

Nixon's fear of dying in hospital

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Richard Nixon's phlebitis condition has worsened but he refuses to enter the hospital because he fears he will "never come out alive," his personal physician said yesterday.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Walter Tkach did not say why the former President fears he would die, but he did say that Nixon "is a ravaged man who has lost the will to fight."

Tkach was interviewed by NBC at his home at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington after he returned from a visit to his patient at San Clemente.

Tkach said that Nixon showed no signs of mental imbalance and is rational.

But, he said in a 30-minute interview, phlebitis has caused Nixon's left leg to swell and he is fatigued and very tense.

The doctor said he feared the tension would lead to formation of a blood clot which could lodge in Nixon's heart.

Nixon is under medication, Tkach said, but is not using anticoagulants because they require hospital supervision. He said he decided against trying to persuade Nixon to enter a hospital after the former President told him: "If I go into the hospital, I'll never come out alive."

Anticoagulants are used to help keep blood flowing freely and prevent formation of clots.

The disease involves a blood clot that makes a vein swell up and is thus more technically called "thrombophlebitis"—thrombos meaning clot and phlebitis meaning inflammation of a vein.

One expert in the field, Dr. Martin Brandfonbrener, professor and chief of the cardiovascular section at Northwestern University Medical School, said that judging from published descriptions, it appears that the former President's deeper leg veins are involved.

One complication is that clots may break off and travel through the bloodstream to the heart, then to an artery leading to the lungs. Lodged there, the clot can impede the flow of oxygen to the lungs and endanger the patient's life.

Although the chances are small, deep vein clotting may indicate that the patient is suffering from an undetected cancer, such as in the bowel or pancreas, Brandfonbrener said.

He said most medical authorities agree that the patient's emotional state has nothing to do with development of phlebitis. Only in the most serious cases are patients sent to a hospital, he said.

The Los Angeles Times, meanwhile, said it had inter-

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viewed a number of persons associated with the Nixon administration who indicated that the former President's physical and emotional health was severely impaired.

A former political associate of Nixon, said the Times, received a long, rambling telephone call from the former President last Thursday. The Times said Nixon spent about 20 minutes complaining about President Ford's handling of his office thus far, listing "the things he (Ford) had done and hadn't done." 12 SEP

The Times also said that Ford's decision to pardon Nixon was based mainly on health reasons. It quoted an associate of the President as saying: "It's obvious that someone spoke to Ford and described Nixon's condition as very grave, very serious."