THE DAILY CLIPS

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A clinical trial at the East Carolina Heart Institute is testing the benefit of a new medical device to help people suffering from leaky heart valves, officials announced Wednesday.

A multidisciplinary team of cardiologists and surgeons is testing the MitraClip System for the treatment of mitral valve regurgitation, a serious heart condition that can lead to arrhythmias and congestive heart failure.

The procedure allows doctors to make mitral valve repairs without the traditional incision in the center of the chest to access the heart. Instead, they place a thin catheter in the patient's groin vessel, guide a tiny clip through the heart's septum and place the clip between the leaflets of the valve to stop the leak.

It also allows doctors to make repairs without connecting patients to a heart/lung machine and reduces recovery time for patients. So far the team has completed two procedures at the Heart Institute in Greenville.

“This gives the East Carolina Heart Institute an entirely new set of tools for mitral valve repairs in high-risk patients,” said Dr. W. Randolph Chitwood Jr., director of the institute and professor of cardiovascular surgery at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

“It is the least invasive way that we can fix a valve. Centers selected to perform these procedures have demonstrated expertise in applying new medical technology under FDA (Food and Drug Administration) guidelines.”

Chitwood secured the clinical trial for the MitraClip System. Dr. Curtis Anderson, a cardiothoracic surgeon and assistant professor of cardiovascular sciences, and Dr.
Ramesh Daggubati, a cardiologist and clinical professor at Brody, collaborated to perform mitral valve repairs the two patients at Pitt County Memorial Hospital. Chitwood joined Drs. Rajasekhar Nekkanti and John Cahill, ECU cardiologists, to assist in the procedure.

“With mitral insufficiency, we normally use the heart/lung machine to either repair or replace the valve,” Chitwood said. “This new procedure is catheter-based, and can be used in high-risk patients who wouldn't do well on the heart/lung machine. These patients have severe symptoms stemming from the leaky valve and can't be operated on safely any other way.”

With the clip, patients leave the hospital the next day and within two or three days return to normal activities or, in many cases, better-than-normal activities.

“Most of the patients are very sick,” said Daggubati, a clinical associate professor of cardiovascular sciences. “Medical management is the only option for them because surgeons consider the risk too high and the patients inoperable.”

Anderson said patient selection is the key to a successful outcome.

“I think a lot of patients with heart failure will be attractive candidates for this device,” he said, adding that collaboration among physicians is vital. “We want patients to have the confidence of knowing that cardiologists and cardiac surgeons are working side by side to give them the best possible outcomes.”

The mitral valve is a one-way valve that connects the left atrium to the left ventricle of the heart. With mitral valve regurgitation, the valve does not seal completely, and blood leaks back into the left atrium. This reversed flow can cause heart and lung damage, as well as death. Symptoms may include an audible heart murmur, shortness of breath and heart palpitations.

For most patients, traditional mitral valve surgery requires an incision in the center of the chest to gain access to the heart valves.

The patient must be put on a heart/lung machine and have the valve either repaired or replaced. Patients typically stay in the hospital four to eight days, as well as endure a lengthy recovery.

The patient benefits of the catheter-based techniques are multifaceted, Chitwood said.

“With this catheter-based approach, the patient doesn't have to go on the heart/lung machine,” he said. “There is less risk of bleeding and fewer lung complications. Efficacy trials have shown that patients improved one to two heart failure classifications, which renders them much more functional.”

One of the patients, a retired 86-year-old farmer from Engelhard, N.C., said he noticed a marked improvement less than two days after the procedure. His daughter said he showed increased physical strength, steadier movements and improved stamina soon after the
surgery. The patient said his experience at the Heart Institute “could not have been better.”

Chitwood said with some patients, the mitral valve clip technique led to improvement similar to surgical clinical options. But Chitwood cautioned that the new technique is not suitable for all patients with mitral insufficiency.

This clinical trial, called REALISM, is being administered at medical centers in the U.S. and Canada. “This is just part of the evolving technology of the East Carolina Heart Institute,” Chitwood said. “We are trying to bring the latest to North Carolina. As we evolve toward less invasive techniques, you'll see more catheter-based procedures.

“The idea is to innovate,” he added. “Don't just do the standard therapy, but innovate and bring something new.”

Chitwood is a pioneer in the development and expansion of robotic-assisted mitral valve repair surgery. Under his leadership, Pitt County Memorial Hospital performed the world's first endoscopic, minimally invasive mitral replacement in 1996 and the first robotic mitral valve repair using the DaVinci robot in 2000. Since then, Chitwood and his team have developed one of the leading centers in the nation for these procedures, and they continue to provide these advanced procedures to patients from around the U.S.

The East Carolina Heart Institute features a multidisciplinary focus to treat cardiovascular diseases. Both ECU and PCMH have aligned their cardiovascular services under the ECHI by disease processes rather than traditional academic disciplines. This move brings cardiologists, heart surgeons, and vascular surgeons together and increases communication and expertise among caregivers.
'Dance 2011' takes stage at ECU
The Daily Reflector
Friday, January 21, 2011

Whether you prefer graceful ballet pieces, electrifying modern numbers, percussive tap or hot jazz, Dance 2011 has something for every dance enthusiast.

The production features the choreography of East Carolina University's School of Theatre and Dance faculty and special guest artist Mark Haim. The show opens at 8 p.m. Thursday in McGinnis Theatre and runs through Feb. 1. All shows are at 8 p.m. except Jan. 30 when the show will be at 2 p.m.

Haim has choreographed more than 100 dances over his career that spans more than 30 years.

Born in New York City, Haim studied as a classical pianist at the Manhattan School of Music before beginning his formal dance studies with an honorary scholarship to The Juilliard School, where he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts. He received his Master of Fine Arts in dance from the ADF/Hollins University.

Haim was artistic director of Mark Haim & Dancers from 1984-1987 and the Companhia de Danca de Lisboa from 1987-1990. From 2002-2008, he was senior artist in residence at the University of Washington and most recently was visiting associate professor of dance at Reed College.

Haim has served on the faculty of the American Dance Festival since 1993 and also has been on the faculties of NYU Tisch School of the Arts and Hollins University.
His work, “This Land is Your Land” will be performed in Dance 2011. The work premiered at the prestigious Northwest New Works Festival in Seattle.

Haim's minimalistic opus has modern dance meeting country music, as it is accompanied by tunes from Hank Williams, Toby Keith and Martina McBride. Audiences will be captivated by the simple movements that reveal subtle changes.

After “This Land is Your Land,” the dancer will perform part of the classic ballet “Coppélia.” Scenes from Act II have been reconstructed and staged by ECU assistant professor Galena Panova. The sentimental comic ballet premiered in 1870 and has been restaged several times over the years, most notably by Marius Petipa in 1884 and by George Balanchine in 1974.

Tommi Overcash Galaska's “Chasm” is a provocative and intense jazz piece about one woman's encounter with the dark side and the underworld. The music is very rhythmic and features a variety of drumming.

After intermission, John Dixon's “The Search” is a satirical work about the seemingly never-ending search for meaning in life and art. The music for his choreography starts with the theme from “Get Smart” that blends in electronic New Age sounds.

Tap dance is next with Clarine Powell's “Hoofbeats” featuring the old tune “My Bucket's Got a Hole in It.” “Hoofbeats” explores the variety of forms that rhythm tap can take. It works off the musical contributions of Willie Nelson, Wynton Marsalis, and the drumming rhythms of the dancers themselves.

Patricia Week's piece, titled “Invention is the Mother of Necessities,” explores the role of technology in our society and is inspired by the work of renowned futurist Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan considered electronic media as extensions of the central nervous system so audiences won't be surprised when the dancers bring out their cell phones.

Dance 2011 concludes with Teal Darkenwald's “Inferno,” which blends physicality with fluidity and passion in a technically demanding work that is meant to challenge the limits of each dancer's body.
By now, Thiago Cavalcanti has likely swum enough miles in the East Carolina University pool to equal the distance between his current home in Greenville and his native Brazil.

He realized at a young age that his swimming dreams would be much easier to realize in America than South America. With that goal long since achieved, Cavalcanti, a senior economics major, business minor and one of the most successful male swimmers in ECU history, has rewritten his to-do list numerous times.

What makes Cavalcanti's story unique, however, is not his drive to succeed or his long journey to do it. It is the fact that in his mind, being a great swimmer means conquering, well, the boredom of swimming.

"You swim every single day in the same pool and see the same people and the same coach. It's boring, believe me," said Cavalcanti, who hopes to cap his memorable ECU career with a trip to the NCAA national meet. "You've got to love the sport."

But thanks to ECU and head coach Rick Kobe's fun-loving style, Cavalcanti has found that the sport he loved as a child is still his favorite today. In fact, it's likely his experience at ECU that makes Cavalcanti say he plans to continue trying to improve on his personal bests even after college.

In Cavalcanti's eyes, Kobe has kept the boredom to a minimum and has also challenged the Brazilian to constantly redefine and expand upon his swimming goals.

"I've always been pretty motivated, but there is a point in your life where you're like, 'What now? I wanted to accomplish that, and I did. Now what do I do?'" said Cavalcanti, who was born in the city of Pernambuco and began swimming at the age of 4 with his
father, also a devout swimmer. "(Kobe) always talks to me, always tries to keep me motivated."

Really, Cavalcanti's motivation has been showing since he came to Roanoke, Va., following high school to learn English and take the SAT. This year, the senior has clocked the ECU team's fastest times in the 200, 500, 1,000 and 1,650 freestyle events.

His Pirate team hosts South Carolina today, and as the regular season winds down and the championship season approaches, the training regimen winds down too. When it does, the traditional shave and taper routine kicks in.

“You train hard, and you don't expect great results until the end of the season when you shave and taper,” Cavalcanti said, referring to the process of trimming down the practice routine — and one's body hair — in advance of a big meet. “We swim twice a day, three times a week during the regular season. Then, when the big meet of the season is coming (the Conference USA championships begin Feb. 23 in Houston) we taper. Practice goes down gradually for two to three weeks before. You rest as much as you can.”

The shaving part is exactly what it sounds like. One difference now, however, is that the NCAA has followed the Olympics in banning the full-body suits popularized at the last Summer Games, meaning Cavalcanti and his male swimming counterparts must shave their legs in order to feel their fastest.

“It's technically not even a second (of difference made by shaving), but it cuts some time,” Cavalcanti said. “I had some pretty good times with the (banned) suit, but I've also had some pretty good times without it. As swimming is, it's 99 percent mental.”

In order for Cavalcanti to add another layer onto his legend at ECU — he's been named the program's Most Outstanding Male Swimmer in each of his first three years — the multi-faceted swimmer must make his move now.

The NCAA sets standard times for automatic qualification to the national meet called the A-cut. Times slightly slower than that form the B-cut, or a second group from which swimmers can be selected if there are not enough A-cut qualifiers.

Cavalcanti, who said he dreamed of coming to America to attend school since he was 10, wants to end his career with an automatic qualification.

“The main goal since I got here was to make the NCAAs,” he said. “My sophomore year I got one B-cut, my junior year I got two B-cuts and now I expect to make a pretty strong B-cut or an A-cut. I'm having a pretty good season, and I just want to keep it the way it is.”

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Jeffrey was a Volunteer Fire Fighter with the Little Swift Creek Fire Department #14 and he attended Craven Community College. He was a member of New Haven Free Will Baptist Church. Jeffrey was an avid ECU Pirate Fan. Where ECU was, Jeffrey was. He went to every home game, and went as far as D.C. to the bowl game. He was best known for his shaved head and painted purple and gold body. He was featured on the front cover of Greenville Mixer in September and on this years 2011 Fall Alumni Magazine. He will be remembered for his "live life to it's fullest" personality. He was also a dedicated fireman, participating in events since he was about 12 years old. Jeffrey loved his Little Swift Creek brothers and most of all he loved his family, his bubba and he held a special place in his heart for Hayleigh and Caroline. He'd want everyone to remember the good times. Don't think about the end. This isn't the end. This is only the beginning, and he is now in a place where he would like to see all of you one day.

He is survived by his parents, Jeff and Gwyn R. Grega; his brother, Jonathon Grega; maternal grandparents, Calvin and Betty Respess; paternal grandparents, Barry and Vivian Grega; maternal aunt, Sharon H. Pomeroy and husband Brian and their children, Hayleigh and Caroline; paternal aunt, Lisa Labra and husband Fernando; cousins, Beth Nitke, Tony, Josie and Fernando Labra; and a slew of close friends and cousins.

Services will be held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 22, 2011 at West Craven High School Performing Arts Center. Burial with Fire Department honors will follow in Pine Tree Cemetery in Ernul. The family will receive friends from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Friday, Jan. 21, 2011 at Cotten Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to: The Jeffrey Grega Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 13036, New Bern, 28561 or to any RBC Bank.

Condolences may be made to the Grega family at www.cottenfuneralhome.com
N.C. community colleges weigh safety risks

By EMERY P. DALESIO - Associated Press

RALEIGH—Nearly two weeks after the deadly Arizona shootings, North Carolina's community college board is considering whether to allow schools to bar admission to students who appear to pose a threat. But some groups are concerned over how the policy might be applied.

A vote scheduled for today could give schools in the country's third-largest community college system more power to bar the door to students like Arizona shooting suspect Jared Loughner, who was suspended from his community college after a pattern of bizarre behavior on campus. Loughner faces charges stemming from a shooting spree that killed six and wounded others including an Arizona congresswoman.

North Carolina's two-year schools already have the authority to suspend or expel students to protect others.

The new rule would allow community colleges to make an exception to their open-door standard of admitting everyone by excluding those who appear to pose "an articulable, imminent, and significant threat."

The new admissions policy, which has been weaving its way through the rule-making process since August, "gives us a little bit more of a level of protection for our students," said Stephen Scott, president of Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh, where 65,000 students are enrolled in degree and continuing education programs.

A spokeswoman for the American Association of Community Colleges was not immediately aware of similar moves in other states.

The 17-campus University of North Carolina system's admissions policies don't bar people who present possible health or safety threats, though students who reveal arrest or criminal records might trigger background checks, spokeswoman Joni Worthington said.
In South Carolina, state legislators on Wednesday introduced a bill that would alert local police if a student displays "disruptive or anti-social behavior." The measure would order colleges and universities to turn over records concerning behavioral problems to local police.

North Carolina community college officials said the policy change was not prompted by the Arizona shootings or other specific events. Stuart Fountain, who chairs the committee that reviewed the language, said administrators started talking about potential admissions changes after the 2007 shootings of 32 people at Virginia Tech.

How admissions officers could screen potential applicants among the more than 800,000 students statewide isn't clear.

"The rub is going to be, how do we know in advance? I can't answer that," Scott said. Community colleges neither conduct criminal background checks nor require physicals, he said.

The policy will allow admissions departments to act on clues as they're presented, Fountain said. The ability to recognize students who pose risks should improve over time, he said.

"There may be the tell-tale sign that an admissions person might recognize that this person might be a threat to that campus," he said. The lack of clarity worries disabilities advocates and the American Civil Liberties Union's North Carolina chapter.

The 58 community college campuses could each decide what they would consider health or safety risks, the ACLU's Sarah Preston said.

"It could be used to target people who are not a danger because they make people or they make administrators uncomfortable," she said, citing those who suffer from HIV/AIDS as a potential example.

The Americans With Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against persons on the basis of their disability, including mental health problems. But there are exemptions covering harm to self and public safety.

Still, admissions officials might use the policy to bar the disabled from the classroom, said Julia Adams, a spokeswoman for The Arc of North Carolina.
For example, someone with the involuntary physical tics and shouted obscenities of Tourette syndrome might be perceived as threatening when they're not, she said.

Errors can be fixed through an appeals process, Scott said.

It's unclear how many safety risks there might be among the more than 800,000 people attending North Carolina community colleges. Each campus tracks how many students are suspended for nonacademic reasons, but that data isn't tabulated for the entire system, a spokeswoman said.

Wake Tech had just one case in the past five years in which a student was barred until he provided proof that he wasn't a threat, Scott said. That student was allowed to continue taking courses online, he said.

The earliest the community college admissions rule could take effect is April, after review by a state panel that oversees new regulations. The General Assembly also could choose to take up the issue.
To Really Learn, Quit Studying and Take a Test

By PAM BELLUCK

Taking a test is not just a passive mechanism for assessing how much people know, according to new research. It actually helps people learn, and it works better than a number of other studying techniques.

The research, published online Thursday in the journal Science, found that students who read a passage, then took a test asking them to recall what they had read, retained about 50 percent more of the information a week later than students who used two other methods.

One of those methods — repeatedly studying the material — is familiar to legions of students who cram before exams. The other — having students draw detailed diagrams documenting what they are learning — is prized by many teachers because it forces students to make connections among facts.

These other methods not only are popular, the researchers reported; they also seem to give students the illusion that they know material better than they do.

In the experiments, the students were asked to predict how much they would remember a week after using one of the methods to learn the material. Those who took the test after reading the passage predicted they would remember less than the other students predicted — but the results were just the opposite.

“I think that learning is all about retrieving, all about reconstructing our knowledge,” said the lead author, Jeffrey Karpicke, an assistant professor of psychology at Purdue University. “I think that we’re tapping into something fundamental about how the mind works when we talk about retrieval.”

Several cognitive scientists and education experts said the results were striking.
The students who took the recall tests may “recognize some gaps in their knowledge,” said Marcia Linn, an education professor at the University of California, Berkeley, “and they might revisit the ideas in the back of their mind or the front of their mind.”

When they are later asked what they have learned, she went on, they can more easily “retrieve it and organize the knowledge that they have in a way that makes sense to them.”

The researchers engaged 200 college students in two experiments, assigning them to read several paragraphs about a scientific subject — how the digestive system works, for example, or the different types of vertebrate muscle tissue.

In the first experiment, the students were divided into four groups. One did nothing more than read the text for five minutes. Another studied the passage in four consecutive five-minute sessions.

A third group engaged in “concept mapping,” in which, with the passage in front of them, they arranged information from the passage into a kind of diagram, writing details and ideas in hand-drawn bubbles and linking the bubbles in an organized way.

The final group took a “retrieval practice” test. Without the passage in front of them, they wrote what they remembered in a free-form essay for 10 minutes. Then they reread the passage and took another retrieval practice test.

A week later all four groups were given a short-answer test that assessed their ability to recall facts and draw logical conclusions based on the facts. The second experiment focused only on concept mapping and retrieval practice testing, with each student doing an exercise using each method. In this initial phase, researchers reported, students who made diagrams while consulting the passage included more detail than students asked to recall what they had just read in an essay.

But when they were evaluated a week later, the students in the testing group did much better than the concept mappers. They even did better when they were evaluated not with a short-answer test but with a test requiring them to draw a concept map from memory.
Why retrieval testing helps is still unknown. Perhaps it is because by remembering information we are organizing it and creating cues and connections that our brains later recognize.

“When you’re retrieving something out of a computer’s memory, you don’t change anything — it’s simple playback,” said Robert Bjork, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who was not involved with the study.

But “when we use our memories by retrieving things, we change our access” to that information, Dr. Bjork said. “What we recall becomes more recallable in the future. In a sense you are practicing what you are going to need to do later.”

It may also be that the struggle involved in recalling something helps reinforce it in our brains.

Maybe that is also why students who took retrieval practice tests were less confident about how they would perform a week later.

“The struggle helps you learn, but it makes you feel like you’re not learning,” said Nate Kornell, a psychologist at Williams College. “You feel like: ‘I don’t know it that well. This is hard and I’m having trouble coming up with this information.’ ”

By contrast, he said, when rereading texts and possibly even drawing diagrams, “you say: ‘Oh, this is easier. I read this already.’ ”

The Purdue study supports findings of a recent spate of research showing learning benefits from testing, including benefits when students get questions wrong. But by comparing testing with other methods, the study goes further.

“It really bumps it up a level of importance by contrasting it with concept mapping, which many educators think of as sort of the gold standard,” said Daniel Willingham, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia. Although “it’s not totally obvious that this is shovel-ready — put it in the classroom and it’s good to go — for educators this ought to be a big deal.”
Howard Gardner, an education professor at Harvard who advocates constructivism — the idea that children should discover their own approach to learning, emphasizing reasoning over memorization — said in an e-mail that the results “throw down the gauntlet to those progressive educators, myself included.”

“Educators who embrace seemingly more active approaches, like concept mapping,” he continued, “are challenged to devise outcome measures that can demonstrate the superiority of such constructivist approaches.”

Testing, of course, is a highly charged issue in education, drawing criticism that too much promotes rote learning, swallows valuable time for learning new things and causes excessive student anxiety.

“More testing isn’t necessarily better,” said Dr. Linn, who said her work with California school districts had found that asking students to explain what they did in a science experiment rather than having them simply conduct the hands-on experiment — a version of retrieval practice testing — was beneficial. “Some tests are just not learning opportunities. We need a different kind of testing than we currently have.”

Dr. Kornell said that “even though in the short term it may seem like a waste of time,” retrieval practice appears to “make things stick in a way that may not be used in the classroom.

“It’s going to last for the rest of their schooling, and potentially for the rest of their lives.”