

**SUBSCRIBE TO  
THE BARRIE EXAMINER**  
TODAY...PHONE 726-6539



January 19, 2002

## **Bypassing the bypass:**

Local heart patients embracing controversial chelation as an alternative to surgery

By Laurel Lane-Moore

About a year ago, Bert Hoftyzer started to get those old feelings again. Although he tried to ignore the uncomfortable pressure that gripped his chest several times a day, he knew his angina was back.

As the symptoms grew worse and his feet often fell asleep, the 56-year-old Minesing man realized with dread he was almost certainly headed back to the operating table for his second coronary bypass in 10 years.

But today, there's no trace of the angina that plagued Hoftyzer for the better part of last year. He is back at work as a mold maker and feeling great – with worries about invasive surgery behind him.

"I haven't felt better. I'm on top of the world," Hoftyzer said with a big grin.

Results of recent tests showed his coronary arteries were open.

"That news I received by Christmas was sure a nice gift to see," he said.

Hoftyzer credits the amazing turnaround in his health to chelation (pronounced key-lay-shun) therapy. Since last summer, he has been coming twice a week to a Barrie clinic for a series of intravenous infusions of a synthetic amino acid called EDTA (ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid).

At \$120 plus tax per session, the treatments at the satellite clinic of Toronto physician Dr. Fred Hui aren't cheap. But Hoftyzer and hundreds of chelation patients in Ontario are more than willing to foot the bill for the controversial treatment they say works.

"It comes out of our pocket," said Hoftyzer. "I've got about \$6,000 invested – and it's worth it."

"What's your life worth?" said Paul MacDougall, who has been making the three-hour round trip to the Barrie clinic from his home in Lindsay twice a week since last September.

The 68-year-old diabetic, who suffered three heart attacks within three weeks in 1978, was managing his serious health problems with medication until last summer. That's when he began to experience chest pains and other symptoms of angina and decided to try chelation therapy – something he had been hearing about for years.

"I've had good results," he said, adding he has also been able to reduce his insulin requirements. "I feel much better. I get up from here and drive home. There are no side effects – nothing for me."

Barrie retiree Norman Hand began chelation therapy in the Toronto clinic of Dr. Hui – one of the first physicians in Ontario to openly offer chelation - shortly before Hui opened The Chelation Center of Barrie 18 months ago.

Hand, 71, is convinced chelation is responsible for greatly reducing the pain in his legs that was making it difficult for him to walk more than a few steps at a time. Chelation, he says, has also helped his wife, Joyce, who suffered from high levels of mercury in her body.

"I'm not cured but I'm better and that's the main thing. I'm a believer in this witchdoctory," he said with a laugh.

"We're all believers," said Hand, gesturing towards the open-concept clinic where about a dozen men and women seated in big easy chairs are chatting casually and munching on healthy snacks, oblivious to the tubes that are slowly dripping specially formulated concoctions of EDTA and vitamin supplements into their veins.

But nobody in the room – and possibly in the province – is a bigger believer than Dr. Fred Hui.

Hui reports a positive response rate of more than 85 per cent among patients treated with chelation.

"The results are undeniable. If you could not carry out the garbage, and now you can, you can't argue with that."

A graduate of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Medicine, the 50-year-old physician practises an unusual blend of Eastern and Western medicine, using techniques from around the world including acupuncture, Chinese and Western herbs, chelation therapy, oxidative therapy, joint manipulation and meditation. In his Toronto practice, Hui focuses on "trouble-shooting" – drawing on his training

in alternative, complementary and conventional medicine to treat patients with conditions such as chronic pain, headaches, arthritis and low immune system diseases.

"I use everything under the sun to fix them," said Hui. "I go to a service call with 10 toolboxes. If I can't find the tool I need in the first toolbox, I look in other ones."

But, says Hui, when it comes to getting the job done, no medical tool has impressed him as much as chelation.

"Nothing excites me more than this," he said. "Because basically, you start with a group of very sick patients, and you can turn them around and (see them) become so enthusiastic."

Hui says many of his patients have already had coronary artery bypass surgery and come to him in a last-ditch effort to avoid going through the ordeal again.

"The typical patients who come to me have maximized treatment by cardiologists or vascular surgeons. They use chelation as a way of bypassing the bypass surgery."

The Barrie clinic, staffed by technicians who are foreign-trained physicians working under Hui's supervision, sees 20 to 30 patients a day, four days a week. Hui estimates half of his patients are local. Others travel to the centre from as far away as North Bay.

Because chelation treats the whole body, removing calcified plaque in the arteries and increasing blood flow throughout the body, proponents say the therapy has many other benefits. Hui says patients treated for heart disease or circulation problems often report improvements in their arthritis, eyesight, stamina and energy levels.

"The good thing is you end up treating the whole system," said Hui.

With a frightening history of coronary disease in his family – his parents both died of heart attacks at 52 – Hui recently began taking chelation treatments himself as a preventative measure.

But like many physicians schooled in conventional medicine, Hui was at first skeptical of the benefits of chelation.

It was a patient – a Bay Street lawyer with angina and diabetes – who raved about the chelation therapy he was receiving in Niagara Falls, New York and urged the Toronto physician to look into it.

"He was driving to Niagara Falls two or three times a week, three hours each way," Hui recalls. "It took up a big part of his day – a lot of billable hours. I thought, either the guy is gullible or stupid, or it works."

After visiting several chelation clinics in the U.S., Hui was so impressed with what he saw and heard, he undertook training in the administration of chelation and was accredited by the American College for the Advancement of Medicine.

At the time, the climate for providing chelation therapy was decidedly chilly in the Ontario medical community. But it wasn't as cold as it had been. In 1987, the David Peterson government actually banned the practice for use in treating cardiovascular disease. New regulations a few years later failed to mention chelation, thus opening the door to legal acceptance.

"I was one of the first to test the political waters," said Hui.

Today, chelation is offered at medical clinics throughout Ontario. And the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario classifies chelation as a type of complementary medicine that physicians may offer as long as they adhere to certain standards and follow a protocol that includes conducting standard examination and diagnosis, keeping careful records, and informing patients about conventional treatment options.

But chelation still has its skeptics.

While chelation therapy has been used for more than 50 years as a recognized treatment for heavy metal poisoning, it remains unproven in the treatment of coronary heart disease.

"Something that is not proven doesn't mean it's necessarily untrue," said Hui.

According to the American Heart Association, "there's still no scientific evidence that demonstrates any benefit from this form of therapy."

"Furthermore," the AHA states in a recommendation posted on its web site, "using this form of unproven treatment for coronary heart disease may deprive patients of the well-established benefits from the many other valuable methods of treating these diseases."

In the absence of a major research study that meets the current standards of Western medicine, the unconventional therapy is unlikely to gain full acceptance by the medical establishment here in Ontario, says Hui.

But that could soon change.

The National Institutes of Health in the United States recently approved a research proposal to determine the effectiveness of chelation in treating coronary disease. The multi-site, double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial is currently awaiting approval of funding.

"Hopefully, if the funding comes through, it would solve one of the main obstacles to acceptance," said Hui, who has offered to take part in the study.

Such a study would go a long way towards ending the North American debate about chelation therapy, according to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the organizations spearheading the research.

"If chelation therapy is safe and effective in treating CAD (coronary artery disease), it would represent a new therapeutic modality that would gain widespread application. However, if chelation therapy is ineffective, these data will provide important information to the U.S. public and allow for informed decision making concerning continued use of EDTA for CAD."

The Chelation Center of Barrie, at 566 Bryne Dr., will host a public information session on chelation therapy on Jan. 30, from 3 to 5 p.m. At the seminar, Dr. Fred Hui will talk about heart disease, high blood pressure, circulation problems, and more. For more information, call 721-1969.