Infusions provide some with alternative to open-heart surgery

Controversial chelation has developed believers

By Janice Mayshinney

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario adopted a policy in 1987 stating "there is no evidence that this therapy is of any value, and there is clear documentation of significant risks associated with it."

But today the college categorizes it as a form of complementary medicine that physicians may offer as long as they follow a specific set of procedures, including keeping careful records, doing a standard examination and diagnosis, and advising the patient about conventional treatment options.

Chelation is freely offered for a range of physical problems in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, as well as throughout the United States and in many other countries.

"It has a consistent 85 per cent success rate," says Dr. Fred Hui.

"You do everything you can," he says. "If four men are pushing a car and it doesn't work, but there's a fifth and sixth, I can call on for help and it's harmless, then why not?"

Hui charges $120 for each treatment, which lasts three hours while the patient is hooked up to an intravenous line. Patients aren't hard to come by. A group called the Ontario Chelated Patients Association, which formed last August, has more than 400 members already.

"I've had 11 treatments and I can now walk through 27 holes of golf," he says. "After this treatment I might even carry my own golf bag. The difference is like night and day."

Collins says he believes money is involved in opposition from the medical establishment.

"Doctors and drug companies don't want it around" and many millions are spent on bypass surgery each year in Canada and the U.S., he says.

In England and in New Zealand, Collins says, a patient must take 10 chelation treatments before having bypass surgery, or before having a limb removed because of diabetic gangrene.

"In 90 per cent of the cases, they don't need the bypass surgery at all," he says. "Bypass costs $37,000 and 10 chelation treatments cost $1,200."

"Our health care system is in trouble: they could save millions with this. Chelation treats all the arteries, not just one."

Dr. Fred Hui, seated right, and staff members Nicola Cosmim, left, and Debbie Nunez, right, administer chelation therapy to patient Lawrence Camenzuli.

"This is my 28th treatment," he says. "When I started I could only walk 10 or 20 feet without stopping and resting and taking some nitro spray. Now I can walk five miles."

Dopp says evidence on the safety and effectiveness of chelation is available in jurisdictions where it is widely used. But, he says, most Ontario doctors don't want to know this. "Doctors are intimidated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons about chelation."

"I was unable to walk a block without severe pain," he recalls. He quit smoking, lost weight, and started nutritional supplements and a series of chelation treatments.

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