



## Life in These Parts

### All Stings Considered

(Dr Craig Thomas and Susan Scott; 233 pages, U. of Hawaii Press)

**Craig Thomas MD** is director of emergency medicine at Wahiawa General Hospital and Susan Scott is a marine biologist who writes the weekly column "Ocean Watch" for the Star-Bulletin. "With the publication of All Stings Considered, ignorance is no longer an excuse for having a good time in the ocean. This book is user friendly". (Gregg Ambrose, SB writer)

## Doctor's Don't Really Save Lives

**John Dempsey Huitt**, 70, died on June 28. John was a retired Kaiser pediatrician and a Gideon International member who once wrote in a 1974 Advertiser article: "Doctors don't really save lives; they only extend them for a brief period of time in comparison with eternity. Often they get so involved in extending a life without realizing the need for the patient's eternal life."

## New CEO

On August 1, former Tripler Medical Center, chief of staff, **Thomas Driskill**, 52, became CEO for the Hawaii Health Systems Corp (HHSC), the new non-profit organization that takes over management of the 13 community hospitals and medical centers from the state Dept. of Health.

## Hope After Stroke

Two new drugs to become available:

**HU 23F2G**: May be given as late as 12 hours after a stroke. **Marek Mirski**, director of QMC's Neuroscience Institute says if the drug works, 30 to 50% of stroke patients would benefit.

**Lubeluzole**: to be used at Queens and Pali Momi in tandem with t-PA.

## New Procedure for Aortic Aneurysms

**Frank Tabrah**, Straub physician had a silent aortic aneurysm picked up by a CT scan. In February 1996, he had an experimental minimally invasive vascular procedure done by vascular surgeons **Bo Eklof** and **Elna Masuda** and interventional radiologist **Robert Lipman**. Drs Masuda and Lipman had trained at Sweden's University of Lund with Bo Eklof who reports that 75% of aortic aneurysms will be treated with the new technique in 5 years.

Frank says "I figured it was a good shot." He figured right because he was soon back playing tennis and has never had the slightest problem since. "I was up eating that evening, out of the hospital on the fifth day, and back to work on the 13th."

## Hope for Infertile Women

The Pacific In Vitro Fertilization Institute at Kapiolani has launched an egg donation program for infertile women. Co-director **Philip McNamee** explains that the Institute implants donor eggs in infertile women, usually over 35 with ovarian problems caused by cancer surgery, chemotherapy or congenital abnormalities. The pregnancy rate

is 50 to 60%. Donors receive about \$2,000 for their eggs and the invitro procedure costs about \$16,000.

**Thomas Huang**, the institute's lab director says the donor eggs work well because donors are no older than 32. New research may soon allow older women to inject the contents of donor eggs into their own eggs, thus maintaining a genetic link to the embryo.

## The Heptachlor Story

For 15 months (1981 and 1982) the people of Oahu were exposed to high levels of the pesticide heptachlor through milk products (because of a glitch in processing cow's feed). The good news is that no early serious ill effects have been detected. The final word about delayed effects is not out. (There is guarded optimism since environmental toxins take years to reveal their effects).

Hawaii subjects carry less heptachlor than residents of Arkansas, N. Carolina, and other southeast areas where pesticide was widely used.

The Foundation will focus on possible long-term effects, notably on immunological, reproductive and neuro-behavioral systems.

(Message from Willis Butler, president of the Hawaii Heptachlor Foundation).

## Medivac Choppers

In a unique partnership since 1974 (after the Vietnam War), the Army has saved Hawaii taxpayers an estimated more than \$4 million and thousands of lives by providing emergency helicopter medical and rescue services. In the past 23 years, the MAST program has performed 4,572 civilian missions and flown 4,886 hours.

## MAST

Unit: 68th Medical Detachment  
Helicopters: Six UH 60 Black Hawks  
Missions: 4,548  
Patients: 5,686  
On Call: 24 hrs/d 7d/wk  
Response time: 10-15 minutes

## Physician Moves

**May**: **Cesar B. deJesus** announced his retirement effective June 1.

**July**: Dermatologist **Timothy Hagino** opened his private practice at Kapiolani Medical Center at Pali Momi, Ste 480.

**October**: **Robert Hollison Jr.** and his University Family Medical Clinic affiliated with Straub Clinic. The clinic has been renamed the Straub Manoa Family Health Center and Bob remains director. **Internist Tyronne Dang and FP Jennifer Frank** relocated to Artesian Plaza, 1907 S. Beretania St., 5th floor.

**November**: General and thoracic surgeon and thoracic oncologist **Paul Morris** opened his practice at Queen's POB II, Ste. 107.

## Hors de Combat

### Good, Bad, or Both:

A study by teams from UCLA, USC and Rand Corp. have found that Medicare patients in man-

aged care plans are only half as likely to have cataract surgery as those in traditional fee-for-service plans. (About 1.4 million cataract surgeries are performed in the U.S. each year, representing the largest single expenditure by Medicare. More than half of all American over age 65 have cataracts and unoperated cataracts remain a leading cause of blindness).

Previous studies comparing managed care and traditional care have shown that HMO's reduce cost by restricting access to expensive surgery. **Jonathan Javit** of the Cleveland Clinic says, "The most important conclusion to draw is that managed care has the ability to alter healthcare delivery patterns. It may be good, it may be bad or it may be both."

## Balance-Billing Law

In June, AMA president **Daniel H. Johnson Jr.** said, "the government does not seem to have any interest in solving the Medicare cost problem." The 475 member AMA House of Delegates passed a resolution saying, they would declare the reimbursement system "unworkable and intolerable" and would lobby for a "balance-billing law" if the doctors don't get relief from fee cuts under proposed Medicare changes. Medicare fees have been cut so many times that for some services, doctors are paid less than what the treatment costs.

## Advertiser Editorial re Physician Assisted Suicide (Excerpts therefrom)

"Our view (as stated before) is that this is yet another matter where less state involvement is better than none. Ultimately, as with abortion, it is a decision that should be arrived at between patient and physician, should the state grant such decision making."

"The governor's panel has been holding public hearings around the Islands and will issue its report in time for legislative consideration next year, then it is time for the people of Hawaii to speak out on what course we will take."

**Historically**: Oregon voters twice approved physician assisted suicide but the Federal government warned that MD's risk license suspension.

**June 1996**: The Supreme Court ruled: "There is no constitutional right to die" thus passing the issue back to the States.

**Justice Rehnquist** wrote: "Throughout the nation, Americans are engaged in an earnest and profound debate about the morality, legality and practicality of physician-assisted suicide. Our holding permits this debate to continue, as it should in a democratic society."

## Medical Tidbits

A recent study by **Robert H. Knopp**, U. of Washington School of Medicine professor and director of the Northwest Lipid Research Clinic reveals that moderate-fat diets are just as effective as ultra low fat diets in reducing high cholesterol levels in men. The Seattle study involved 444 male employees of the Boeing Co. who had elevated LDL's (*JAMA Nov. '77*)