

Sepsis?

Sepsis is not commonly talked about, but it is a serious illness that results from bacteria overwhelming the bloodstream. The infection can start anywhere in the body, but more commonly it begins in the kidneys, the brain (from meningitis), the gastrointestinal tract, the lungs (from bacterial pneumonia), or on the skin. At Oroville Hospital, Dr. Ardavan Afrasiabi, chairman of medicine and assistant director of the hospitalist program, says the increasing occurrence of sepsis may be due to the increased average human longevity and a growing resistance to antibiotics in the pathogens around us.

How serious is sepsis? That depends on the type. "Sepsis" is easily treatable, but "severe sepsis" kills 20 percent of those afflicted, and septic shock has a mortality rate of almost 50 percent - often within 12 to 24 hours of infection - not figures to blow off. Anyone who seems to be experiencing an inexplicably accelerated respiratory rate or heart rate, or fever - each a key symptom - should call the hospital. Elderly and diabetic patients are particularly at risk for developing serious cases of sepsis, in which victims can experience a rapid drop in blood pressure, followed by

shock and, finally, multi-organ failure.

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In other words, if the human body was fitted with an alarm system, all sirens would be screaming when sepsis barges through the door. Clearly, the earlier one calls a doctor or visits the hospital, the better. Once doctors have identified the exact pathogen responsible for a case of sepsis, antidotal treatment can begin.

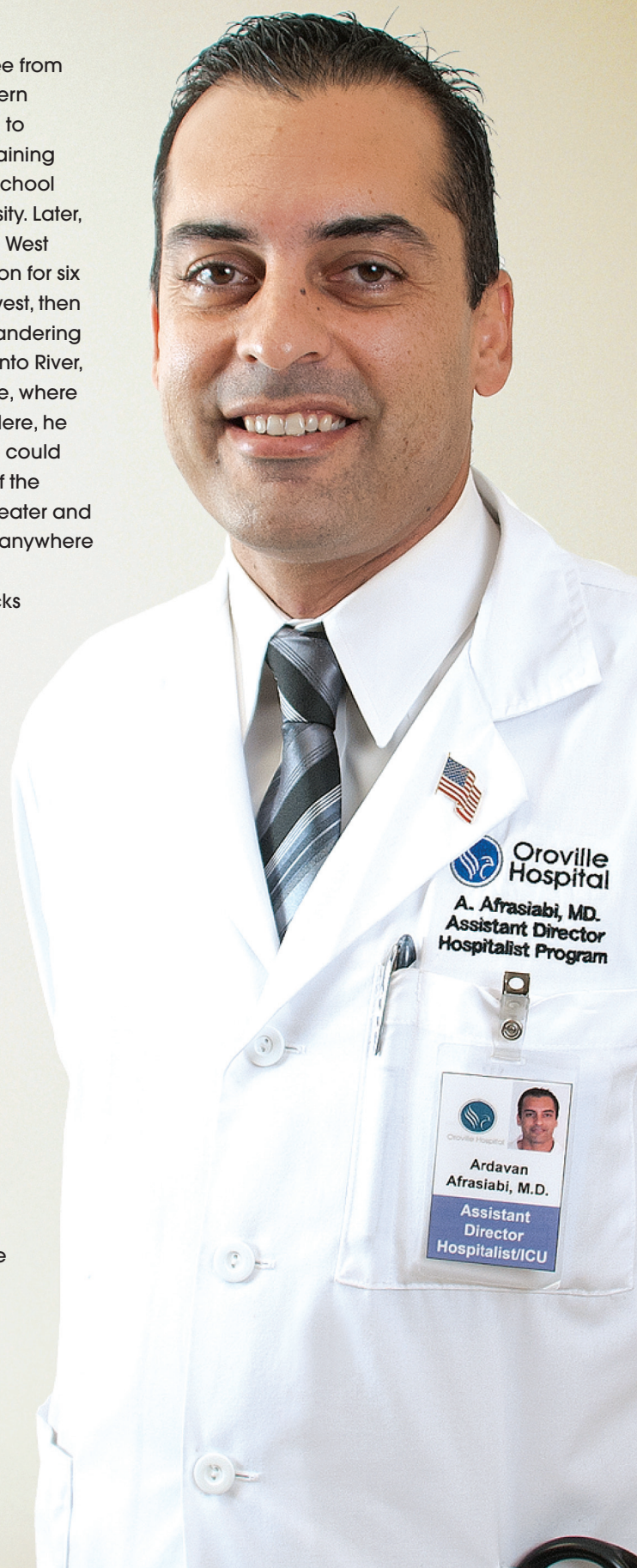
Fortunately, Oroville Hospital has received a five-star rating from HealthGrades for treatment of sepsis. Such accolades have arrived because of Oroville Hospital's protocols, education, and teamwork. "You have to have a staff that understands how to recognize the signs and initiate treatment, since it's vital to begin treatment right away," says Dr. Afrasiabi.

A native of Orange County, Dr. Afrasiabi received his

undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California. He went on to receive his medical training at Chicago Medical School and Columbia University. Later, he spent some time in West Africa and then Houston for six years. He gravitated west, then north through the meandering valley of the Sacramento River, and finally into Oroville, where he dropped anchor. Here, he felt that the impact he could have on the people of the community was far greater and more rewarding than anywhere else.

As the flu season kicks into full throttle and the risk of sepsis increases, Dr. Afrasiabi invites everyone to come in for essential shots and vaccinations to keep the immune systems strong.

"Staying up to date on your vaccines is very, very important to prevent pneumonia, which can prevent sepsis," he says. And while it's reassuring to know that sepsis treatment at Oroville Hospital is ready and reliable, prevention is by far the best medicine.



Oroville Hospital

