

THE BATTALION

New cure found for 'bubble boy disease'

NEW ENGLAND (AP) — In the most striking success yet for gene therapy, French doctors have apparently cured four little boys of two rare and deadly immune system disorders dubbed "bubble boy disease."

The boys, followed for up to two and a half years, have healthy immune systems, are growing normally and live at home after spending their first months in a sterile environment because they could not fight off disease. The immune system of the fifth boy was partially restored and he is improving with other treatment.

Two years ago the doctors reported initial success with the first two patients; the update in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine shows the treatment is still working.

"This is the first instance in which an otherwise fatal disease has been treated with gene therapy as the only treatment and the disease was reversed," said Dr. Jennifer M. Puck, head of the immunologic genetics section at the National Human Genome Research Institute. "This is exciting and it's important."

The study is welcome news for the gene therapy field, which suffered a setback when an experiment killed a teenager at the University of Pennsylvania in 1999. The death raised fears that the experiments might be too dangerous and led to efforts to increase safety.

The best-known victim was David, Houston's famous "bubble boy" who lived in a germ-proof plastic enclosure until his death on Sept. 12 in 1984.

The boys lacked a crucial protein because of a genetic mutation. As a result, they could not make two types of crucial infection-fighting immune cells. Many babies with the disorder are now saved with bone marrow transplants, but need monthly intravenous infusions from donated blood for the rest of their lives.

To reverse the gene defect, doctors at Necker Hospital in Paris drew bone marrow from the boys. They collected stem cells for the marrow and mixed them with a harmless virus in which a gene that makes the missing protein had been inserted. After the virus infected the bone marrow cells, millions of each boy's cells were injected into his bloodstream.

Repeated tests showed the boys' bone marrow cells continued to make the immune cells they once lacked. In addition, they have gotten inoculated against some childhood diseases — shots that once would have killed them.

Soia Skarlatos, gene therapy coordinator at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, said the results do not prove the boys' immune systems have been permanently repaired, but it is the longest-lived success in gene therapy so far. Some of the boys' stem cells still have the defective gene, but enough have the normal one to give them a good immune system, she said.

Skarlatos said the approach could eventually help create some other genetic diseases starting with hemophilia and another form of SCID. "In the next five years or so, I would expect to see some results," she said.

Heatwave hits East coast

BOSTON (AP) — Summerlike heat baked the eastern third of the country again Wednesday, toppling more records and sending people outside in search of sun — and relief.

"Whatever is cold is flying out the door," said Barbara Fingold, a co-owner of Bart's Homemade ice cream parlor in Northampton.

It felt like July, not mid-April. As Phoenix, Miami and San Antonio all hit the low 80s, Boston hit a record high of 92 degrees and Springfield sweltered at 95. Concord, N.H., posted a record 91 and Portland, Maine, a record 80. New York and Newark, N.J., both had a record of 96 and Philadelphia hit 95. It was 94 in the nation's capital.

The unseasonable warmth stretched from the Midwest to southern Maine, where the Portland beaches played host to people in swimsuits before the mercury dropped into the 50s.

Along the upper Great Lakes, snow melting rapidly under the hot sun caused flooding in northern sections of Wisconsin and Michigan.

Leona Williams, shopping in Philadelphia for summer clothes for her children, said she was enjoying the heat —

to a point.

"Winter was so mild it was almost like spring, and now it looks like spring's going to be like summer," Williams said. "It's very strange."

The late afternoon sun was

"We got help from local residents, city departments and we've got high school students out here helping us sandbag to protect what we can"

— Joseph Cayer
public safety director

so hot in Manhattan that Theresa Hudec said her 10-minute wait for a bus home felt like an hour.

"It came too hot, too soon," she said. "If it's like this now, what's going to happen in July and August?"

Cooler weather was advancing across the northern Plains and was expected to reach the Northeast during the

weekend.

In the meantime, flooding caused by melting snow and recent heavy rain in northern Michigan led to an order for evacuations in Ironwood. Michigan Gov. John Engler declared Gogebic County and Ironwood a disaster area Wednesday and National Guard troops were sent to help.

"We got help from local residents, city departments and we've got high school students out here helping us sandbag to protect what we can," said public safety director Joseph Cayer.

School was let out early Tuesday at Glidden, Wis., so youngsters could help sandbag low-lying areas along the Chippewa River.

On the Camden, N.J., waterfront, students on a class trip fanned themselves while walking to the Amistad, a replica slave ship. Across the Delaware River, a summer-like and soupy haze hung over Philadelphia.

"If this is a premonition of the summer, I'm worried," said Bobbie Beebe of Morrisville, Pa., sweat beading on her arms and legs as she rested from cutting grass at a church in Hopewell, N.J. "It's too early for this."

HEAVENS

In the real world, you'll need more than just maroon clothes.

Wells Fargo provides an Aggie Graduate Loan Program developed just for the **Class of '02** that includes:

- ★ 100% Car Loan
- ★ Unsecured Personal Loan
- ★ Wells Fargo® Free Checking
- ★ FREE Wells Fargo Online® Banking account access
- ★ FREE Wells Fargo ATM & Check Card®


Call, or come by one of our local branches to open your loan today.
College Station: 200 Southwest Pkwy: 776-3424, 1801 Rock Prairie Rd.: 776-3499,
 321 University Dr.: 691-8366
Bryan: 3000 Briarcrest: 776-5402, 501 N. Harvey Mitchell Pkwy.: 821-3120

©2002 Wells Fargo Banks. All rights reserved. Member FDIC

DUB MILLER

LIVE at
Shadow Canyon
 Thursday, April 18th

Doors Open at 8pm;
 show starts at 10pm



DUNK YOUR RING AND WEAR IT, TOO
PITCHER & T-SHIRT COMBO PACK


A \$42 VALUE Only **\$29.99**

*must have this coupon to redeem. EXPIRES MAY 15th

The Aggie Ring.
Not the easiest ring to get, but definitely the best.

AGGIELAND OUTFITTERS
 POST OAK MALL
 979-764-4445
 SOUTHGATE
 979-680-8780
 www.aggielandoutfitters.com


What do you expect to see at Party House 2002?

 **A. Jell-O shots**

B. Keg stands

C. A party with plenty of singles

D. ALL OF THE ABOVE



Come to Party House ONE NIGHT ONLY: Thursday April 18th, 8-11pm at Walton Hall

FREE PARTY NO CHARGE COME AND ENJOY THE PARTY!!!

Party House is an EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM put on by members of the T.O. Walton and C.C. Kruegger Hall Staffs and Hall Councils. Join us for an experience that will last a lifetime.