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HemoTherapy Center of Nevada opens in Spring Valley

By AMANDA LLEWELLYN
VIEW STAFF WRITER

Medical services provided at the newly opened HemoTherapy Center of Nevada, 3150 Charleston Blvd., may be new and unknown to the general population, but if you are one of the thousands of Nevadans who suffer from congestive heart failure, treatments offered at the center may provide a ray of hope.

The center specializes in the treatment of fluid overload, the retention of water and sodium in the body, with the newest CHF Solutions technology known as Aquapheresis therapy.

The medical therapy removes excess salt and water from the body through a roughly eight-hour outpatient process during which the Aquadex FlexFlow, a machine approved by the FDA in 2002, filters the fluid and sodium from the patient's blood.

"Blood is removed from the vein and then run through the machine, where unwanted water and salt is collected in bags and discarded," HemoTherapeutics Inc. President Hal Lieberman said. "Everything else is filtered back into the body, along with electrolytes. The process is accomplished through two separate lines, usually in each arm -- one, which filters the blood into the machine; the other restores it into the body."

The treatment provides immediate relief, which usually lasts for about 90 days, Lieberman said.

"We have had patients who have not had a treatment or been in the hospital with a related problem for more than a year," he said. "For people suffering from congestive heart failure, that's a huge deal."



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The facility opened in September, with the goal of treating patients who suffer from fluid overload, mostly a side effect of congestive heart failure.

When a person has congestive heart failure, the heart is not pumping strongly enough to circulate the blood as it should, Lieberman said. The result is an over-saturation of water and sodium built up in the chest cavity, ankles and abdomen.

The condition is most commonly treated with diuretics on an outpatient basis, but according to Lieberman, many congestive heart failure patients have been on medications for extended periods of time.

"Many patients are weary of taking medications that, while helpful in many cases, have stopped working," Lieberman said. "We see this treatment as an alternative. The results we've had with the procedure in other clinics in California have been very promising. So, we are very excited to be able to introduce this technology to Las Vegas."

Congestive heart failure and the associated swelling and water retention can be brought on by a number of maladies including, diabetes, kidney failure, heart attack and infection, Lieberman said.

"There are any number of ailments that will cause the homeostasis of the body to go awry," he said. "And the effect is different with each patient. That is why medication continues to work decently enough for some patients, while others cannot find any relief. They feel as though they are drowning."

Lieberman said it has been his experience that even those patients who still experience some success with medication after prolonged use are admitted to the hospital or emergency room numerous times annually.

"The medications only work to a certain extent," he said. "The fluid that gathers is most difficult to remove. Moreover, over time, the diuretics damage kidneys, and they remove water, but not enough salt, which results in what we call frequent fliers, or, people who are in and out of the hospital for the same reason again and again."

Ailments associated with congestive heart failure are the No. 1 expense in the Medicare program and among the senior citizen population nationally, Lieberman said.

"There are 1 million hospital admissions per year in connection with this condition, and the number is expected to double in the next 20 years," he said. "Medicare is straining under the current load. Many patients are admitted over and over, given medications that have lost effectiveness. This technology offers a way around all that."

The procedure costs roughly \$2,500 per session and is covered by most insurance policies, Lieberman said.

Dr. Richard Sweet, the center's director, said that the cost for three to four Aquapheresis sessions amount to less than one

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emergency room visit and admission to the hospital.

"The treatment is cheaper than admitting someone to the hospital," he said. "There, you're looking at upward of \$10,000 per admittance, depending on the hospital. We hope to provide people with an alternative form of treatment with results that last longer and will, in the end, save them a bit of money."

Cardiovascular Consultants of Nevada physician Jerry Routh said that while the technique is still very new to the valley, he would recommend the service to his patients.

"It's an alternative treatment for those who have become frustrated with more conventional methods, which, in many cases, do not produce enough results to relieve the patient of symptoms for prolonged periods of time," Routh said. "Aquapheresis is an incredible technology, and I think a great number of people who are suffering needlessly will benefit from it."

Lieberman said the center is the only one offering the treatment in the valley, but he hopes to change that in the coming year.

"We are working to meet with hospitals in the valley to talk about providing the service on a larger scale," Lieberman said. "If we can provide the service to hospitals and clinics, more people would learn about it as an alternative form of treatment."

For more information, call (888) 232-5708.

Contact Downtown and North Las Vegas View reporter Amanda Llewellyn at allewellyn@viewnews.com or 380-4535.

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