

Nixon Had Phlebitis Before

By Victor Cohn

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President Nixon had a mild case of phlebitis, a sometimes dangerous inflammation of the veins in one leg before his recent Middle East trip.

White House deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren disclosed this last night, but said that Dr. Walter Tkach,

the President's physician, has pronounced him "in good health" and fit for his trip to Brussels and Moscow which starts today.

Phlebitis is typically accompanied by the formation of a thrombus or clot of coagulated blood. If the clot breaks away the condition can become more serious, and—if the clot reaches the lungs—fatal.

But the fact that the President made an active Middle East journey apparently with little trouble would seem to confirm Tkach's diagnosis that the condition was not only "mild" but has now resolved itself.

"The President is in good health and is looking forward to the (next) trip," Warren quoted Tkach as saying. The doctor was unavailable for comment.

CBS News reported last night that clots in his leg made the President limp during his Mideast trip. But Warren said, "I did not notice him limping at all and I saw him a lot."

Other correspondents confirmed this, and Washington Post White House correspondent Carroll Kilpatrick said he watched the President review troops at every stop, as well as walk to reception lines and stand in them to shake hands with as many as 200 guests without any apparent trouble.

On a stiflingly hot day in Saudi Arabia, the President chose to walk about two blocks to an appointment with King Faisal, explaining to the king, "We're a couple of minutes late, but we decided to walk."

The President was hospitalized last July for viral pneumonia, partly caused, his doctors said, by overwork.

Dr. Robert E. Rothenberg in his 1974 "Complete Surgical Guide" says that thrombophlebitis—phlebitis accompanied by blood clotting, the usual kind—is most likely to appear in those "in whom there is poor heart function or those affected by some chronic disease. It is also more apt to occur in areas adjacent to an infection or injury."

"People who have had one attack must guard against a

subsequent one," Rothenberg warns.

Tkach pronounced the President in "excellent" physical shape on Feb. 13 after a 2½-hour examination by six doctors at the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Both an electrocardiogram and blood pressure readings were normal, Tkach said. Also, the President had recently been running in place by his bed every morning, in response to Tkach's frequent advice to "exercise more."

Phlebitis is typically accompanied by swelling, stiffness, tenderness and, sometimes, severe pain. It is usually treated by anti-coagulant drugs and sometimes other medications, use of leg bandages to support the weakened vein and, if serious enough, surgery.

It tends to occur most often in persons with fragile or vari-

Trip

ous veins, and sometimes strikes air travelers or others who sit for long periods with little exercise.

Doctors usually advise more exercise for those who have had the disease, and it is highly possible that the President's doctors will repeat their old advice to him—advice they say he had often ignored—that he get more exercise.