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DURHAM, N.C.

Child treated for rare immune deficiency

By David Williamson

Each time Ricky tries to pull the masks from the faces of the doctors and nurses who care for him here, he risks contracting an infection that could end his life.

But the child, who suffers from severe combined immunodeficiency disease (SCID), doesn't know any better. He is

only 11 months old, and exploring comes naturally to him.

Ricky lives in isolation on Rankin Ward, a clinical research unit supported by the National Institutes of Health. A plexiglass shield resembling a large telephone booth surrounds his crib, and a continuing wave of filtered air pushes disease agents downstream from him.

He is a victim of the same hereditary condition that kept a Texas boy named David in a germ-free bubble for his first six years. David recently received national attention when NASA designed a miniature "space suit" that gives him a chance to move out of his bubble for up to four hours at a time.

Both children were born with defective

immune systems, the body's mechanism for fighting the countless infectious organisms that humans ingest, one way or another, every day. Neither has compatible donors of bone marrow that could cure their illness.

While doctors in Houston say they haven't treated David and don't plan to until a proven therapy becomes available, Ricky is currently undergoing what Duke physicians believe to be the most promising treatment.

Injections stimulate white blood cell growth

Dr. Rebecca Buckley, a professor of pediatrics, said she and Dr. Donald Perlman have been injecting fetal liver cells into the child's abdomen in an attempt to stimulate the growth of white blood cells that create antibodies against disease.

Ricky's brother Jamie, who was also born with SCID, was treated similarly here in 1974, Buckley said. Now four years old, he lives at home in Ohio, has almost normal immunities and is the world's longest surviving fetal liver transplant recipient.

Jamie's health has not been perfect, the pediatrician said, but it has been good considering that the maximum life

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A SONG IN HIS HEART — Eleven-month-old Ricky lives in isolation on the Clinical Research Unit, but he's surrounded by carefully dressed friends. At left, he seems to be chatting with Drs. Donald Perlman (left) and Rebecca Buckley, who have been giving him injections of fetal liver cells in an effort to build up his immune system. Below, head nurse Kathy Callahan, who is trying to feed Ricky his breakfast, competes with the photographer for the child's attention. (Photos by Jim Wallace)

Students, teachers pleased with experimental curriculum

By John Becton

Everyone associated with the Biomedical Interdisciplinary Curriculum Project (BICP) knows that the real value of the program can't be measured for four or five more years, but after one semester, some positive indicators are beginning to appear.

The BICP was begun this fall in four North Carolina high schools as an experiment in laying an educational foundation specifically designed for students whose interests and aptitudes are leading them toward health professions. (See *Intercom*, 9/9/77.)

Positive reactions

Students and teachers are enthusiastic about the project.

"I think it's fantastic!" was the assessment of Tommy Alexander, a junior at Rockingham's Richmond Senior High.

"It's challenged some people who haven't been challenged before," according to Glenn Hood, one of the team of BICP teachers at Harnett Central High in Angier.

"The students are highly motivated," Richmond High Principal Herman Williams added, "because for one thing, their interest came first. They asked for this. We had 170 who expressed interest and had to narrow them down to 26."

Introduction to health field

The two-year curriculum is not a

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