

Fast-track experimental drugs for terminally ill

By **STEPHEN PRESCOTT**

Abigail Burroughs died of head and neck cancer at age 21. Kianna Karnes, mother of four and grandmother of one, succumbed to kidney cancer when she was 44. David Baxter was 16 when colorectal cancer took his life.

Each story is a tragedy in itself. But what makes these losses more profound is that at the very moment Abigail, Kianna and David battled for their lives, clinical trials were taking place involving experimental drugs that might have saved each of them.

Their families knew of these trials. In fact, they tried mightily to get their loved ones enrolled.

But drug companies are highly selective about whom they will enroll in clinical trials. The results of these trials will determine whether an experimental drug ultimately receives ap-



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approval for marketing from the Food and Drug Administration. Consequently, the admission process often serves as a lesson in the cruelest of ironies: The sickest patients are least likely to qualify. And that's what happened to Abigail, Kianna and David; each was turned down.

But their families did not give up so easily. When initial efforts failed, their

families worked with physicians to get their loved ones enrolled. They lobbied drug companies and enlisted the aid of senators and congressmen. They courted the press, arranging interviews from hospital wards and prompting extensive coverage in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*.

All to no avail.

For Kianna, calls eventually did come from Pfizer and Bayer, the two companies sponsoring clinical trials for experimental kidney cancer drugs. The companies offered to prepare what's known as an application for "compassionate use." If granted by FDA, the application would have allowed the drug companies to release experimental drugs to Kianna even though she was not enrolled in a clinical trial.

Unfortunately, there was no time to file the application; Kianna died that same evening.

Abigail and David's stories are much the same. Too little, too late.

The process of vetting experimental drugs always has pitted safety against speed. Move a drug through the process too quickly, and, voila, Vioxx! Move too slowly, and sick patients are denied experimental medications that could help them.

This standard risk-benefit calculus makes perfect sense when you're talking about drugs for erectile dysfunction and joint pain. That equation changes when you're talking about patients suffering from a terminal illness. In that case, how much additional risk are you introducing with an experimental treatment?

Yes, a new drug could prove ineffectual. It may be expensive. And it also could produce dangerous side effects.

Still, if a patient is going to die without that drug, shouldn't we give that person the option of rolling the

dice?

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., has co-sponsored legislation that would allow pharmaceutical companies to sell promising drugs to terminally ill patients who have exhausted existing treatments and are not eligible for clinical trials. The FDA belatedly joined the fray in December, proposing guidelines to make experimental drugs more widely available to the gravely ill.

The FDA's proposal is a positive step. But it shouldn't take dying patients and forward-thinking senators to kick the federal bureaucracy into action. We need to provide the terminally ill with fast and easy access to experimental drugs. Now.

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Tulsa World file

Historic Preservation districts in Tulsa include Brady Heights (above) and Maple Ridge (below).

Board of Adjustment ruling threatens to harm city's historic neighborhoods

By **SUSAN MCKEE**

Tulsans always have shown great pride in their history, architecture and residential neighborhoods. Commercial as well as residential styles display architectural diversity from Art Deco to Craftsman style bungalows, all built with oil money.

Concerned with the disappearance of a number of Tulsa landmarks, including entire neighborhoods, a Tulsa Landmarks Committee was formed in 1971 by the University of Tulsa during an urban design seminar. Out of this committee organizations took leading roles or were formed to research and preserve archaeologically, architecturally and historically significant sites and buildings in Tulsa.

Various state and local grants and other funds were gathered and used to sponsor the Tulsa Historic Preservation office that opened in August 1977. Taking on the task of surveying Tulsa's heritage, both architectural and historic and planning for its preservation, the Tulsa Historic Preservation Plan Report was prepared in September of 1980. The Tulsa Board of City Commissioners created the Neighborhood Conservation Commission in 1985 to conserve, stabilize and revitalize property within a neighborhoods conservation area.

After years of work by a number of concerned citizens throughout Tulsa the city commissioners passed a preservation ordinance on July 12, 1988, creating the Tulsa Preservation Commission and Historic Preservation Supplemental Zoning. It took nearly 11 years to create the system that we have and it has been in place for nearly 19 years.

Five different Tulsa neighborhoods, Gillette, Yorktown, North Maple Ridge, Swan Lake and Brady Heights, voluntarily went through an involved process of surveying, cataloging and establishing its historical significance to become a Historic Preservation district. Ninety percent of the property owners in each neighborhood had to vote in favor of having the Historic Preservation zoning applied to their property.



Susan McKee

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Guidelines were written in accordance with standards set by the Department of the Interior and the National Trust for each district. Tulsa's Planning Commission and City Council voted to approve the zoning overlay as well as the design guidelines. A process of obtaining a certificate of appropriateness was established by the Tulsa Preservation Commission, using these guidelines to regulate any work.

As a result, these HP districts, which once were endangered or unstable neighborhoods, soon became desirable and property values began to rise.

These five districts, along with White City, Tracy Park, Riverside and Owen Park, have gone through the process and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several more will follow in the near future.

After years of work to preserve our history and our neighborhoods, the integrity of these HP districts is still being compromised by commercial encroachment, tear-downs, inappropriate infill and even residents who are either ignorant of the design guidelines and regulations governing these districts or simply choose not to follow them.

On March 13 our historic preservation supplemental zoning was hit with a tragic blow. The Board of Adjustment voted to overrule the Tulsa Preservation Commission's decision to deny a certificate of appropriateness. The commission's decision was consistent with national requirements because the project did not meet all



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of the requirements detailed in the historic preservation district design guidelines.

It is not up to an individual or the Board of Adjustment, who has no training in this area, to determine what does or does not comply with the guidelines. It is the job of the Tulsa Preservation Commission which possesses the expertise and training to make these decisions.

The Board of Adjustment's duty was to determine if the decision to deny this certificate of appropriateness was in error not, if there was a hardship. It did not do that. Its decision has given a

green light to all who do not want to follow the rules and regulations in these neighborhoods.

By overruling the Tulsa Preservation Commission decision and allowing changes to be made that do not comply with national standards, another Tulsa property's eligibility to remain listed on the National Register of Historic Places will likely be revoked. This is no small matter. This ruling will jeopardize Tulsa's history and the fragile neighborhoods we have worked for years to protect.

Susan McKee is a Tulsa neighborhood leader.

Perception vs. reality — Oklahoma's failing grades

By **SUSAN HARRIS**

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently released a report, "Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness," compiled by the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, which gives Oklahoma marks that few parents would consider acceptable:

Academic achievement — F
 Academic achievement of low-income and minority students — D
 Return on investment — C
 Truth in advertising about student proficiency — F
 Rigor of standards — C
 Postsecondary and workforce readiness — D
 21st century teaching force — A
 Flexibility in management and policy — C
 Data quality — D

Oklahoma received an F in truth in advertising in student proficiency. And we're being called out for it.

Oklahoma's students score 7 percentage points below the national average in the percentage of eighth graders at or above the national test used by all states — the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Yet Oklahoma's own state test reports 80 percent of our eighth graders are scoring at satisfactory or even at advance performance levels.

Two different tests, two different standards and two vastly different perceptions.

Why the gap? Could it be that our state performance standards and tests are not as rigorous as national standards?

We all know the cliché — if it's not broke, don't fix it — but how do we know where the system breaks down? The state, despite legislation to implement a comprehensive data system, cannot match students' test records from year to year to benchmark academic growth. If we only measure our successes and not our failures, we will never meet or exceed national standards.

Oklahoma received a D for postsecondary and workforce readiness. Low-skill jobs (those requiring a high school diploma or less) are now only 10 percent of the job market and Oklahoma only graduates about 70 percent of the students.

We know students need at least two years of post-secondary education (either technical or academic) in order to be economically successful adults. We also know the current economy requires rigorous education or training in math, science and technical fields. We must raise kids to be life-long students where a high school diploma is the only choice and secondary school is not only expected, but required.

Oklahoma is considered number one in the nation in early childhood education — often acknowledged as the most important component of a child's education — but overall, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce places Oklahoma in the lowest group of 10 compared to other states and the District of Columbia.

Approximately 86 percent of Oklahoma 4-year-olds are in publicly-funded, early childhood educational programs. We received a grade of C for return on investment because we are not providing the same intensity of education to our elementary, middle and high schools.

Oklahoma students deserve the best education we can give them. In an economy that places the utmost value on knowledge and technical skills, having a strong body and a good work ethic are just not enough. Students today are tomorrow's workforce. The Tulsa Metro Chamber believes education is everyone's business and has made it a top priority during the next five years to influence changes in Tulsa and in Oklahoma.

We don't know what the plan is yet, but we know we need to stop managing perceptions. Call an apple an apple and an orange an orange and let's just get to work.

Susan Harris is vice president of community betterment with the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce.



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