

Pain pump will give terminally ill patients relief

by Patrick Raftis

WALKERTON--Controlling pain is one of the few ways medical practitioners can aid patients suffering from cancer or other terminal illnesses.

Recently, the County of Bruce General Hospital purchased two pain pumps, which have proven effective in controlling pain when all other treatments have failed.

The portable devices are pre-programmed to administer a prescribed amount of medication at regular intervals. They allow patients to function outside the hospital, while keeping their pain under control.

The machines are ideal for use by patients who are only in the

hospital for pain management purposes. The patients stay in the hospital for three or four days when first put on the pump. When hospital staff discover the optimum dosage for relieving pain, while leaving the patient mentally alert, they are released.

"The important thing about this is that they can function. They can drive their car, go to the beach, or do whatever they would normally do," said Mary Ernewein, Unit II head nurse.

The pumps work by automatically administering a minute, constant amount of analgesic or pain medication to the patient through a small needle, usually inserted in the abdomen. The battery operated

pumps are compact (about twice the size of a telephone pager), battery operated and can be worn around the waist or shoulder.

The pumps, which cost about \$4,500 each, are used only when the medical professionals believe the patient can go home once his or her pain is controlled.

Since the program began in May, five patients have been admitted to the program. If the hospital pumps are in use, the patient can rent a pump through the Home Care program.

The family and patient are taught how to care for the pump. The teaching is started in the hospital and continues through home care.

Ernewein says the pump has

built-in safety features to prevent misuse. The computerized pumps have an individual security code, which is not given to the patient, which must be used to alter dosage.

"There is no way you can overdose on this thing," Ernewein says.

Although used in major centres for years, the concept is new to this area, said Ernewein. Newer still, is the practice of having attending physicians at the local hospital prescribe the medication.

Before obtaining their own pumps, the hospital sent patients to London, or other major centres, to be put on the program.

Two pharmacists in Walkerton and one in Mildmay can fill the cassettes containing the medication, allowing most patients to deal with their regular pharmacist.

While Ernewein said no patients have experienced problems with the pumps, they are always given other medication to take in case the machine fails.

Ernewein said the value of the machines becomes obvious shortly after the patient receives a pump.

"When you see these people come in here crazy with pain, and then you see that they get relief from that pain to the point they can function at home, I think it gives that person a sense of control."



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PAIN PUMP--Mary Ernewein, Unit Two head nurse at County of Bruce General Hospital, demonstrates the use of a pain pump, on hospital employee Terry Schultz. The device dispenses controlled doses of pain medication to patients who would otherwise have to be hospitalized. (Raftis photo)



GARRETT LAMB

Garrett Lamb, son of Andrew and Eileen Lamb of Walkerton, graduated from the University of Waterloo at the spring convocation exercises on May 24, 1990.

He received a degree in English and Middle East studies.

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Historic meeting

October 2, 1990

IN CELEBRATION of the 125th anniversary of the proclamation making Walkerton the county town of Bruce, Walkerton town council held one meeting in the home of the town's founder, Joseph Walker. Walkerton reeve Dale Wilson brought congratulations to the town on behalf of Bruce County and Les Young brought greet-

ings from Brant Township. A room in the Walker House, located on McNab Street, provided the setting for this photo of council (from left): Steve Adams, Jim Penner, reeve Dale Wilson, Wilf Lane, mayor James Bolden, Doug Abel, deputy reeve Ron Lobsinger, Alex Ramsay and Ron Wells. (Photo by J. Lavole)

Mini golf co.
by Ron Wassink