

## Shooting past bad blood

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Life Writer

Gus Zalagenas' health was so compromised that walking mere metres completely drained him, so he was willing to try anything to help his ailing heart and arteries.

When a neighbour suggested a blood-cleaning process called chelation, he felt he had nothing to lose and underwent 40 treatments at his own expense. Six years later, the 84-year-old can carry his golf clubs and play 18 holes.

Now a \$30-million North American study, sponsored by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, is investigating the technique of artery binding and cleansing that Zalagenas says saved his life. Practitioners in 21 centres across Canada, including four in Toronto, have been recruited to examine the technique's effect on clogged arteries and weak hearts.

I had nowhere to go and I knew I was very bad, says the pensioner, who spent \$130 for each session with Dr. Fred Hui, a Toronto doctor who practices integrative and naturopathic medicine. Zalagenas continues to get one treatment a month for maintenance.

Hui, certified by the American Board of Chelation Therapy, is responsible for three centres in the study two in Toronto and one in Barrie.

Scientific questions need to be answered, Hui says, but he believes chelation therapy could be used to clear arteries instead of many bypass surgeries costing \$4,000 to \$5,000 per case, rather than the tens of thousands surgery costs. Hui, who has been administering chelation therapy for 10 years with great success, is seeking participants who have suffered a heart attack and who are 50 or older.

Patients will receive 30 weekly intravenous treatments of either chelation or a placebo, then 10 more treatments from two-weeks to two-months apart. They will also receive either high-dose vitamins or placebo pills.

Chelation is used in conventional medicine for treating heavy metal poisoning. It involves injecting EDTA (ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid), which binds metals, into the blood and allowing them to be excreted in urine. Some physicians and alternative medicine practitioners use it for clogged arteries, as EDTA also binds fatty deposits.

But there are no adequate scientific studies to support chelation for coronary artery disease and the American Heart Association discounts chelation for that reason. Without a controlled, scientific study showing positive results, they recommend lifestyle modifications, medications and surgical procedures. And since none of the material used is patentable, there has been no pharmaceutical interest.

None of the traditional treatments worked for Zalagenas, who, following a heart attack in 1973, has undergone triple and quadruple bypass surgeries, and made every recommended lifestyle change, to no avail. He was forced to quit his job at age 54 as assistant executive chef at the Royal York Hotel.

I could only play about five holes (of golf) before I would have to quit, because I couldn't walk, he says.

His angina disappeared after 25 chelation treatments, Zalagenas says. Three months after the 40th session, he played his first full round of golf.

The trial, involving 120 centres and nearly 2,000 patients in the U.S. and Canada, is underway and expected to finish in 2010, or sooner if enough volunteers come forward.

Some of the participating centres are the Montreal Heart Institute, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore, New York University School of Medicine and the world-renowned Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami.

As for Zalagenas, he's happy to be fit and ready for the start of golf season.

I can tell you chelation helped me, he says. I couldn't say for anybody else, but for me, it saved my life.

For information on Hui's study, call 647-438-7025 or see [drhui.com](http://drhui.com). For a full list of study sites and program overview, see [nccam.nih.gov/chelation](http://nccam.nih.gov/chelation).

## About the Author

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