

New treatment for kidney stones pleases doctors

United Press International
HOUSTON — Doctors said Wednesday they were optimistic about an experimental procedure that dissolves kidney stones within an hour by using sound waves through water. The procedure, called extracorporeal shock-wave lithotripsy, is a relatively painless treatment which uses no drugs or surgery and requires only a local anesthetic for the patient, said Dr. Don Griffith, director of the project at Methodist Hospital in Houston. The machine, an updated

version of one developed a decade ago in Munich, West Germany, pulverizes kidney stone into dust-size particles. Within 48 hours, the granules pass through the patient's body naturally and painlessly, Griffith said. Five patients have undergone the procedure in Houston this week, and Griffith said each is doing well. Overall, there is a 90 percent success rate, which means a few of the patients have to undergo secondary treatment. The treatment begins by placing the kidney stone patient

in a tub of water over an energy source that produces shock waves. The shock waves are concentrated directly on the kidney stone and force an implosion on the stone causing it to disintegrate, but do not destroy or damage the kidney or surrounding tissues. During the hour-long treatment, the patient receives about 1,000 to 1,500 shocks which are monitored by a urologist with fluoroscopes. The test program in Houston, utilizing the \$2 million machine, is one of six in the United States, including centers in Indianapolis, Boston, New York, Gainesville, Fla., and Charlottesville, Va. The entire procedure costs the patients between \$2,500 and \$7,000. Not all insurance companies are reimbursing for the costs because the procedure is still considered experimental, Griffith said. "We are selecting patients now who are in good health and who have simple, solitary

stones," Griffith said. "But by June, we should be able to treat people with more than one stone. By August, we hope to treat patients with any stone in the kidney of upper urinary tract." Patient George Black, 58, underwent the treatment Tuesday. He said it felt like "a little mild slap," but he felt no discomfort. In fact, he said, within a few minutes he fell asleep and

had to be awakened at the end of the procedure. "It was totally painless," said Black, who attended a news conference and expected to be released from the hospital this week. Sara Wilson, 29, a school teacher, said she underwent an operation two years ago to remove kidney stones. At that time, she was out of work six weeks. She had the procedure performed

on her Monday. "I plan to be back at work next Monday," she said. Griffith said patients being accepted into the program must not weigh more than 280 pounds and stand no more than 6-feet-6 or less than 4-feet. They also must have no life-threatening medical problems or uncontrolled urinary infection, he said.

Ford unveils first natural gas powered vehicles

United Press International
DEARBORN — Ford Motor Co. unveiled a fleet of natural gas-powered Ranger compact pickup trucks Wednesday, that the company said are safer and cheaper to operate than conventional gasoline-powered vehicles. The 27 natural gas Rangers will be tested by utility and natural gas-related companies across the nation. Each is paying \$20,000 over two years to participate in the program. Natural gas is commonly used to power vehicles in Italy, New Zealand, Canada and the Netherlands, but this is the first major test of the fuel's use in the United States, officials said. The Ford program is being conducted in conjunction with the American Gas Association. Each Ranger has been equipped with a 2.3 liter engine that has been modified to use 130 cc of natural gas fuel. In addition to mechanical modifications, the trucks are equipped with four fuel tanks made of fiberglass-wrapped aluminum. These add about 300-400 pounds to the weight of the truck. Dale Compton, vice president of research at Ford, said each truck gets about 18 mpg

on gasoline and would get about 20 percent better using natural gas. He said the cost of operating the natural gas trucks is "roughly half per mile" of regular gasoline powered trucks. However, the vehicles can carry only enough natural gas to travel about 250 miles. The firm hopes to convince major oil companies to begin offering natural gas at their service stations, Compton said. He said the natural gas program is part of a larger effort to test alternative fuels. Ford offers a propane option on 1984 LTD and Mercury Marquis autos and is testing 600 Escorts powered by methanol. It has sold 300,000 autos in Brazil that are powered by grain alcohol or ethanol. "Gasoline prices have remained relatively low and have lulled us into a false sense of security," said Compton. Gas association spokesman Kenneth T. Cuccinelli said there is enough natural gas in the world to power 100 million vehicles for the next several hundred years. Both officials maintained drivers need not worry about the safety of natural gas-powered vehicles. Cuccinelli said

the fuel tanks "had bullets fired at them — they've been burned, crushed and dropped. They're extremely safe." Compton said Americans use natural gas to heat their homes and to cook with, and that fear of the fuel was not an issue.

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Memorial

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After that, the decision was made to put it at west gate." Peel said the west gate site was his second choice for the memorial's location. "My first choice was to build on west campus," he said. But some old buildings need to be torn down first, and since Mr. Albritton wanted to begin building immediately, another site was chosen. The location of the bell tower and the removal of the memorial have aroused concern among some Texas A&M students. Several students told The Battalion that though they do not object to the bell tower, they do object to its location. "If he (Albritton) wants to donate money for a bell tower, that's great, but I don't think they should have moved the memorial," said Tim Goggin, a senior building construction major. "I don't think they put enough thought into where to put the bell tower." Monique Cox, a freshman business major, agreed with Goggin. "I don't like the idea of moving the memorial," she said. "I think they could have found a better place for it (the bell tower)." Special

Philip Toelkes, a sophomore ocean engineering major, defended Albritton's decision to donate a bell tower. "I think it's a good idea," Toelkes said. "I think it's great of him to donate so much money to the University. A lot of people are running him down, and I don't think that's right." One student commented on the propriety of Albritton's gift. Peel said he was surprised and pleased at students' interest in the future of the bell tower and the memorial. However, students should keep the "big picture" in mind when considering the issue, he said. "When someone is making a gift, it's real hard to say, 'We don't need it, we need something else,'" Peel said. "They have specific things in mind that are their preference. We could not function, we could not operate without gifts. One has to evaluate the big picture."

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