my own health history, so having everything digitized and integrated is a real bonus."

Parsons makes it a policy to be open and frank about his health and always makes time during speaking engagements to discuss the facts about depression – namely that people recognize the signs and seek treatment. This open attitude carried over as he discussed his pacemaker and heart condition with his colleagues, friends and family.

"My wife and I are trying hard to break through our tendencies for denial and to make sure our kids know it's okay to talk about feelings and personal health conditions," he says. "For myself, I've had to deal with my own emotions as this was really the first time something major happened to me health-wise. I'm convinced, though, that Mayo Clinic Executive Health is a premium program and I'm just so grateful and impressed about the humane way in which they deliver health care."



## DEAR EXECUTIVE HEALTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANT:

Excellent service and efficiency have been hallmarks of the Mayo Executive Health Program for decades and in 2006 they are getting even better. First, we now have an executive health lounge for your use at our Scottsdale campus through the generosity of Mayo Clinic benefactors and participants in the Executive Health Program, John and Anna Marie McMillian. The lounge, to be shared with some of Mayo Clinic's benefactors, is located beside the the Gift Shop. We expect it to be a 'home away from home' for you to enjoy if there should be a gap in your schedule during the day or at the end of the day before you leave for a flight. Additional information is provided in this issue of *Executive Health Notes*, and you will be receiving access and other information on the occasion of your next executive health examination.

Second, all our physicians are being equipped with widescreen desktop monitors and automated prescription devices, which will enhance our interaction. The appearance of x-rays, for example, on the big screens allows details to be seen with great clarity, assisting us in explaining our findings to you.

Third, Mayo Clinic has continued to support the development of an excellent IDX-based Electronic Medical Record. The speed with which clinical, laboratory and other test results are made available is astounding. We also have begun to use new diagnostic equipment, in particular the 64 slice CT scanner, for selected patients with high coronary artery calcification scores and/or cardiac symptoms. CT coronary angiography (CTCA) allows evaluation of coronary vessels without an invasive catheterization study in some patients.

The Mayo Clinic Executive Health Program just gets better and better. We look forward to seeing you when you are next here.

**Robert Orford, M.D.**  
Director, Executive Health Program

## Avian Flu: How dire the Threat?

No doubt, you've heard countless media reports regarding the feared pandemic of avian (bird) flu. Thus far, bird flu is hard for humans to contract, but health officials warn a major outbreak could occur if the virus mutates into a form that can spread easily from person to person.

One common question is whether people can get bird flu from eating poultry. According to the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that humans can get bird flu from eating properly cooked poultry or eggs, even in areas of the world experiencing outbreaks of the disease. For humans, the risk of catching bird flu comes from being in close contact with live poultry with the disease, not by eating infected poultry that has been fully cooked.

For now, if you're traveling to Southeast Asia or to any region with bird flu outbreaks, consider these public health recommendations:

- **Avoid domesticated birds.** If possible, avoid rural areas, small farms and especially any close contact with domesticated fowl.
- **Avoid open-air markets.** These can be colorful or dreadful, depending on your tolerance level, but no matter how you see them, they're often breeding grounds for disease.
- **Wash your hands.** One of the simplest ways to prevent infections of all kinds, hand washing is also one of the best. When you're traveling, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, which don't require the use of water, are an excellent choice.
- **Watch your kids.** Keep a careful eye on young children, who are likely to put their hands in their mouths and who may not wash thoroughly.
- **Steer clear of raw eggs.** Because eggshells are often contaminated with bird droppings, avoid mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, ice cream, and any other foods containing raw or undercooked eggs.

*For the latest, reliable information on bird flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the World Health Organization Web site, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).*

## Insurance Update

**CIGNA HealthCare** and Mayo Clinic announced that they have signed an agreement to provide CIGNA HealthCare members and their covered dependents in-network access to Mayo's facilities and its specialty physicians effective June 1, 2006. The contract is effective for commercial CIGNA patients, however, Mayo Clinic's Executive Health Program is specifically excluded from this contract. If you have any questions regarding the Executive Health Program and the new contract, please contact Kathy Thoele at 480-301-4333.

## "Vital" Stats:

The following statistics were collected from the National Live Statistics Reports and from the Centers for Disease Control. Food for thought...or at least a good conversation starter!

- 11** → The number of additional years a 75 year old man can expect to live
- 13** → The number of additional years a 75 year old woman can expect to live
- 35** → The age at which you begin losing more bone than you make
- 40** → The waistline measurement, in inches, at which risk for heart attack increases dramatically
- 45** → The age at which disease becomes a bigger mortality threat than accidents
- 65** → The number of validated "super-centenarians" in the world who are still alive at 110 or beyond
- 70** → The "new 65"
- 85-94** → The fastest growing age group in America
- 120** → The estimated potential life span of humans, if nothing goes wrong
- 122** → The oldest fully authenticated age to which any human has lived

## Ellen Remenchik, M.D., to Join Mayo Clinic Arizona Executive Health Program



**Ellen Remenchik, M.D.**

Ellen Remenchik, M.D., M.P.H., is no stranger to executive's health issues. Before coming to the University of Texas at Tyler, she was an executive physician for Goodyear, the U.S. Postal

Service and the Johnson Space Center. And, beyond her medical degree, she also has a master's degree in public health, with an emphasis on occupational medicine.

"At NASA, I worked with a number of engineers, even administering stress tests to a few of the astronauts," says Dr. Remenchik. "People in corporate settings have unique stressors which can affect their health. I'm excited to use this experience at Mayo Clinic and to focus more on preventive medicine."

With more than 20 years experience in internal medicine, Dr. Remenchik is board certified in internal medicine and certified by the Board of Preventive Medicine in occupational medicine. She received her medical degree from the Texas A & M Medical School and a master's degree in public health from the University of Texas School of Public Health. While at NASA, she received a certificate of appreciation for outstanding support in ensuring the success of the new Johnson Space Center "Total Health Program," as well as the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center Group Achievement Award.

Dr. Remenchik will begin seeing patients in July. In the meantime, she'll be wrapping up her internal medicine practice at the University of Texas where she serves as an assistant professor in the departments of internal medicine and occupational and environmental medicine.

Her primary medical interests are in preventive health, including helping people to stop smoking. She is completing a National Institute of Health funded research project on nortriptyline in smoking cessation. She also did her master's thesis on hypertension control, another important factor in preventive health. And, she enjoys working with women's health issues and currently serves as a grant reviewer for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. She served as a reviewer for the AMA publication Assessment and Management of Adult Obesity: A Primer for Physicians and has an interest in helping individuals with weight problems.

Dr. Remenchik's husband, Ken, an attorney, and her son, Robert, will be moving to Arizona with her, while her daughter, Jennifer, will stay at the University of Texas in Austin to finish up her degree in fine arts.

"After living in Texas, we're looking forward to the variety of scenery in Arizona and the proximity to the coast," she says. "As a physician, I'm also really looking forward to being able to spend a generous amount of time with my patients and to help them achieve optimum health and to prevent premature illness."



### Executive Lounge

We are pleased to announce that a new lounge area is available for the participants in the Executive Health Program. The lounge is conveniently located on the concourse level, adjacent to the Mayo Clinic Gift Shop. Access to the lounge is via access code, which will be provided to you in your confirmation letters prior to your executive examination. The lounge offers a place to relax or work in between appointments, and we encourage you to take the opportunity to visit and enjoy. Some features include:

- Television/newspapers
- Fax/copier services
- Beverages
- PC access and laptop hookup capabilities
- Work spaces
- Telephone access to an Executive Health staff member for general assistance

## Who to Contact:

### New appointments and general information

480-301-8088  
Shelly Zausmer  
Lee Hebenstreit

### Fax Number

- For patient questionnaires: 480-301-9644
- For prescription refills: 480-301-7569

### E-mail

[mcs.exehealth@mayo.edu](mailto:mcs.exehealth@mayo.edu)

### Web Address

[www.mayoclinic.org/executive-health](http://www.mayoclinic.org/executive-health)

### Billing Questions

480-301-8165  
*Ashraf Zanaty,*  
*Financial Services Coordinator*

### Executive Health Manager

480-301-4333  
*Kathy Thoele*

### Corporate Relations

480-301-6616  
*Andrea Knapp*

### Physicians and Administrative Assistants

- Robert Orford, M.D.  
480-301-7379  
*Kim St. John, Assistant*
- Michael Covalciuc, M.D.  
480-301-8285  
*Shannon Avelar, Assistant*
- Pasquale "Pat" Palumbo, M.D.  
480-301-7379  
*Kim St. John, Assistant*
- Ellen Remenchik, M.D.  
480-301-4481  
*Marci Green, Assistant*
- Jan Stepanek, M.D.  
480-301-4481  
*Marci Green, Assistant*

# MAYO CLINIC IN THE NEWS



Jacksonville, Florida



Rochester, Minnesota



Scottsdale, Arizona

**Florida:** Gastroenterologists are using radiofrequency ablation to treat Barrett's esophagus, a premalignant condition that leads to esophageal cancer in some people. The minimally invasive treatment is an outpatient procedure that takes about 30 minutes. A gastroenterologist specializing in diseases of the esophagus passes a special endoscope into the patient's esophagus. The endoscope has a tiny balloon at its tip that delivers controlled radiofrequency energy to destroy a thin layer of surface tissue that contains the problem cells. Patients go home hours after the procedure. Until recently, doctors' usual recommendation to patients with Barrett's esophagus and low-grade dysplasia was to have a periodic endoscopy performed to make sure the condition was not getting worse. This new treatment is an option for patients who are uneasy with the conventional "watchful waiting" approach.

**Minnesota:** Researchers have narrowed the search for effective prostate cancer biomarkers (genetic variations that point to a specific disease or condition), identifying changes in the expression of genes of the whole genome closely correlated to prostate cancer development and

progression. Prostate cancer causes differential expression of hundreds of different genes, each potentially an indicator of whether a man may get the disease, or already has it. They also may be used to provide information on the development of the cancer, without the need for a painful biopsy. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for men in the United States, exceeded only by lung cancer.

**Arizona:** Patients suffering from chronic migraine headaches who have found no relief through the use of medication may find hope through occipital nerve stimulation (ONS). ONS treatment involves implanting a neurostimulator under the skin at the base of the head. The neurostimulator delivers electrical impulses near the occipital nerves via insulated lead wires tunneled under the skin. More than 32 million Americans, 70 percent of whom are women, suffer from migraines and lose about 157 million workdays each year, according to the National Headache Foundation. It is estimated that approximately 40,000 people in the U.S. do not respond to existing treatments, and many may be candidates for alternative therapies.

## Preventive Medicine Update

Curious about the latest in preventive medicine? Here's a brief summary of recent research that might be of interest to you.

- **More benefits of fish oil.** Eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids is recommended by the American Heart Association to prevent coronary disease. However, fish may contain organochlorines and mercury. Fish oil supplements (which are available in capsule form) may be safer. A recent study has also found fish helpful in preventing exercise-induced asthma.
- **Inhaled Insulin.** The FDA approved the first inhaled insulin (Exubera) in January 2006 for use by non-smokers who do not have chronic lung conditions. Studies are under way to ensure that long-term use

does not result in lung damage from the new product. The inhaler is the size of a regular flashlight.

- **Glucosamine and Chondroitin Update.** Glucosamine, shown in previous studies to delay the progression of osteoarthritis, may not reduce osteoarthritis-associated pain. A recent study showed it was more effective for those with moderate to severe pain symptoms than for those with mild pain.
- **Heart Disease Risk.** The Mayo Clinic heart disease risk calculator will help you determine your risk of having a heart attack or dying of heart disease within

the next 10 years. Go to the Heart Disease Center at [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com) and click on "heart disease risk factors."

- **More Exercise Benefits.** Daily exercise can add 1½ to four years to your life, according to the Harvard Alumni Health Study. Make it your goal to increase activity levels to at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity walking five days/week. Regular exercise also improves mood, positive well-being and vigor.

*\*Reference details are available upon request.*



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