HEALTH CARE

OHSU doc discusses the latest, and some experimental, MS treatments

Dr. Dennis Bourdette, executive director of the Multiple Sclerosis Center and chair of the department of Neurology at OHSU, says OHSU places an emphasis on safety when it comes to MS treatment.

By Rivkela Brodsky
Contributing Reporter

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At Oregon Health & Science University, the emphasis is on safety when it comes to

So says Dr. Dennis Bourdette, executive director of the Multiple Sclerosis Center and chair of the department of Neurology. Since founding the center in 1983, he has treated over 1,000 patients dealing with MS. About 7,000 people in Oregon have the disease.

He and other OHSU doctors attended a talk by Dr. Richard Burt, chief of the division of immunotherapy at Northwestern University's medical school, in November about the use of hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) for MS.

In HSCT treatment, which is known as a cancer therapy for lymphomas, a patient's stem cells are collected and cryopreserved. The patient is then given drugs to achieve extreme immune suppression. Then the patient receives their own previously preserved stem cells.

I asked Bourdette about MS research at OSHU and his thoughts on HSCT.

Tell me about some of the current research being done at OHSU for the treatment of MS.

A group of investigators at OHSU invented a therapy called RTL1000. It's a protein that controls a part of the immune system that's involved with MS. We are working right now on a drug that we believe is going to stimulate the remyelination, or repair of people with MS. All the current FDA-approved therapies for MS are designed to control the inflammation that's causing the disease, but they don't do anything about promoting repair of the damaged brain and spinal cord. Another group of investigators is working on developing a drug which we believe will be useful for treating progressive MS that enhances energy production in the brain.