

Sick students wanted as test guinea pigs

Health Center studying new flu drug

by Cyndy Davis
Battalion Staff

If you have the flu, the A.P. Beutel Health Center wants you. And will pay you for it.

Students with the flu are being paid to participate in a study involving ribavirin, a drug that doctors hope will be effective against all strains of influenza virus.

Influenza viruses are found in two types, "A" and "B." Within each type, numerous new strains are discovered each year. When two different strains of flu virus are found in an organism, they can mix and produce new strains.

Last year's flu study indicated that ribavirin was effective in curing and helping patients with most Type A flu viruses. Because most cases coming in this year are Type B, the study is focusing on that type, said Dr. John M. Quarles, professor of microbiology and immunology at the Texas A&M College of Medicine.

Ribavirin is in its last stages of required human testing before being licensed by the Food and

Drug Administration.

"We are looking for something in a drug that works over a broad spectrum of influenza viruses," Quarles said.

"We want something that ignores the differences in the strains and attacks all flu viruses."

The Texas A&M study, part of a series of studies conducted on influenza in the past six years, is headed by Dr. Wayne Knight, chairman of the microbiology department at the Baylor College of Medicine.

The only requirements for the study are sickness and time. When a student comes into the health center with a cold, he is referred to the Cold Clinic, where a nurse examines him for flu-like symptoms. If symptoms are found, the patient sees a doctor, who explains the study to him and asks if he would like to participate. The student then signs a consent form and checks into the health center for at least 72 hours.

Ribavirin is inhaled by a patient at two-to-four hour intervals for 12 hours a day. Inhaled

drugs reach the respiratory system quicker than drugs taken by mouth, Dr. Roberts Atmar, a research fellow in the program, said.

Inhaled drugs also are more effective because the liver absorbs 90 percent of medication taken by mouth.

Some students in the study are given ribavirin, and others are treated with the traditional flu care methods of fluids and rest. Subjects of the study are not told whether or not they are being given ribavirin.

After being released from the hospital, students return to the health center for a check-up, and again in three weeks after the test.

Students who participate in the study are paid \$72 for three days in the hospital and \$20 for each follow-up visit.

The study started Jan. 19 when the first flu patient was admitted and probably will last until spring break, Quarles said. As of Wednesday, 12 students had taken part in the study, he said.

The study is funded by

Viratek, a division of ICN Pharmaceuticals. Viratek produces ribavirin under the name of Zirazole.

The ribavirin studies at Texas A&M are receiving national media coverage. An ABC News story on the studies will be broadcast this week, and the stu-

ries will be the cover story of the March 8 issue of "Fortune" magazine.

Council approves funding for Magna Carta exhibit

by Jean Kiser
Battalion Reporter

The College Station City Council voted in a special workshop session Wednesday to give the Magna Carta Committee \$2,000 to help pay the \$15,692 needed to bring the document to campus.

Committee Chairman Wayne Stark said he was pleased with the council's decision, although only \$2,000 of the \$4,000 requested was approved.

The council's contribution came from the Hotel-Motel Fund, which is derived from taxes on hotel and motel rooms in the city. The revenue is divided between the city and the state and is used by both entities to promote tourism and artistic and cultural activities at the state and local levels.

"I didn't feel that it was a worthwhile project for the fund," said Councilman Tony Jones, the only member voting against funding. A lot of people had contacted him before the meeting and asked that the council not approve funding, he said.

The council unanimously decided to set up a nine-person committee to revise the Capital Improvement Program Budget

— establishing a budget criteria for the city's capital improvements. The committee will be comprised of three council members, three planning and zoning commissioners and three members of the parks and recreation board.

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