

SATURDAY
JUN 7 1997BURRELLE'S297
...WC.VC
.....U

'Incurable' lupus may respond to process

9692A FRONT PAGE
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Six months ago, Heather Markel was dangerously ill with lupus, an incurable disease that had attacked her lungs and kidneys and forced her to rely on steroids for strength.

Now doctors who destroyed Markel's immune system and then revived it say lupus may be vulnerable to a procedure called a stem cell transplant.

Markel, a 24-year-old medical student from Millersburg, Ohio, shows no signs of lupus in her system two months after the treatment, said Dr. Richard Burt at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. She is the first patient to undergo the procedure.

Markel contracted lupus when she was 11. The disease attacked her blood and central nervous system, leaving her with failing kidneys and soaring blood pressure when she came to Northwestern in January. Thirteen years of treatment with steroids and chemotherapy had apparently failed.

But since the transplant in April, Markel's kidneys have returned to normal, her strength is back and she has lowered the amount of steroids she is taking.

Burt and others cautioned that it is still early for a definitive answer since the disease is characterized by active and



Dr. Richard Burt hugs Phyllis Young as he says goodbye to Young and her daughter, Heather Markel, after a news conference Friday at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Associated Press

inactive periods.

The new process takes stem cells, which grow into bone marrow cells, a foundation of

the immune system, from a patient's blood and purifies them. Intense chemotherapy destroys the patient's immune

system and then the purified cells are returned to blossom and recreate the immune system.