

## Dr. Wells Delivers Father's Gift to Son

# First Parathyroid Transplants Succeed Here

By William Erwin

Surgeons here have successfully transplanted two parathyroid glands from a father to his 19-year-old son in what is believed to be the first transfer ever of parathyroids from one living patient to another.

Dr. Samuel A. Wells Jr., an associate professor of surgery, said he and his colleagues transplanted the glands 15 months ago and have been following the patients closely since then.

Both have recovered with no ill effects, and the boy's immune system has not rejected his new glands, Wells said. The father and son live in Winston-Salem.

The patient, Donald McKnight, originally came to Duke as a patient of

Dr. J. Caulie Gunnells in the Division of Nephrology, and he subsequently received a kidney transplant, also from his father, John McKnight.

When the question of a parathyroid malfunction arose, Gunnells referred the patient to Wells.

"We would not expect the parathyroid transplant to be rejected," Wells said, "since the patient was already taking medicines to prevent the rejection of his kidney transplant."

The doctor described the parathyroid operation last Friday at a meeting of the Society of University Surgeons in Tucson, Ariz.

"Parathyroid glands are yellowish-brown structures about the size of a pea," Wells explained in an

interview. "Normally a person has four of them in his neck."

The glands are important, he said, because they secrete a hormone that keeps the body's calcium level balanced.

"If the glands become enlarged and too much hormone is produced, the patient might develop kidney stones or bone disease," he said. "Occasionally, as a complication of advanced kidney disease, all four of the parathyroid glands become overactive and have to be removed."

Such was the case with the 19-year-old.

"He had far advanced kidney diseases and had all of his parathyroid glands removed," Wells said.

To keep the boy alive, doctors gave him large doses of medicine designed to replace the missing parathyroid hormone. But the medicine gave him abdominal cramps and diarrhea.

So the Duke doctors decided to transplant two of the father's four glands into his ailing son, Wells said.

"On November 30, 1973, the father and son were placed in adjoining operating suites at Duke," he said. "Two of the father's glands were removed from his neck. The glands were sliced into 13 very small pieces and these were then implanted into the muscle of the son's forearm."

The surgeons chose the forearm, Wells said, because the gland pieces could be removed under local anesthesia if they ever became overactive again.

"Following the transplantation, the young boy's blood calcium returned to normal and he again felt well," the doctor said. "He has been followed now for over a year and has taken no replacement medication for nine months."

"As far as we know, we're the first to do this (operation)," Wells said.

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# Intercom

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DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

## Supplies Worth \$1,100 Found in Hospital Trash

Gold has been discovered in the trash at Duke Hospital.

It's not the shiny yellow stuff that everyone would like to have stashed away in a safety deposit box for hard times. Rather, it's another form of gold—very precious and sometimes almost as costly.

In case you haven't guessed, we're talking about hospital supplies.

One day in January, Frank Braden, assistant administrator for patient services, and four undergraduates hired for the occasion, searched all hospital trash that was delivered to the compactor near the back of the old hyperbaric chamber.

Their purpose was to discover the amount of hospital supplies that were being wasted and the dollar value of those supplies.

To their surprise and dismay, the total value of items recovered was approximately \$1,100, ranging from \$750 worth of surgical sutures to unused bundles of paper towels.

The trash was checked starting with the first trash run at 8 a.m. and ending with the last run at 10:45 p.m. All trash bags were labeled so that they could be identified by work areas.

The largest percentage of valuable items were recovered from the trash early in the morning before 9:30 a.m., indicating that these supplies had been discarded during the night shift. The least amount of valuable items was found in the afternoon and early evening.

Included on the list of unused, reusable or repairable supplies were forceps, blood bags, nebulizers, blood pressure cuffs, trash bags, towels, dietary trays and silverware, syringes, stethoscopes, inter-office mail envelopes, wash cloths, catheters, polar packs, surgical tape, pepper dispensers, baby powder, floor wax, bed liners, surgical gloves and clothing, ointment and urinary drainage sets.

In addition, the searchers found dozens of used needles which were discarded into the trash despite the fact

that these needles pose a serious health hazard to environmental service workers and that special disposal containers for needles have been placed on all wards and in laboratories.

Simple arithmetic shows that if an equal amount and value of hospital supplies were discarded each day of the year, in five years the loss would amount to more than \$2 million. In a year's time, the \$400,000 represented by the waste supplies could reduce patient costs, support more needed research or pay the salaries of an additional 77 employees, all earning wages at a rate of \$2.50 per hour.

Braden said that he and the students who helped him with the original search are planning at least one more inspection of trash bags in upcoming

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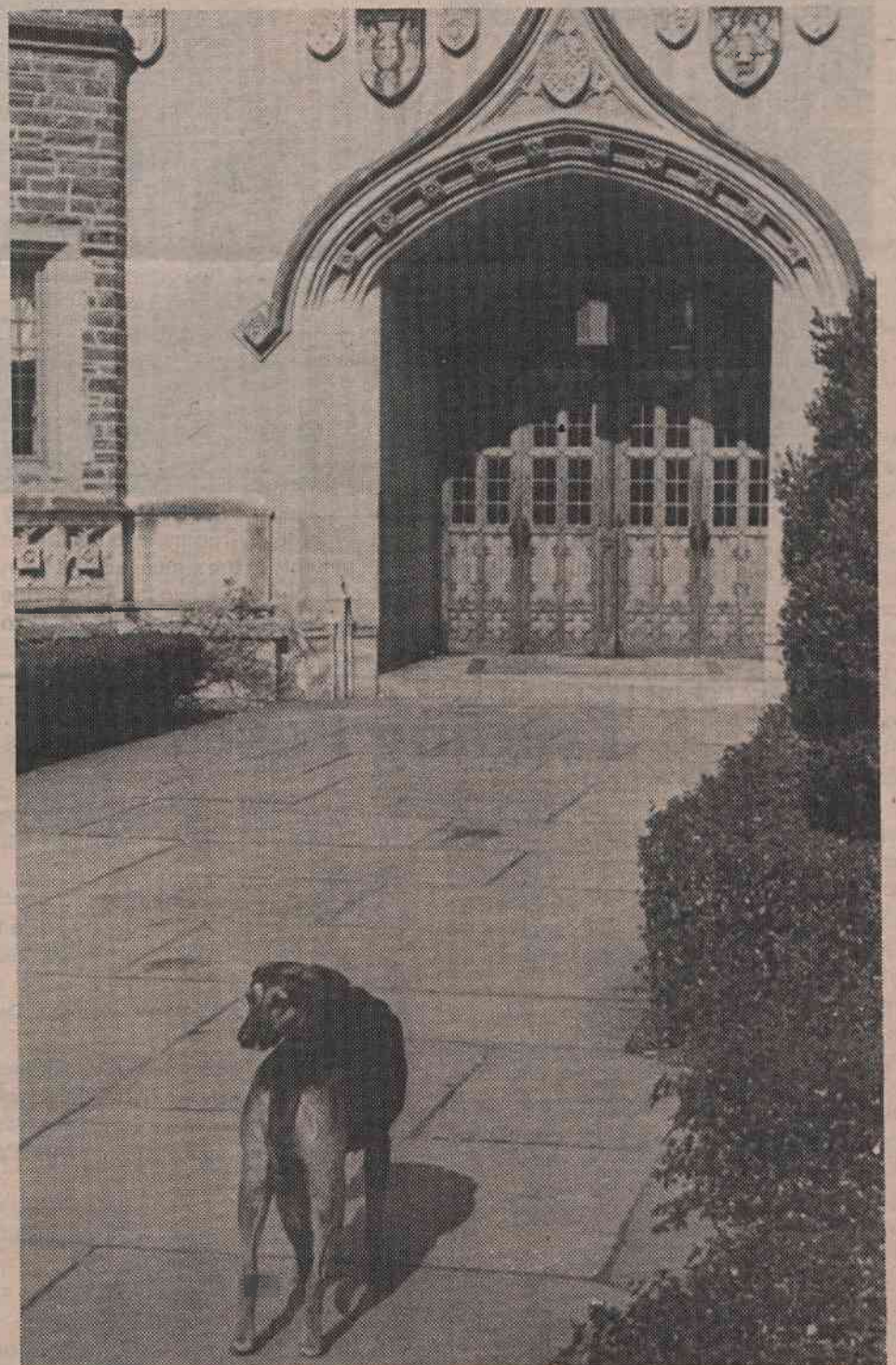
## Panel Will Discuss Hospital Child Care

The Triangle Affiliate of the Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals will meet Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in the hospital amphitheatre.

The meeting will feature a panel discussion on the effects of hospitalization on children during early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence entitled, "Dialog: Children's Responses to Hospitalization."

Panel members will include Dr. Brian Stabler, clinical child psychologist at the University of North Carolina, who will speak on early childhood and pre-school aged children; Dr. Cathy Taylor, child psychologist also from UNC, who will discuss middle childhood and school aged children; and, Dr. David Jones, Duke child psychologist, who will speak on adolescence.

Following the discussion, coffee and doughnuts will be served in the pediatric playroom. All TAACCH members, their guests and friends, are invited to attend.



**WAITING FOR HER MASTER** — There's an old saying that the most successful publication of the century might be one about Abraham Lincoln's doctor's dog, since books about dogs, doctors and the 16th president of the United States always seem to sell a lot of copies. INTERCOM decided to test the proposal last Wednesday, Lincoln's birthday, by making a photograph that had something to do with all three. Thus, pictured above is "O.D.", a former research animal who lived to bark about it and become a growing fixture at the School of Medicine. Her master, third year medical student and future family practitioner Greg Friedman, was busy at the hospital that day, and faithful O.D. planted herself outside the Davison Building to wait for him as she does all day, every day. (Photo by David Williamson)