

Doctor Says Nixon Has a New Attack Of Phlebitis in Leg

NYTimes SEP 14 1974

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

Former President Richard M. Nixon's physician, Air Force Major Gen. Walter Tkach, said late yesterday that Mr. Nixon had suffered a new attack of painful phlebitis in his left leg and that a new blood clot had formed. Mr. Nixon rejected the advice of his doctors and family that he enter a hospital.

The announcement, which was made in San Clemente, Calif., was the first official statement about the change in Mr. Nixon's physical condition that has developed since his resignation on Aug. 9.

Mr. Nixon's left leg had been swollen—but not painful—during the last months of his Presidency. The swollen leg had resulted from complications of two attacks of phlebitis, one 10 years ago and another this June when he was visiting the Middle East.

After examining Mr. Nixon, Dr. Tkach issued a medical bulletin, in which he said:

"I have found the former President to be suffering from severe physical strain and physical fatigue, but he is mentally alert and has been working in his office or at home each day."

Dr. Tkach, who now has another Air Force assignment, flew from Washington yesterday to examine Mr. Nixon and to assess whether the damage from the most recent attack of phlebitis necessitated hospital-

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ization.

Mr. Nixon returned to San Clemente late Thursday night from the Palm Springs, Calif., estate of Walter H. Annenberg, Ambassador to Britain and a friend of the former President.

San Clemente is 15 miles from Camp Pendleton. An informed medical source said the move had been made to keep Mr. Nixon nearer to Camp Pendleton, where he would be hospitalized, if necessary.

Dr. Tkach said that he and other doctors had given "serious consideration" to putting Mr. Nixon in a hospital but had ruled it out at this time "based on former President Nixon's wishes."

Dr. Tkach said he had consulted with Dr. John C. Lungren of Long Beach, Calif. Dr. Lungren, a specialist in internal medicine and heart disease, had been Mr. Nixon's personal physician before he moved to the White House. Dr. Lungren had treated Mr. Nixon for the attack of phlebitis that began shortly after his resignation and that worsened last Tuesday.

Continuity Sought

A chief reason for Dr. Tkach's transcontinental consultation yesterday was to provide continuity in Mr. Nixon's care. As chief White House physician in the Nixon Administration, Dr. Tkach headed the team of doctors that treated M. Nixon for his attack of phlebitis that developed when he was visiting the Middle East and that persisted during his trip to Russia.

Among the factors that Dr. Tkach and other doctors reportedly considered in their assessment of Mr. Nixon's condition were measurements of the size of Mr. Nixon's upper and lower legs.

By comparing the circumference of a specified point on the calf and thigh with that recorded when Mr. Nixon was President, the doctors were able to get an objective determination of the extent of the increased swelling.

Dr. Tkach's bulletin did not make clear whether the consideration of hospitalization was based on a need for more

sophisticated diagnostic medical tests that could be done only in a medical center such as Camp Pendleton Naval Hospital or because Mr. Nixon needed more intensive care than he is getting at La Casa Pacifica, his San Clemente estate.

Among such tests are those using the Doppler machine to distinguish whether clots are obstructing blood flow through the superficial (above the leg muscles) or deep (beneath the leg muscles) venous systems. The test can be helpful in determining the risk of a clot's breaking off and lodging in the lungs, causing life-threatening complications.

Another test is the lung scan. This test requires the injection of a radioactive isotope, or chemical, that permits a picture to be made from an emission of the radioactive materials. Pulmonary infarcts, or damaged lung tissue, can be detected by examining the pattern on the picture, which is called a lung scan.

Because Mr. Nixon has a staff including a full-time medical corpsman to aid him, he can be treated at home more easily than most other patients with the same condition. Phlebitis is a common medical problem and doctors are often forced to admit mothers and other active Phlebitis patients to community hospitals to allow them to constantly stay off their feet and to speed recovery.

Out of Bed

Mr. Nixon was reported by a close friend to be out of bed part of yesterday, working in his office. Whether he did it against his doctor's advice is not known.

Meanwhile, at the White House, the acting press secretary, John W. Hushen, said that President Ford had asked for regular reports from his own physician, Navy Rear Adm. William Lukash, who is communicating with Mr. Nixon's doctors.

Dr. Tkach said in his statement that he and Dr. Lungren would evaluate Mr. Nixon's condition on a weekly basis. Dr. Tkach did not say what medications Mr. Nixon was receiving.