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Process shows signs of treating lupus

■ Treatment eliminates – at least temporarily – crippling disease previously considered incurable.

CHICAGO (AP) – A radical process that destroys and then revives a patient's immune system has shown early success in treating a woman with lupus, a crippling disease considered incurable, doctors said Friday.

Dr. Richard Burt at Northwestern Memorial Hospital said Heather Markel, 24, has no signs of lupus in her system two months after undergoing the treatment.

"This is much more than you would expect from a normal remission," he said. But he ac-

knowledged what other experts emphasized – that it's too early to tell whether the disease will return.

"We're just going to have to continue to follow her," Burt said. "But at least we have a short-term remission with no evidence of disease."

He added that because destroying the immune system exposes patients to other dangers, for now only the most severely afflicted lupus patients should receive the treatment – about one percent of people stricken with the disease.

Lupus makes a victim's immune system turn against its own body. The disease can be controlled with steroids and other drugs, but there is no cure.



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Dr. Richard Burt, center, head of the allogeneic bone marrow transplantation program, hugs Phyllis Young, left, as he says goodbye to Young and her daughter, Heather Markel, on Friday at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.