

Cambodian Boy Enters Hospital for Surgery

By Judy Luce Mann

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Khoan Ngeik, 10, a Cambodian refugee who needs open heart surgery, was admitted to Georgetown University Hospital yesterday after the Lutheran Social Services gave the hospital written assurances that it would raise an estimated \$7,000 to pay for hospital costs.

The child arrived in Washington on April 17 and was tentatively scheduled for surgery May 8 after doctors at Georgetown diagnosed a series of congenital heart defects.

The surgery was canceled at the last minute however, because financing arrangements for hospital costs were not clearly drawn, according to a hospital spokeswoman.

Helen Hessler, head of the adoption section of the Lutheran Social Services which sponsored the boy's trip to the United States, said yesterday that about \$2,500 has been do-

nated by private citizens to help pay for hospital costs following news accounts of the child's need for surgery. Doctors had already volunteered their services for the surgery.

Mrs. Hessler and hospital spokesman Arthur Ciervo said that surgery now is scheduled for Tuesday.

"We're a long way from \$7,000," Mrs. Hessler said, adding that the response to articles about the child's need "hasn't been anything like what we'd hoped. She suggested that this might be because of a negative reaction to refugees in general; I really don't know what to attribute it to, though."

"Some people who've called (with donations) have been very concerned, very sympathetic. Many have had open heart surgery themselves," Mrs. Hessler said.

"What I did was give Georgetown assurances in writing that we would be responsible for covering the bill. We will have to find the money to do it."

She said that she and others involved with trying to finance hospital costs have inquired whether Medicaid might cover it but have so far not received an answer from the Health, Education and Welfare Department.

Khoan Ngeih, who speaks almost no English, is now in the care of Bruce and Bonnie Graham, foster parents who hope to adopt him. Mr. and Mrs. Graham thought at first that their insurance policy might cover the hospital costs but were told that the child had to be here at least a year for coverage.

In an interview earlier this month, Mrs. Graham said that the child's heart has been severely strained by lack of treatment in Cambodia.