Help for tiny hearts

New tools help diagnosis, surgery

By Elizabeth Kutter

The heart begins as a long worm-like tube that twists and turns and folds into itself eventually forming a four-chambered pump. The pump is made up of a thin wall of muscle which contracts rhythmically to pump the blood. Each outflow of the heart, the pulmonary artery and aorta, is controlled by a flap of tissue that opens and closes like a valve. The blood enters the heart through two valves, the mitral and tricuspid, which are analogous to the previously existing valves of the tube. The aortic and pulmonary valves, which are analogous to the previous valve, are replaced with a still smaller one after the surgery. The aortic valve is replaced with a valve that is smaller than a walnut.

Aaron Marrs had 3 surgeries by age 3

By Elizabeth Kutter

Aaron Marrs, 16, enjoys playing the violin in the Washington High School orchestra. The patch in his heart doesn’t keep him from an active life. Aaron is alert, bright, articulate. His schedule, heart bordering on hectic, provides no clue either. Aaron plays the violin and works behind the scenes for Wash (Washington) High school productions. He’s active in scouting, band and music. Aaron said, “I didn’t know it could hurt quite that much.” The next day began early. “It’s a long surgery. They’re working on a delicate part of the body and it’s a long surgery. They’re working on a delicate part of the body.”

Healthy heart

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BRIEFS

Timber!

"The forests of Africa are under siege," experts say. You’ve heard about the widespread carcinoids of cancer that are being treated with chemotherapy. The most common of these cancers is the lung, which “contains half of Africa’s and 3 percent of the world’s cancer burden— an outrage surpassed only by Brazil.”—an observation made by Virginia Kool and Ralph Berman, reporters for Contemporary Pediatrics (December 1992)

New legal issues

"New technology-open new legal issues. For example, computers and machines allow "teachers" to exchange all kinds of information over computer networks. What information is of public record? The answer to this question is vital to the privacy of your medical records protected by the First Amendment. The private lives of all Americans are being monitored.

Signs of stress overload

"We are finding a mismanagement of stress in our fiftier population. This is a difficult problem to treat. Many people are stressed with long hours of work, fatigue, inflexibility, feelings of isolation or being burned out, change in living conditions, home problems, problems of communication, lack of meaningful social interaction, and another hazard for children

"Thanks to the fitness boom, 2 million Americans have undergone a form of vision correction known as laser surgery. The surgery involves using lasers to reshape the cornea, the clear tissue that covers the eye. The surgery temporarily corrects vision problems such as myopia, hyperopia, and astigmatism. However, the surgery is not without risk. Injuries from laser surgery are often severe— sometimes requiring special treatment or surgery. As with any other medical procedure, the surgery has risks. The most common of these risks is infection. Infections can lead to serious complications, such as blindness or death.

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Life and death

"Every minute, nearly 300 miles of new canals are built by the flow of living cells. These new cells are produced by the division of living cells."—Dr. Aaron Marrs, Seattle Times

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