

Nixon Comfortable Despite Side Effects to Therapy

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN
Special to The New York Times

LONG BEACH, Calif., Oct. 25 —Former President Richard M. Nixon experienced "a small amount of bleeding from the gums" and "spent a comfortable night with a minimum of pain" at Memorial Hospital Medical Center here, Mr. Nixon's doctors said today.

Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's physician, did not elaborate on the kind or location of the former President's pain. Mr. Nixon is receiving injections of heparin, a blood-thinning drug, under the skin. Such injections can be uncomfortable and are presumed to be the cause of Mr. Nixon's pain.

Hopes to Avoid Surgery

Bleeding from the gums can be an early sign of toxicity to blood-thinning drugs. But Dr. Lungren said in a medical bulletin that the bleeding was minor and "is not of sufficient magnitude to" stop Mr. Nixon's blood-thinning therapy.

Dr. Lungren said he was pushing ahead with another round of heparin anticoagulation treatment in hopes of avoiding an operation. Such surgery would seek to prevent clots in Mr. Nixon's phlebitis-damaged leg from breaking off and traveling with the swiftly moving blood to a lung. Such a

clot, or pulmonary embolus, was detected during Mr. Nixon's previous hospitalization which ended Oct. 4.

Nevertheless, Dr. Lungren emphasized that "the potential for surgery [is] still a possibility."

He went on: "At this time, Dr. Eldon Hickman, my vascular surgical consultant, and I are satisfied with the progress former President Nixon is now exhibiting with the introduction of heparin and Coumadin anticoagulation therapy."

The status of Mr. Nixon's health is a key factor on when or whether he will be able to testify at the Watergate cover-up trial now going on in Washington.

Mr. Nixon had been taking Coumadin pills while he recuperated at La Casa Pacifica, his estate at San Clemente, 60 miles south of here.

Computer Checks Data

But Mr. Nixon declined the intravenous machine that had been used when he was in the hospital before and chose to receive heparin injections periodically under his skin.

Dr. Lungren also said: "The department of pharmacology at Memorial Hospital Medical Center, together with that of other institutions in the United States, is conducting computer-

ized studies in an effort to rule out the possible paradoxical response of the patient [Mr. Nixon] to anticoagulation drugs. This information should be available to me shortly."

Although Dr. Lungren did not elaborate, another hospital source indicated that a computer was comparing data about Mr. Nixon's drug dosages and laboratory test results with those of other patients who have had anticoagulation therapy.

Regulate Dosage

Doctors regulate doses of Coumadin according to results of the prothrombin time test. The test is done on samples of blood taken from a vein.

In Mr. Nixon's case, results of the prothrombin time test being adequately thinned despite increasing doses of Coumadin. And a venogram test done Wednesday night also detected clots in Mr. Nixon's left leg.

Accordingly, Dr. Lungren then resumed heparin injections for Mr. Nixon.

Memorial Hospital officials take pride in development of a technique by which a machine constantly pumps heparin at a very slow rate into a vein in a patient's arm. A needle is kept

in the vein for the duration of the therapy.

The technique provides a steady dose of heparin instead of the more erratic levels provided by intermittent injections of the blood thinner by vein or under the skin.

Memorial Hospital officials have been concerned about the problem of adverse drug reactions. The proliferation of drugs in recent years has made it virtually impossible for any physician to know all the facts about every drug.

Studies done at other hospitals in recent years have shown that 10 to 15 per cent of patients suffer serious drug reactions during their hospitalization.

In addition to patient suffering, hospital bills have risen because such patients need prolonged stays.

Memorial Hospital says that in 1970 it became the first community health facility in the country to open a 24-hour "hot line" to give professionals information about 20,000 drug products.

These and other efforts have saved patients \$115,000 a year, Memorial officials said.

Nevertheless, other factors have caused the daily room to rise to \$94 from \$90 during the three-week interval since Mr. Nixon was here before.