

Medical advances help families

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

With all the debate over health care reform, focus has been placed squarely on the quality of medical treatment families receive. Fortunately, the world has recently seen a series of innovations that could help people much faster than expected.

As the hospital and laboratory converge, families could soon benefit from an array of important advancements.

One of the fastest-developing areas in the medical field has been in the area of genetics. Whether it be mapping the human genome or the debate over stem cells, scientists have found a variety of technologies that could potentially help cure, and in some cases avoid entirely, an array of diseases.

“If stem cells could be made to grow into tissues and organs, waiting lists for transplant recipients would become things of the past. That is still in the future, but already stem cell therapy to heal diseased organs is being tested in human trials and the prospects look bright,” says Kenneth C. Aldrich, Chairman and CEO of International Stem Cell Corporation.

Diseases currently targeted by such cutting edge technology and research include diabetes, liver disease and macular degeneration.

Aside from scientific research, new technologies also could provide imminent help to a family’s overall health. With roughly 14 million Americans living with asthma, the health industry has seen a variety of new high-tech treatments, including a unique sensor developed at the University of Pittsburgh that can track oncoming asthma attacks. Considering these attacks account for roughly a quarter of emergency-room visits in the United States, these technologies could be a health care lifesaver.

Meanwhile, for the 15 million American adults suffering from kidney disease, long trips to the hospital for lengthy dialysis sessions cut into moments that could be spent with family. But thanks to a revolutionary portable dialysis machine that cleans blood using a battery, that may no longer be a problem.

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And in a surprising shift that could forever alter the health of adults and children, a useful piece of health-related equipment may already be sitting in your living room.

While video game companies probably never intended for video game consoles to contribute to family health, it has organically gone in that direction. Children, adults and the elderly are finding home workout alternatives that are fun and can track their progress. Who would have thought a child playing video games with grandpa could contribute to a family's long-term health?

With health care becoming an increasingly important aspect of family life, these and other advancements could help the average family in a number of ways. Whether through genetics, nanotechnology or video games, the solution might be closer than you thought.