



Staff Photo By Janet Hammer

# UNL Dentist develops new bone-graft surgery

By Sue Bigham

Assembly-line surgery in South Africa has led to extensive research for one of Lincoln's new, oral-maxillofacial surgeons at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Dentistry.

Dr. James Edward Stakesby Lewis has been using his knowledge to the benefit of Nebraska residents since he moved to Lincoln in 1978.

Lewis, 46, has recently developed a new technique for using bone grafts to repair breaks to the bony structure that supports the eye.

Such a break occurs when the eye is hit, causing pressure in the eye itself. A fairly common example would be a tennis ball hitting the eye.

### Pressure breaks bone

When this happens, the pressure breaks the delicate bone below the eye. Without the needed support, a person will have double vision, an eye that cannot move and physical deformity.

"In past years, these cases were inoperable," Lewis said. "More recently, a plastic called Sialastic has been used to form a support over the broken bone."

"However, bone grafting is by far more desirable. Surgeons have avoided using bone grafts because they call for a second, rather major surgery to secure the bone."

### New method

Lewis has now developed a new method for getting this bone from the hip.

"What was once difficult is now a minor operation," Lewis reported. "People needing bone grafts for many reasons can be helped by this new technique."

On June 15, Lewis will present a paper on his new technique to the International Association of Oral Surgeons in Ireland.

### Technique ideas

Lewis said that his ideas for this technique started in South Africa. He received his formal education in Johannesburg and had a private practice there for

seven years.

### 100 outpatients

On a typical Monday morning, Lewis said, he would see 100 outpatients. Each week he would average 20-30 major, complicated operations, such as fractures of the facial skeleton, tumors, and deformities.

"The necessity was to operate economically," Lewis said. "A fast and accurate diagnosis followed by doing the minimal surgery without doing too little."

"With such quantity there wasn't time to do any repeated surgery. Nor was there time to do more surgery than was necessary."

### Difficult decision

The hardest decision he has ever made, he said, was to leave South Africa and move to the United States.

"It was real trauma to both myself and especially my wife and three children," Lewis said.

"We left South Africa because the political system was changing the country. Sons were being called into the military where brainwashing was a part of their training."

"Young people were being taught to hate and want to kill all blacks. Families that felt no racial prejudices were being torn apart by this brainwashing."

He said he could not support what the South African government was doing, and moving to the United States was his only alternative.

"Leaving behind personal property and assets were just part of our sacrifice," he said.

In 1967 Lewis moved to Durban where he had a private practice and taught at the University of Natal Medical School Hospital.

The hospital serves more than 5 million black people, Lewis said. It has 2,000 beds plus mattresses on the floor for overflow patients, he said. Outlying convalescent hospitals care for patients who have had surgery at the Natal Hospital, he said.

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### Libraries will close

All UNL libraries except the Law Library will be closed July 4 through 6 for the Independence Day holiday.

"We're advising students and faculty to check out the books they need ahead of time," said Dean Waddel, assistant dean and professor of libraries.

Waddel said certain reference materials may be kept over the holiday. For more information, call the library information desk at 472-2848.

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