

# CEREBRAL ANEURYSMS

## SERIOUS BUT TREATABLE

JULY 2003

An aneurysm is the result of a weak spot in the blood vessel wall similar to an egg seen in a tire. As time passes, this weak spot will balloon out, the wall of the blood vessel becoming thinner and thinner. Eventually this wall will break, rupture, allowing blood to leak out of the blood vessel (hemorrhage) into or around the brain. Hemorrhage from a cerebral aneurysm occurs in 4 of 100,000 people per year. "There is a 25% chance that the person will die if the aneurysm ruptures," explained neurosurgeon Frank Culicchia, M.D. of Culicchia Neurological Clinic. "Of those that arrive to the hospital and additional 30% will suffer permanent disability or death. Unfortunately, the greater majority of aneurysms do not cause symptoms until they rupture. Usually, the patient will complain of the worst headache of their life and most often fall unconscious," says Culicchia.

Aneurysms may be repaired surgically or non-surgically, depending on the size and location of the aneurysm. Dr. Robert Dawson of Culicchia Neurological Clinic is one of the region's few interventional neuroradiologists trained to repair aneurysms via a microcatheter which is placed into the sack of the aneurysm. Through this catheter, a coil is passed into the inside of the aneurysm and packed until no blood flow is allowed into the aneurysm. Dr. Frank Culicchia repairs those aneurysms requiring surgical intervention by dissecting the aneurysm from the surrounding structures of the brain. Patients

## STROKE STUDY TO BEGIN SOON

Culicchia Neurological Clinic will soon begin studying a new drug that researchers hope will reverse the effects of stroke in patients. "We are about to start a study using a drug called SAINTS II," said Dr. Walter Truax, neurologist and researcher at Culicchia Neurological Clinic. "It's given intravenously in patients with acute stroke. Hopefully it will be a neuroprotectant and will decrease the size of the stroke. We will not know the results for probably two years."

According to Dr. Truax, no other similar drug has been found to do so, though many have been researched. "We are still looking for a drug to decrease stroke size in patients who have had a stroke," said Dr. Truax.

## DID YOU KNOW?

High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke. According to neurologist Dr. Michael Puente of Culicchia Neurological Clinic, lowering the systolic pressure (the top number) by 10 points and the diastolic pressure (the bottom number) by 6 points reduces your chance of stroke by 40%.

### NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY

Carl F. Culicchia, M.D.

### NEUROSURGERY/ COMPLEX SPINE

John C. Steck, M.D.

### NEURO-ONCOLOGY

Syed Nasir, M.D.

### NEUROSURGERY/ NEUROVASCULAR SURGERY

Frank Culicchia, M.D.

### INTERVENTIONAL NEURORADIOLOGY

Robert C. Dawson, III, M.D.

### PHYSICAL MEDICINE/ PAIN MANAGEMENT

Maria Carmen

E. Espiritu, M.D., P.T.

Meda K. Colvin, M.D.

### NEUROSURGERY/ GAMMA KNIFE

Robert L. Applebaum, M.D.

### NEUROLOGY

Steven T. Atkins, M.D.

R. Charles Fiore Jr., M.D.

John L. Freiberg, Jr., M.D.

William A. Martin, M.D.

Michael A. Puente, M.D.

Walter D. Truax, M.D.