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THE KEY TO HEALTHIER HEARTS

BY SALLY VALLONGO

Blade Staff Writer

A small number of doctors are using a chemical cleansing process called chelation to remove life-threatening plaque from arteries.



Dr. Terry Chappell:
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ment.

You'd think the founder of a health spa would never be troubled by the country's most deadly physical problem. Yet Laurie Hostetler, the nutrition-conscious hatha yoga instructor who runs the famous Kerr House in Grand Rapids, found herself

in the same leaky boat boarded by millions of Americans who are far less careful about how they live.

"My left carotid artery was about 50 percent blocked," says the Perrysburg woman. Routine tests revealed that her brain's blood supply was being compromised by plaque clogging the big vessels.

Although she was experiencing no symptoms related to the blockage, "I was concerned," Mrs. Hostetler recalls. Her mother and grandmother had died of strokes, one grim and frequent effect of atherosclerosis.

Atherosclerosis, the clogging of the body's arteries with plaque, also causes America's Number One killer, heart disease, caused by oxygen starvation.

Mrs. Hostetler might have faced

costly surgery, drug therapy, or other invasive procedures, standard tactics in medicine's war on plaque in the human circulatory system.

But she chose something else. Instead of being strapped onto a hospital gurney, she drove to Bluffton, O., where she spent comfortable hours in a lounge chair, chatting with others also receiving life-enhancing care.

Mrs. Hostetler was receiving chelation therapy, an intravenous cleansing of the arteries with the chemical ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid (EDTA). Terry Chappell, an M.D. and one of only a few physicians in Ohio to administer chelation (key-LA-tion) therapy, provided her care.

Mrs. Hostetler joined the 600,000 or so Americans who have discovered the benefits of this rather simple procedure, one that, largely because of medical politics, remains one of the best-kept health care secrets in the country.

"It's amazing how it has been blocked," says Dr. Chappell, a country doctor with a busy practice. At his Celebration of Health center just behind the courthouse in this Allen County town, he practices allopathic medicine with an alternative twist that includes laser surgery, homeopathy, and preventive and nutritional medicine.

Dr. Chappell incorporated chelation into his holistic practice in 1982, after hearing about it the way most people do — word of mouth — then passing rigorous written and oral tests. He is one of only 148 physicians in the nation with a diploma from the American Board of Chelation Therapy.

About one-fifth of his practice is devoted to chelation, he says; it is administered in a separate clinic below the main office. On a typical day last month, a dozen or so patients in recliners relaxed and chatted as EDTA solutions dripped slowly through intravenous lines into their arms.

Typically, after a series of laboratory tests indicate its therapeutic value, chelation will be administered to a patient in 30 treatments, each lasting two to three hours. Dr. Chappell charges about \$80 for each infusion — about midpoint in the national range of \$65-100 — so an average course of treatment will cost approximately \$3,000 to 4,000, depending in part on testing used to monitor progress.

Dr. Chappell says: "About 85 percent of the people we treat with chelation therapy show measurable improvements." Some of the stories are dramatic, because not only will breaking down plaque in arteries reduce strain

Dr. Chappell adds: "If someone continues with the lifestyle that brought on the problems, those problems will recur." Smoking, poor nutrition, stress, and lack of exercise and rest – the components of so many of society's major health problems – will undo the good of any treatment.

Nor are all who seek chelation good prospects. The heavy flushing of waste puts pressure on the kidneys, and several patients died from kidney failure before procedures were reevaluated. "I wouldn't want to do it every day," says Dr. Chappell, who was chelated himself three years ago.

But unless a patient hears about chelation from a friend, it's likely to remain a secret. Although the American Medical Association hasn't issued a ban on the procedure, a few physicians have lost their licenses because they administered the treatments.

Although Jack Hanks, who administers the chelation therapy certification board, says the number of M.D.s and D.O.s taking the training is rising, most physicians ignore it at best, consider it quackery at worst. Few recommend it as an alternative to surgery, drugs, or other procedures in the campaign against heart disease.

"My position is what every M.D.'s ought to be," says Dr. Chappell, who has written widely on the procedure. "Patients should hear the pros and cons. Chelation therapy should be explained as an alternative."

on the heart, it affects every other body function to some degree.

"I can't live without the treatments," says Clare Looten, 72, of Findlay. "It helps my sugar. It helps my arthritis. It stabilizes my diabetes. I had no feeling in my feet and hands because of high blood pressure."

Milton Schimming, of Graytown, O., was scheduled for open-heart surgery, the costly bypass operation that has been medicine's most popular antidote for coronary artery damage caused by atherosclerosis. Sent home from the hospital to recover from a bacterial infection, he had chelation therapy instead. "I never went back to the hospital," he said.

But where health insurance might well have paid for all or a good part of the cost of bypass surgery – the cost has risen to \$100,000 in some parts of the country, and it's a \$6 billion a year industry – insurance coverage for chelation therapy is rare.

Blue Cross-Blue Shield spokesman Steve Adams says his company will cover chelation in cases of systemic poisoning, but not for treatment of other circulatory conditions.

Medicare does not cover it; a few private companies will. At Dr. Chappell's clinic, patients receive receipts they can submit for reimbursement.

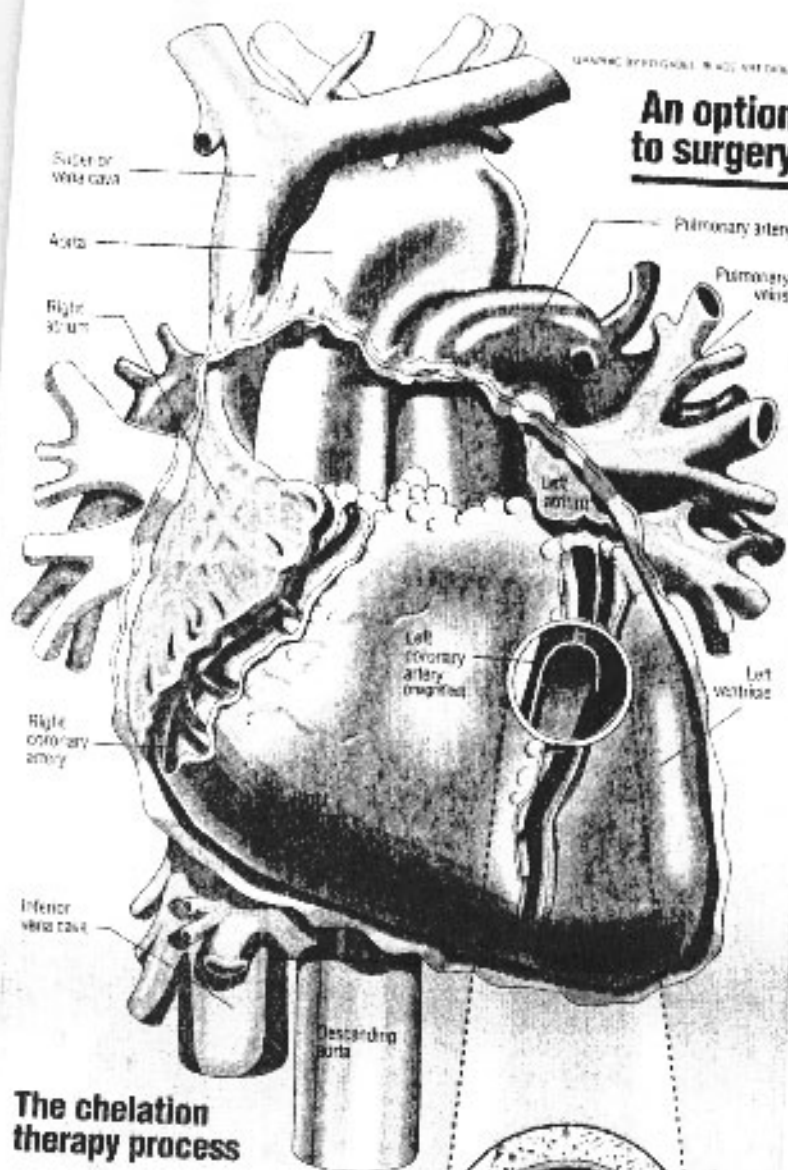
The typical age of chelation therapy patients is 50 and over, but the process works for younger people as well. Toledoan John Dikovicky, 46, had 30 treatments from Dr. Ralph Lev, a New Jersey physician, a few years ago. "My body was spent. I was used up," Mr. Dikovicky says.

Chelation removes calcium and other minerals, including iron and lead, from the blood, expelling them through the urine, relaxing arterial walls and increasing blood flow.

Mr. Dikovicky, 46, says the painless treatments restored his energy and improved his vision. Yet he realizes that lasting improvement depends on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. "It's not designed to be a cure-all."

James Frackleton, a Cleveland physician who practices only preventive medicine, concurs: "Chelation does work, but it's only part of the whole story. You have to do nutrition and mineral balancing."

An option to surgery



The chelation therapy process

1 A cross-section of coronary artery shows a minimal amount of fatty deposits and early formation of plaque.



2 The artery is narrowing dangerously as the result of more fatty deposits and advanced plaque.



3 A series of intravenous treatments with EDTA "wash away" much of the plaque buildup in the artery.



4 After chelation therapy, the coronary artery is considerably more open, allowing for less restricted flow of blood to the heart.

