

Doctor Says Nixon Has Developed High Blood Pressure

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LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 12—Former President Richard M. Nixon has developed a new problem—sudden episodes of high blood pressure during physical or mental stresses—that threatens to complicate further his course after surgery for phlebitis, Mr. Nixon's doctor said here today.

Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's physician, expressed "concern" in a bulletin because the former President had developed "labile hypertension"—a blood pressure that fluctuated into the abnormally high range.

High blood pressure is a painless condition that affects perhaps 15 per cent of Americans. If the patient faithfully

takes anti-high blood pressure pills every day, the chances of strokes, heart attacks and other complications can be reduced.

But high blood pressure could pose unusual problems in Mr. Nixon's therapeutic course because its management hinges largely on the success of the anticoagulation, or blood thinning, drug that he resumed taking last Saturday.

High blood pressure, depending on the circumstances, could be a contraindication of anticoagulation therapy. Drugs used to treat the high blood pressure can cause complications and could interfere with the drug used to thin the blood.

'A Factor of Concern'
Dr. Lungren's bulletin at Memorial Hospital Medical Cen-

ter recognized this problem by saying:

"This labile hypertension or fluctuating elevation of blood pressure at times of physical or nonphysical stress is a factor of concern to us, particularly with our patient on anticoagulation therapy."

Despite the newly discovered complication, Dr. Lungren said he hoped Mr. Nixon could go home to San Clemente later this week. His bulletin also said:

"We have documented evidence of marked elevations of his blood pressure over the last several days at times of even minus stressful situations. The rise in blood pressure is more noticeable with stressful physical activity. It also is evident when he is physically quiet and

concentrating or engaging in problem-solving." The bulletin went on:

"Yesterday afternoon, for instance, his blood pressure rose to 180 over 95 during the course of a conversation with a visitor. His normal blood pressure always has run 120 over 70 to 80."

a blood pressure of 140 over 90 or higher measured on three consecutive office visits as hypertension in adults. Blood pressure measured in a hospitalized patient usually are lower than those recorded when the same person is working.

Dr. Walter Trach, White House physician in the Nixon Administration, said of the President in 1970 that "even under conditions of stress his

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During Physical or Mental Stresses

blood pressure does not vary."

The discovery of Mr. Nixon's blood pressure problem comes at a time when he is under considerable stress as a result of his hospital bills and developments in the Watergate trial.

Doctors not connected with the case said they would consider Mr. Nixon a potential candidate for essential hypertension, the most common type of high blood pressure, on the basis of the bulletin. The doctors said that though this was the first time Mr. Nixon's hypertension had been recorded, they suspected it was not the first time it "yo-yo'd" with various stresses.

The doctors were less worried about the specific blood pressure measurements cited

than the value it could reach.

"If it bounces to 180/95, might it reach 210/110? That's what would concern me," one cardiologist at a California medical school said. He added:

"Even if Mr. Nixon's blood pressure occasionally reaches 95 or 100, he could bleed in the brain or elsewhere just at the moment of that transient rise," the cardiologist said.

Doctors do not always treat patients with labile hypertension. The usual custom is to re-examine such a patient at regular intervals because most, but not all, patients with the labile form eventually develop sustained high blood pressure.

High blood pressure once was considered an innocuous condition. But research in recent years has shown that even mild

elevations of blood pressure are linked to greater risk of premature death and strokes, blindness, heart attacks and kidney damage.

Before proper high blood pressure treatment can begin, the doctor must determine if the condition is due to a clearly definable cause, such as a kidney disorder or a tumor in the abdomen.

Dr. Lungren said that before Mr. Nixon went home, he would have another lung scan to determine if more blood clots had lodged in his lungs and caused the collection of fluid and inflammation that have hindered Mr. Nixon's recovery. "Approximately 7 per cent of Mr. Nixon's lung tissue remains partially" devoid of air and inflamed, Dr. Lungren said.

*Labile 3. Prone to undergo displacement or change; unstable. Now only in Physics and Chemistry. Oxford Univ. Dictionary