

Alcor News Bulletin

Number 7: February 6th 2003

Service Update

from Charles Platt, Director of Suspension Services

Paramedics at Alcor

On January 29th, nationally certified paramedic Larry Johnson officially started work as a fulltime employee at Alcor. We chose Larry from among more than 20 applicants with medical backgrounds. In addition to taking a leadership role in future standby-transport operations, Larry will be applying many years of emergency-medical experience to help us upgrade our procedures and equipment. This is a major step forward for Alcor.

On January 30th Larry and I were joined at Alcor by a registered nurse who wants to participate in cryonics standbys. The three of us received instruction from Hugh Hixon regarding operation of the ATP, the portable blood washout equipment which Hugh codesigned. Our visiting nurse showed the depth of her interest in cryonics when she spontaneously suggested the idea of fluorocarbon ventilation of the lungs as a way to cool a patient rapidly. She was quite surprised when I told her that Critical Care Research, in Southern California, has been developing this idea for several years as a tool in resuscitation medicine.

Today, February 6th, Larry shared his newly acquired knowledge of the ATP with four paramedics from Paramedics Unlimited, the local "temp agency" with which Alcor has negotiated a contract for standby help. The paramedics learned the equipment more quickly and more thoroughly than I expected. Tomorrow, eight more from the same agency will come here to receive their training. Next week, California standby team member Joe Tennant will visit us to make sure we are fully informed on every aspect of the ATP.

Training Classes Overfilled

When I announced in the previous Alcor News that we would be offering standby/transport training classes beginning on March 1st, I expected 10 to 15 applications. In fact more than 20 potential students have asked to attend, and we have overfilled the capacity at David Pizer's Creekside Lodge. I apologize to the people we cannot accommodate in March. Clearly we will need to run another set of classes in the fall.

Revitalizing Alcor UK

Just a couple of years ago the fate of Alcor UK seemed uncertain, as our overseas members complained that Alcor's strict requirements for life insurance were too difficult to

satisfy. The situation now is very different, as the short-lived insurance requirements have been withdrawn. When I visited England recently I discovered new determination among Alcor UK members to enhance their capability.

In the near future I hope that Alcor UK will become a clearly defined entity linked contractually with Alcor in the United States. The next step will be to try to bring vitrification to British Alcor members. I believe Alcor's British activists can implement the procedure if we help to provide them with the necessary equipment, but transport of a vitrified patient remains a major challenge, since it should be done at a temperature well below dry-ice. Still, I see a lot of potential in the UK for an active, effective organization.

Before I returned to the United States I visited former Alcor member Alan Sinclair, who has started Cryonics Europe, an umbrella organization that accepts members from Alcor and The Cryonics Institute and is supported by equipment which Alan largely designed and built himself. Alan has fitted out a trailer as a mobile perfusion unit, has built a laboratory/workshop in his back yard, and showed me a dry-ice cooldown box in his garage. His resourcefulness demonstrates that cryonics is still a field where one person can make a very substantial difference.

A New Kind of Thumper

Back at Alcor I was pleased to find we had received our first LUCAS cardiopulmonary support device manufactured by the Swedish company Jolife (check their website at www.jolife.com). For more than a decade Alcor has depended on the Thumper, a gas-driven unit which applies CPR via a piston located over the patient's sternum. Manufactured by Michigan Instruments, the Thumper is reliable but extremely heavy. When it is used in conjunction with a portable ice bath, the ice bath has to be very rigid and strong while allowing side access for the Thumper--an almost impossible set of requirements for an accessory that must be collapsible and sufficiently light for transportation as airline baggage.

The LUCAS is half the weight of the Thumper, smaller, and simpler to operate. I'm indebted to Mathew Sullivan for discovering this device online. Its only drawback is that it cannot be used on obese patients. We may make our own modifications to rectify this problem.

Truck Conversion and Facility Expansion

Today I visited Tim Carney, our truck conversion expert, and found that he has made progress toward creating our new ambulance. We have resolved fundamental questions such as how the truck's work area should be air conditioned, and we have established our total power requirement (about 10,000 watts) which will be satisfied by a generator mounted under the floor at the side of the chassis.

Driving back from visiting Mr. Carney, I noticed dozens of

trucks similar to ours parked outside buildings in the commercial area where Alcor is located. I had hoped that our truck could be parked outside like everyone else's, but at a board meeting on February 2nd the Alcor directors made a general informal recommendation requesting that the Alcor truck should be parked inside the building. While I share the desire to maximize safety, parking the vehicle inside will complicate our facility expansion plans to some extent, because commercial buildings are not designed to accommodate trucks of this type, and a rear access door to the building will have to be enlarged. Still, this is only one challenge in the facility expansion plan which Alcor director Steve Van Sickle and former Alcor president Steve Bridge developed with me during the past month. The plan calls for relocating our growing number of Dewars in an additional unit of the building, moving the operating room to a larger area which will allow us to have two operating tables, more than doubling our lab space, and adding an intermediate floor in some areas. Alcor's staff and directors have approved the plan in its basic form. Now we just need money and a supervisor to implement it.

Looking ahead

Later this month I will visit Southern California with Larry Johnson. Larry will participate in surgical training at Critical Care Research, and two days later he will meet the Southern California standby team, our most active and highly trained regional group of volunteers.

March 7th will be the last day of the six months which I originally pledged to Alcor when I accepted the title of Director of Suspension Services. I hope to continue my involvement with Alcor while reducing the extent to which I am involved in standby/transport work, for which I am not ideally qualified. Generally I am pleased with the progress that has been made in upgrading our capabilities, although the quick succession of patients last year did have an impact on our readiness. Today I saw Mathew Sullivan cleaning countless items from standby kits that were used in last December's case and had been stored at a mortuary since then. It's easy to forget that every standby/transport operation requires meticulously assembled kits which have to be meticulously refurbished before they can return to service.

Bearing in mind the increasing caseload which we can expect as our members grow older, our need for extra help is obvious, and I have received authorization to advertise for a laboratory assistant. Naturally we prefer to hire someone with a genuine interest in cryonics. Anyone who is willing to relocate in the Phoenix area, has some knowledge of biology or chemistry, and has some basic experience doing lab work should contact Alcor immediately.

Extropians in Phoenix

by Dr. Jerry Lemler, President and CEO

On the evening of Wednesday, February 5, I was invited to speak to the Phoenix chapter of the Extropian Society in the Red Room of the Jetz Americana Restaurant in Scottsdale. My presentation drew a most interesting crowd of 15 or so individuals, and was (I believe) quite well received. No more than ten minutes into my formal presentation, we were joined by Chris Heward (Research Director at Kronos), and his friend (and ours) Dr. Michael West. From that point on, Dr. West joined me in rebutting the few skeptics in attendance regarding the likelihood of cryonics being successful, and other matters pertaining to why one should sign up with Alcor. It was great to see Mike again, and I look forward to further interactions with members of this outstanding organization.

Alcor News is written primarily by Charles Platt.
Contents are copyright 2003 by Alcor
Foundation but permission is granted to reprint any whole
news item, so long as Alcor is credited as the source and
the reprint includes our URL at <http://www.alcornews.org>.