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IN BRIEF

Forced hibernation could allow for better treatments

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Consider it hibernation-on-demand.

Researchers plucked mice into almost a state of suspended animation and then revived them, with no apparent ill effects, in an experiment that is generating excitement because it might ultimately lead to new ways to treat critically sick people.

It works essentially like hypothermia in reducing the amount of oxygen needed to survive, scientists from Seattle's Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center report Thursday in the journal *Science*.

In hypothermia, extreme cold preserves brain cells from the certain death that would otherwise quickly follow oxygen deprivation. Following that logic, doctors now sometimes use ice to chill stroke victims in hopes of minimizing damage to their brains.

Chilling might help other illnesses, too, buying time for surgeons to stop a trauma victim's hemorrhaging, for example. But inducing

hypothermia is difficult and can take time that patients may not have, so scientists are hunting for ways to lower body temperature more effectively from the inside out.

The new experiment uses a small amount of hydrogen sulfide gas to force the body into a state of hibernation for six hours.

"We wonder whether we've stumbled on a way to access this quiescent state in a way that could be beneficial for medicine," said lead researcher Mark Roth, a cell biologist at Fred Hutchinson.

Within minutes of inhaling the gas, the mice appeared unconscious. Their body temperatures plummeted from 98 degrees down to 59, and respiration slowed to fewer than 10 breaths per minute from 120, Roth reported.

Overall, their metabolic rate dropped by 90 percent, meaning normal cellular activity slowed to almost a standstill, thus reducing the need for oxygen.

Fresh air revived the mice, and testing uncovered no differences in behavior or functional ability between the treated mice and untreated ones, the study concluded.

The research is "very intriguing," said Dr. David Sachs, a Harvard University transplant specialist, who said it might point to ways to help donated organs survive longer before transplant.

The next step is to see whether large animals can be pushed into this hibernating state, and if doing so while an animal is ill actually helps.

— The Associated Press

Catholics: Pope has power to speak on factious issues

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have a pope from the ... developing world," Orique said.

Barbara Miller, St. Paul Catholic Church's coordinator of ministry to seniors, said Ratzinger is a learned man who is likely to follow in the path of Pope John Paul II.

"He was chosen by the Holy Spirit; he's well trained and ready to go," Miller said.

Archdiocese of Portland spokesman Bud Bunce echoed these sentiments.

"There's also been a lot of excitement of where it might lead the church," he said. "Most of us believe he'll continue to lead us in the same direction as John Paul II."

Prentice said there might be some similarities between the new pope and the old one considering their close relationship and styles, but differences in areas of focus are likely to emerge as Pope Benedict assumes leadership.

"I think there'll be a lot of continuity," he said. "Individual emphasis will shift in some way."

The new pontiff served for many years as the head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Questions have arisen about his past stance on issues such as his steadfast opposition to abortion, homosexuality and women as priests.

University graduate Kayla Emmons, a Catholic who is for abortion rights, said if Ratzinger is known as a hard-liner, he might not be the right choice.

"I don't think (the church) should be in the business of telling people whether they should have an abortion or be gay," said Emmons, who is also a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Alliance volunteer. Emmons said the church is "a place to worship Christ" and should consider being more open to such

issues as allowing women into the priesthood.

But Ratzinger was simply doing his job, Bunce said.

"What he's been doing is defending the teachings of the Catholic Church," Bunce said, adding that there are certain teachings that do not change.

Orique said he doesn't expect the new pope to make any drastic changes.

"I think he needs to be given a little time to prove himself," Orique said. "I think he might surprise us."

Some say that as the new leader of the Catholic church, Pope Benedict has the potential to create dialogue on divisive issues.

"I think he is conservative, but I think we need to look carefully at that — what are the best needs of the church?" said Gordon, adding that Ratzinger will give people direction. "People want to know clearly what is right and what is wrong."

His former role as chief interpreter and enforcer of doctrine may have contributed to his image as a conservative, Prentice said, and this image may change as he takes on his new duties.

"I think that part of it is the nature of the office that he held before," Prentice said. As pontiff, Pope Benedict will have a more "pastoral role," Prentice added.

Miller said the new pope will "stand by his faith's convictions."

"That's how he will reach out to the children, to the youth," she said. "He will be a good, strong leader."

"I think it's good to give this pope just a little bit of time to establish his own style," Bunce said. "I think we have to realize that he is not John Paul II."

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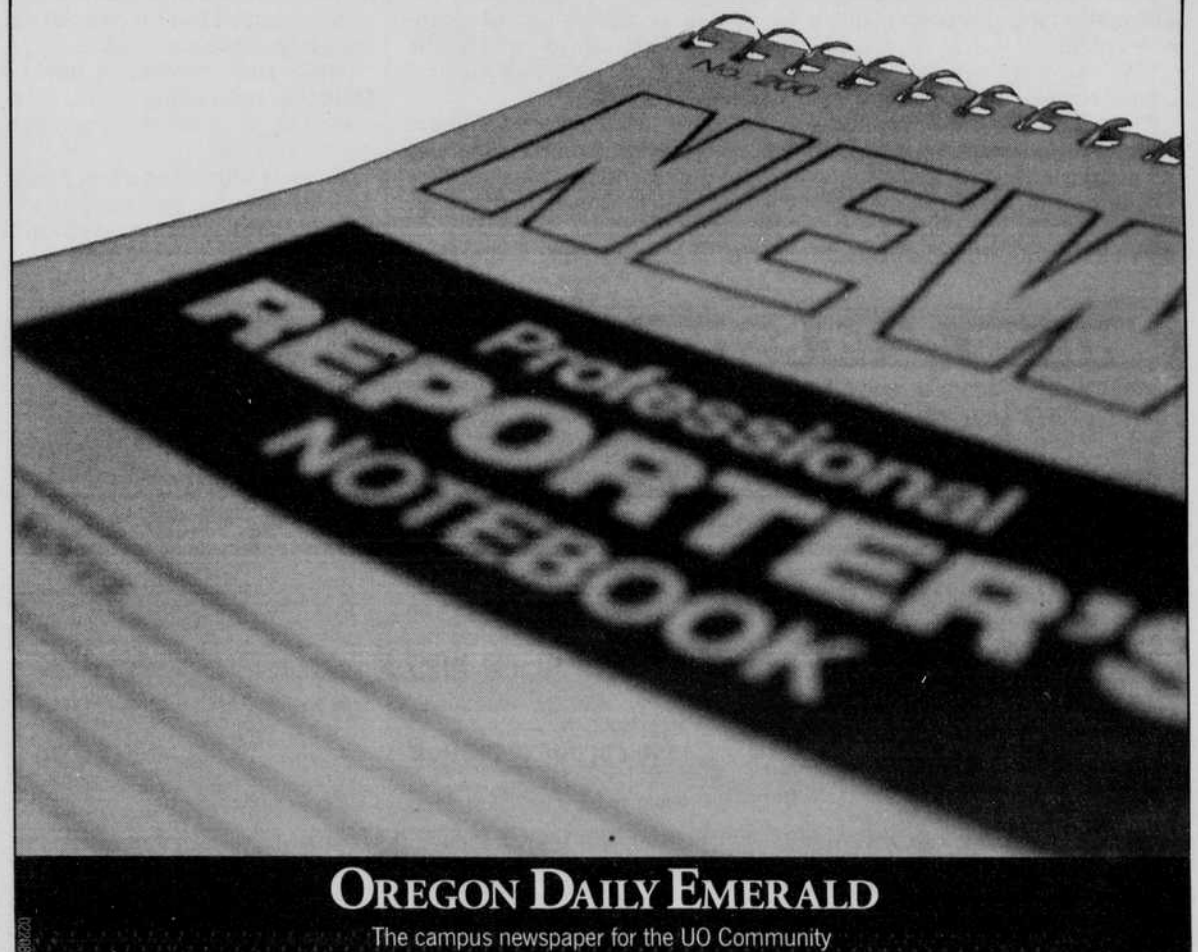
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