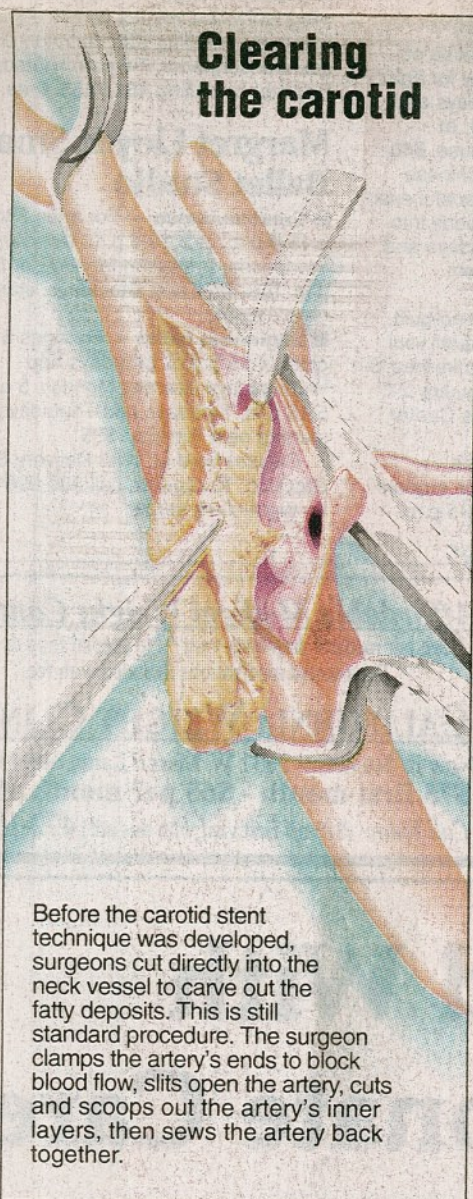


Record photos by CLIFFORD OTO

**IN THE OPERATING ROOM:** Dr. Hooman Madyoon does a carotid stent procedure on patient Henry Hebert at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton recently. The hospital hopes to become a host site for an upcoming nationwide trial on the procedure's effectiveness.



**Clearing the carotid**

# Medical Breakthrough

New technique helps reduce risk of stroke

**By Christopher Lewis**  
Record Staff Writer

Henry Hebert's arteries have been pumping blood for 71 years, so he figured the vessels were just "a little tired" when his legs turned wobbly several months ago.

A little tired? Try flat-out pooped. Tests showed that one of Hebert's carotid arteries, the vessels that carry blood to the brain, was clogged like the Berkeley tunnels during rush hour.

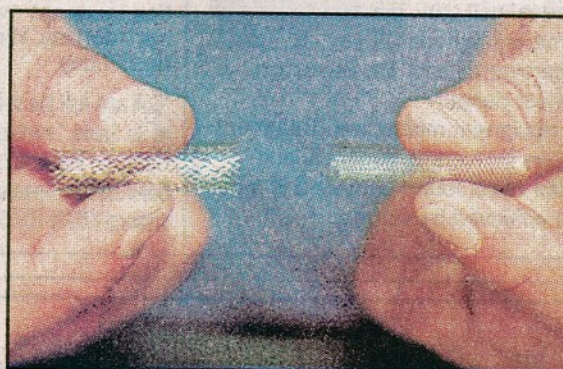
Ninety-five percent clogged. That made Hebert a sudden candidate for a "breakthrough" medical procedure to prevent strokes at St. Joseph's Medical Center, according to Dr. Hooman Madyoon, an intervention cardiologist.

The new technique restores normal blood flow by opening the narrowed carotid artery with a small mesh tube called a stent. It lessens patient recovery time and surgical complications, preliminary data shows, and the patient stays awake during the operation.

"It's only a matter of time before I have a wozy of a stroke. No ifs, ands or buts about it," Hebert said

before his operation.

After additional tests revealed he'd already had two minor strokes, Hebert became the fourth patient to receive a carotid stent at St. Joseph's on June 18. Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento



**EQUIPMENT:** Stents are used to clear blocked blood vessels in the neck to prevent stroke.

and Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto are also on the short list of Northern California hospitals performing the operation.

Ted Baburek of Manteca, 63, was the first carotid stent patient at St. Joseph's on June 1.

"I had it done on a Tuesday and got out the following day," he said. "The doctor said I could go play golf on Thursday. It's not painless, but it's not bad. The recovery is real quick."

Patients are normally hospitalized three to five days; sometimes stent patients can even go home the same day.

Doctors had warned Baburek: "If you don't have it done, there's a 100-percent chance you'll have a stroke."

Hebert was facing similar odds. "His (artery) is very, very tight," mused Madyoon the morning of Hebert's operation, holding his X-rays to the light. Madyoon was gunning for the white blob of "plaque" that was choking the vessel.

In the operating room, Madyoon ran a long tube from Hebert's groin up through the neck artery, opening it with a balloon catheter and then inserting the stent. The expanding stent pressed the plaque against the vessel wall, which is safer than trying to remove the fragments. The stent remains in the patient.

The carotid stent is a less invasive