

# Mercy & Unity

## HOSPITALS

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## Melanoma

DIAGNOSIS BRINGS MONTHS  
OF CHALLENGING TREATMENT



**A** MOLE on Paul Schneider's back itched so badly that he would rub his back against a door frame to scratch it. Eventually, the mole broke open and blood seeped onto his dress shirts. That's when he decided this was a nuisance; it was ruining his shirts, and it had to come off.

A dermatologist removed the mole, and Schneider felt relieved that at last he was done with this aggravation. But the dermatologist's words a day later were chilling.

"I still know where I was when the call came in," Schneider says. The dermatologist used the term 'melanoma' in reporting the lab test, but Schneider did not grasp the meaning or impact of the word. "I thought it

was a matter of scraping off the bad part and putting a bandage over it. The dermatologist explained that melanoma was an extremely life-threatening form of cancer, and it needed to be taken care of right away."

### TREATMENT BEGINS

Treatment began immediately, guided by Thomas Amatruda, MD, from the Hubert H. Humphrey Cancer Center. Schneider underwent sentinel node testing, and lymph nodes from under both his arms were surgically removed. The cancer had migrated to two lymph nodes.

It was fall 1999. Schneider was 35 and engaged to his wife, Mychelle. Their wedding

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Mercy Hospital honored for clinical excellence



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Recovering after years of addiction



MERCY & UNITY  
HOSPITALS  
Allina Hospitals & Clinics

**MERCY HOSPITAL WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR CLINICAL EXCELLENCE**

Mercy Hospital has received the 2004 Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence™ from HealthGrades, Inc.®, a national health care quality ratings firm that grades the performance of hospitals throughout the nation.

Mercy, along with two other Allina hospitals, Abbott Northwestern and United, are winners of the esteemed award, which places them among the top 5 percent of hospitals in the nation. A total of 164 hospitals received the award, selected from a group of 869 hospitals nationwide.



In addition to the Distinguished Hospital Award, Mercy is ranked among the top 10 hospitals in the state for overall cardiac services, with five-star ratings (the best possible score) in valve replacement and treatment of heart attack.

Other highlights of Mercy's ratings include:

- Ranked among the top five hospitals in Minnesota for heart surgery, orthopedic and pulmonary services.
- Received five-star ratings in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease care and community-acquired pneumonia care; vascular services for resection or replacement of abdominal aorta; and treatment of bowel obstruction and gastrointestinal bleeding.

"This distinction is an incredible validation of all the hard work put forth by our physicians and staff throughout the hospitals, especially in the areas being recognized with five-star ratings," says Venetia Kudrle, president, Mercy & Unity Hospitals.

HealthGrades is a national organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care. Each year, HealthGrades analyzes the quality of care at more than 5,000 hospitals across the country and publishes ratings based on the performance of each hospital. Hospitals are awarded a five-star (best), three-star (average) or one-star (poor) rating. HealthGrades recognizes the top 20 percent of all hospitals that achieve the highest overall ratings with the Distinguished Hospital Award. The analysis is based on data collected by the federal government's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. ❖

**OPEN HOUSE**

**DON'T MISS OUR OPEN HOUSE**

Friday, Aug. 6, 2004  
 Mercy Hospital Heart Center Lobby  
 4050 Coon Rapids Blvd.

Please join us for an open house, celebrating the completion of our expansion. Meet and talk with physicians. There will be entertainment, Heart Center tours, health screenings, refreshments and more! ❖



**CARDIAC CENTERS EXPAND TO IMPROVE SERVICES**

The Cardiac Centers of Mercy & Unity Hospitals are adding additional space, technology and services—all within a healing environment.

The expansion provides ample space for new diagnostic and therapeutic technology.

A new sleep study center, a peripheral vascular blood flow laboratory, women's heart center and a 24-room inpatient unit are just some of the building expansion features.

For more information about expansion of The Cardiac Centers of Mercy & Unity Hospitals, call 763-236-9300. ❖

## What is skin cancer?

**T**HERE ARE two types of skin cancer, nonmelanoma and melanoma.

Nonmelanoma skin cancer is the most common, and accounts for nearly 95 percent of all cases. The two most common types of nonmelanoma skin cancer are basal cell and squamous cell skin cancer. Basal and squamous cells are found in the outer lining of your skin, the epidermis.

One million Americans are diagnosed with basal and squamous cell skin cancers each year, but both are highly treatable. Five-year survival rates of these cancers are greater than 99 percent (basal cell) and 95 percent (squamous cell).

Melanoma skin cancer is less benign. This cancer occurs in the melanocytes, or melanin-producing cells in the epidermis.

Melanoma accounts for 4 percent of all skin cancer cases, yet accounts for nearly 80 percent of all skin cancer deaths. That's because melanoma can spread to the body's organs through the

blood or lymph system.

Melanoma is on the rise among Americans. The American Cancer Society estimates that, this year, 55,100 people will be diagnosed with melanoma and about 7,910 people will die from it.

### RISK FACTORS

The No. 1 risk factor for skin cancer is too much sun.

Other risk factors are:

- Fair skin, freckling and light hair.
  - Being a man. Men have higher rates of skin cancer than women.
  - Exposure to chemicals such as arsenic, tar and coal.
  - Radiation treatment.
  - Smoking.
  - Weakened immune systems, xeroderma pigmentosa and HPV infection.
- The risk factors for melanoma include those listed above as well as:
- Presence of dark, irregular-shaped moles.
  - Family history of melanoma.
  - Personal history of melanoma.

### AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Take these precautions for yourself and your family:

- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater.
- Seek shade.
- Cover up (see sidebar below).
- Wear sunglasses.
- Don't use tanning beds or sun lamps.
- Identify moles. Check regularly for changes in the way they look or feel, or have them removed.

Warning signs of skin cancer include:

- Any change in the appearance of a mole.
- Any bleeding, oozing spots that don't heal within three weeks.

If you notice either of these signs, see your dermatologist. ❖

### BEYOND SUNSCREEN:

## Clothing counts too

The clothing you wear can help reduce the risk of skin cancer and other damaging effects of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light.

Here are examples of clothing that offer some protection:

- Loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants or skirts.
- Tightly woven fabrics made from fibers such as unbleached cotton or silk. These absorb or reflect UV light better than bleached cotton, the fiber used in most T-shirts. If you aren't sure about a garment, hold it up to the light. If you can see light through it, then the UV rays can penetrate it.
- Darker colors may offer more protection than lighter colors.
- Hats with wide brims to shade the face, ears and back of the neck.
- High-tech, sun-protective clothing. This clothing is specially made to help block harmful rays. It is labeled with an SPF. Look for an SPF of at least 15.



# RECOVER

## after decades of addiction

*Editor's note: Kurt, whom we will call by first name only, checked himself into 2E, the substance abuse area of Unity Hospital, just before Christmas 2003, after a 10-day drinking binge measured more easily in gallons than by drinks. He did not know what was going to happen to him in the hospital, but he knew he was going to die if he did not get help for his addiction. The fact that he found the courage to seek help after decades of addiction is testimony to his strength and determination. We caught up with Kurt on his last day of outpatient treatment. When we thanked him for sharing his story, he said it was worth it, if it helped just one person caught in the throes of addiction.*

**K**urt began using drugs before age 12, when a physician prescribed valium for the somewhat high-strung, strong-willed child.

Kurt's childhood was chaotic at best. Raised primarily by a single mother, he had numerous stepfathers, and there was violence in the home. He developed sleep problems as a child (possibly out of fear of what might happen while he slept) that have followed him all his life.

Kurt spent years being shuffled from one foster home to another. As a teenager in his hometown of Elizabeth, N.J., just outside New York City, neighborhood groups of young people gathered in gang-like fashion. Kurt wanted to maintain a good image and acceptance within his group.

Doing drugs was one way to achieve that profile.

As an adult, Kurt

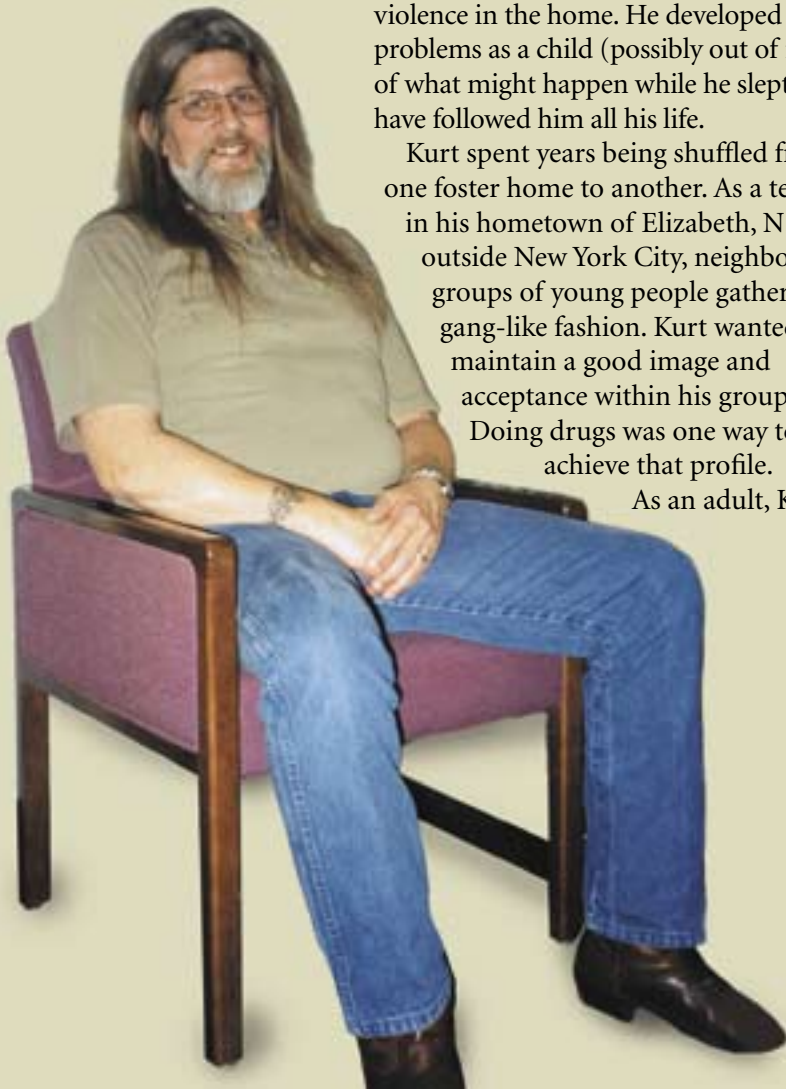
never really liked drinking very much, but once he weaned himself off amphetamines, it became a legal way to get high. And getting high was what he wanted, because it took away some of the pain.

Kurt says that he led two lives for many years. A highly motivated and intelligent individual, he wanted to succeed, and he did, in the manufacturing and trucking industries. But he was also driven to feed his addiction. Eventually, the two lives clashed and, "little by little through bad decisions," he walked out on everything—his job, his education and two marriages. "I didn't feel like I was hurting anybody but myself," he says.

Despite everything that went wrong in his life, Kurt now has five young granddaughters, and his face lights up when he talks about them. He also has the knowledge that he is on a path of recovery that is "the most important thing in my life."

Kurt spent eight days as an inpatient in Substance Abuse Services at Unity Hospital, followed by 20 sessions in Outpatient Services, available in the Lyric Building, just east of the hospital.

"I didn't have the ability to conquer what was wrong," says Kurt. "In treatment I had counselors who were straightforward with me, and I had others around me with the same problem. They made me aware of the way I was thinking. Treatment has given me the tools that I need to cope." ♦



# RING

SOBRIETY

ONE DAY AT A TIME

## OVERCOMING ADDICTION

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VITAL CHOICES OR ANY OF THE CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY PROGRAMS AVAILABLE THROUGH MERCY & UNITY HOSPITALS, CALL 763-236-4300.

A medical definition of addiction is difficult to pin down, but most of us believe we know what it means: doing something you cannot stop, even though it interferes with daily living and healthy relationships, or something that controls you, despite good intentions to stop.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse calls addiction "a primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal."

### CHEMICAL DEPENDENCE

Alcohol, amphetamines, barbiturates, cocaine, marijuana, narcotics, nicotine and many other chemicals are known addictive substances.

People are considered chemically dependent if they meet three of the following criteria over a 12-month period:

- A need for more of the substance to "feel good" or achieve intoxication.
- Having withdrawal symptoms after stopping use or using the substance to avoid those symptoms.
- Using more of the substance than usual, or for longer than intended.
- A continued desire for the substance or unsuccessful attempts to cut down or stop using.
- Spending a lot of time to obtain, use or recover from the substance.
- Giving up or cutting back on important social, work-related or recreational activities.

■ Continuing to use the substance even though it's causing problems.

Whatever the source, addictions affect the "reward area" of the brain. Addicts experience a "rush" when engaging in their addictive behavior.

### WHEN ADDICTION TAKES HOLD

People appear to be more vulnerable to addictions at certain times in life. Losing a loved one or a job, realizing that something you hoped for won't happen, or moving to a new place can create situations that increase the risk of addiction.

"There are many social stressors that can trigger an addiction," says

Judy Hannaford, program manager for Substance Abuse Services at Mercy & Unity Hospitals.

"In Substance Abuse Services, we engage people in taking a look at what these chemicals have done to them, not for them," Hannaford says.

Substance Abuse Services at Mercy & Unity Hospitals are abstinence-based and include inpatient/outpatient day and evening programs, primary, relapse, family and continuing care programs. Substance abuse assessments are done Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Substance abuse assessors determine what level of treatment, if any, is needed. In some situations an assessor may be called in by a health care professional within the hospital to evaluate a patient who is admitted for another illness or treatment. The program also receives referrals from insurance companies, county agencies, court services and families.

### VITAL CHOICES PROGRAM

In addition to chemical dependency programs, Substance Abuse Services offers Vital Choices, an educational program for DWI/DUI and other first-time offenders. Vital Choices

meets the regulatory requirements of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation. The 12-hour program includes a two-hour



Judy Hannaford, program manager for Substance Abuse Services at Mercy & Unity Hospitals.

Friday-night session and a 10-hour Saturday session.

Its purpose is to educate and promote discussion and introspection through intense instructional, interactive and visual education. "It is not therapy," Hannaford says, "but it provides the offender with pertinent in-depth information that can lead to wiser life choices." ♦



# Mercy & Unity HOSPITALS



## **BRAIN INJURY AND STROKE**

Brain Injury Support Group  
Stroke Support Group

## **CANCER**

### **Cancer Resource Center**

A place to find multimedia informational resources on cancer, programs and individualized support. Call 763-236-4040 (Unity) or 763-236-6060 (Mercy).

### **Breast Cancer Support Group**

### **Cancer and the Family**

Five-week group with sessions for children ages 4 to 12, teens 13 to 18 and adult family members.

### **Living With Cancer**

Weekly group for people with cancer and loved ones.

### **Living Beyond Limits**

Specialized 12-session group for breast cancer patients with advanced disease.

### **Look Good, Feel Better**

Help for dealing with self-esteem and side effects of cancer through demonstrations in the use of wigs, hats and makeup.

### **Patient Partner**

One-to-one visits for people newly diagnosed with cancer and their families.

### **Prostate Cancer Support**

Support for prostate cancer patients and spouses.

### **Renewing Life**

Eight-week educational and support series for individuals with a life-threatening disease and their loved ones.

## **DIABETES**

### **Adult Diabetes Support Group**

Diabetes Care Education Classes\*

## **GRIEF**

*Grief support groups meet at the same time so family members can come together, participate in separate groups, and go home together.*

### **Adult Grief Support Group**

For those 18 and older. Includes separate groups for pregnancy and infant loss; death of a spouse, child or parent; and death by suicide or violence.

### **Children's Grief Support Group**

For children 6 to 12.

### **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support Groups**

For anyone who has experienced a loss, including ectopic miscarriage, stillborn and SIDS.

### **Preschool Grief Support Group**

For children 3 to 5.

### **Teen Grief Support Group**

For teens 13 to 18.

## **HEALTH IMPROVEMENT**

### **Blood Pressure Screening**

Free blood pressure screenings are offered at Mercy and Unity.

### **Heart/Stroke Screening\***

Includes a heart or stroke questionnaire, blood pressure check and blood screen for total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides and glucose. Health counseling is available.

### **Supervised and Monitored Exercise Programs\***

Exercise and lifestyle modification programs that require physician referral.

## **HEART**

### **Cardiac Club**

For cardiac patients and the community.

## **Cardiac Education Classes:**

Low-Sodium Strategies  
Heart Healthy Nutrition\*  
Risk Factor Evaluation  
Benefits of Exercise  
Stress and Relaxation  
Medication Information  
Life Changes

### **CPR Course for Family and Friends\***

Participants choose one: rescuer adult course, or adult, child and infant course portions.

### **Mended Hearts**

Former cardiac patients visit and provide support to cardiac patients and their families.

## **PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND PARENTING**

### **All About Babies\***

### **Birth and Parenting Preparation\***

### **Breastfeeding Preparation\***

### **Car Seat Safety**

### **Celebrating Families**

Tell your birth story, hear how others have adjusted to their newborn and learn basic infant safety (choking and infant CPR).

### **Cesarean Birth\***

### **Changing Shapes™: Pregnancy Fitness\***

### **Expecting Multiples\***

### **Healthy Pregnancy\***

### **Infant Massage\***

### **Infant and Child CPR\***

### **New Brother/New Sister\***

### **New Parent Connection**

Support group for parents with babies up to 4 months old.

### **Pregnancy After a Loss**

A class and support group for expectant

To register or for more information, call Medformation at 651-697-3333 or visit [www.medformation.com](http://www.medformation.com).



**STROKE SCREENING**

Saturday, May 1, 7–11 a.m.  
Unity Hospital Boardroom

**Follow-up Stroke Education**

Thursday, May 13, 6–7:30 p.m.  
Unity Hospital Boardroom

For more information or  
to register, call  
Medformation at  
651-697-3333.

parents who have experienced the loss of a previous baby.

**Refresher Birth and Parenting Preparation\***

**Small Talk**

Sign language for parents to communicate effectively with their hearing infants and toddlers, ages 9 months to 3 years.

**Teen Pregnancy\***

**Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC)\***

**RESPIRATORY**

Support groups for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are available at Mercy and Unity.

**Breath of Mercy (Mercy)**

**F.A.N. Club (Unity)**

**Lung Power\***

An education and exercise program for patients with COPD and their families.

**Respiratory Screening\***

Includes a pulse oximetry test and a breathing screening. Respiratory counseling is available.

**SAFETY**

**Child Safety**

For parents and/or caregiver groups.

**EN C.A.R.E.**

Emergency Nurses Cancel Alcohol Related Emergencies (EN C.A.R.E.) is

an alcohol awareness program. Free to local schools and parent and civic organizations.

**Think First**

Head and spinal cord injury prevention program for presentation in the classroom in grades 1 through 3 and 7 through 9.

**TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAMS\***

Freedom From Smoking  
Quitting on Your Own

**WEIGHT INTERVENTION/GASTRIC BYPASS SURGERY**

For people who are 100 pounds or more overweight, who have been unsuccessful at losing weight by other means and want to learn more about surgical intervention.

**OTHER**

Arthritis and Fibromyalgia  
Inflammatory Bowel Disease  
Support Group  
United Ostomy Association  
Support Group

Programs with a fee are noted with an asterisk\*.

If you do not find the program or class you're looking for in this listing, call Medformation at 651-697-3333 for information about offerings at other Allina hospitals, or visit [www.medformation.com](http://www.medformation.com).

Note: Several of our educational offerings, programs and support groups are offered in cooperation with local and national societies and associations, including the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the Minnesota Chapter of Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America, the National Head Injury Foundation and the North Suburban Branch of the Twin Cities Diabetes Association.

**COMING EVENTS**

**Multiple Sclerosis: The Disease and Its Treatment**

Wednesday, May 19  
6:30-8:30 p.m., Mercy Auditorium  
Presented by Alan Ingenito, MD,  
Minneapolis Clinic of Neurology,  
this forum features:

- General information.
- Treatment plans for people with multiple sclerosis.
- A question-and-answer session.
- Refreshments.

Open to the community; no registration necessary. For more information, call Nancy Novak at 763-236-4345.

**Melanoma Community Forum**

See page 8 for details.

**Women and Cancer**

Thursday, July 15, 7-8:30 p.m.  
Mercy Hospital Auditorium  
Community forums are free and open to the public. For more information or to register, call the Cancer Resource Center at 763-236-4040.

# Melanoma treatment

—Continued from Page 1

arrangements had been made with no inkling of a diagnosis like this, but the couple wouldn't let cancer curtail their plans. Schneider and Mychelle were married immediately after his release from Abbott Northwestern Hospital and one week before he started interferon treatment. "I left the hospital at 11:30 a.m. and was married at 2:30 p.m.," Schneider says.

## CHALLENGED LIKE NEVER BEFORE

The newlyweds' vows, "in sickness and in health," were called into action much sooner than for most married couples. Interferon treatment occupied the first year of marriage—a month of intravenous drip at the clinic, followed by 48 weeks of self-injections three times a week. The interferon caused extreme fatigue, a raspy voice and a 50-pound

weight loss. Schneider became so weak that he was unable to work, and at times it was difficult for him to speak. About six months after finishing the interferon treatment, he managed to regain some weight, and was strong enough to take a position at Land O' Lakes.

Questions about sun exposure (a risk factor for any skin cancer) came up during his treatment. Schneider was raised on a farm in Spencer, S.D., and spent long summer days outside in the sun.

Family history is another risk factor. Schneider had an uncle who died of melanoma.

## LIFE GOES ON

Schneider has had no recurrence. He has CT scans and x-rays every six months, and has quarterly dermatology check-ups. "We have our scares," he says. "You find a little bump under the skin and you worry. It's an unusual disease that you can't predict. But life goes on."

Schneider is operations account manager at Land O' Lakes in Woodbury, and specializes in manufacturing accounting. "I was

always a serious person, but I've let go a little," he says. "I enjoy a little more of the day-to-day stuff."

## LEARN MORE

For more information on melanoma and other skin cancers:

- Read "What is skin cancer?" on Page 3.
- Ask your doctor.
- Attend a free community forum at Unity Hospital (see details below).
- Call the Cancer Resource Center, 763-236-4040. ❖

ATTEND A FREE COMMUNITY FORUM AT UNITY HOSPITAL ON MAY 20. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 763-236-4040.

# Melanoma Community Forum

Thursday, May 20  
7-8:30 p.m.

## Unity Hospital Auditorium

Prevention, risks, screening and current trends will be discussed. Led by local health professionals, the forum will end with an interactive Q&A segment. Refreshments provided. Educational credit is offered.

Community forums are free and open to the public. For more information or to register, call the Cancer Resource Center at 763-236-4040.

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