

Nixon Health Showing Slow Improvement

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LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 1 — Former President Nixon's health continued its slow but steady improvement today, his doctors said, and Mr. Nixon received a hospital visit from President Ford.

Mr. Nixon "was very alert," the President said after the eight-minute visit in the critical-care unit at Long

Beach Memorial Hospital.

"But it was obvious to me that he had been very, very ill."

Mr. Nixon's doctors reported that he was in the best shape yet since going into shock Tuesday afternoon after an operation designed to block blood clots in his left leg from flowing to his lungs, where they could cause death.

But even the short visit from Mr. Ford tired him.

The visit was set up last night when President Ford, who addressed a Los Angeles Republican dinner, called Mrs. Nixon to give his best wishes and offered to come to the hospital. Mrs. Nixon said, "I can't think of anything that would do him more good." But no visit was scheduled until this morning to give doctors a chance to make sure that Mr. Nixon was in good enough condition.

Their morning medical bulletin, issued almost two hours before the Ford visit, underscored the improvement in Mr. Nixon's condition.

"He is still under critical care, but is slowly and steadily improving," said Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's chief physician.

As an indication of the improvement, doctors began listing in their medical bulletin specific information on Mr. Nixon's vital signs such as blood pressure, heartbeat and temperature. They said his blood pressure was 150 over 84—within the normal limits—and his heart rhythms were normal. His temperature was slightly above normal—99.4 degrees.

More significantly, his red blood cell counts had increased markedly during the night after receiving transfusions. His hemoglobin rose from a low of 9.6 grams yesterday to 11.6 grams today.

That is still below the normal levels of 14 to 15 grams.

All told, President Nixon has received six pints of blood since massive internal bleeding drew him into shock Tuesday afternoon. He was given one pint of blood last night and another this morning.

His platelet count also increased during the night after the former President received transfusions of eight units of concentrated platelets—a clotting mechanism in the blood.

The platelets have increased from 69,000 units yesterday to 180,000 units this morning, but it is still just within the lower limits of the normal range.

Decreases in Mr. Nixon's platelets and red blood cell levels yesterday worried doctors that his internal bleeding might be continuing. But today's tests buttressed their feeling Thursday night that they had managed to stop

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what they described as "a generalized oozing" of blood into the abdomen.

The doctors reported one more encouraging sign Mr. Nixon has regained bowel activities and they have been able to remove an uncomfortable tube running through his nose that was used to suck out gas from his intestines.

Mr. Nixon was also reported as being in less pain today.

Despite these good signs, the doctors remain cautious. "We are still concerned with

the potential danger of hemorrhage," Lungren said.

During the morning visit with President Ford, Mr. Nixon remained lying flat on his hospital bed, wearing the standard white hospital gown. He had tubes in his arm and his neck, and four bottles with intravenous solutions stood by his bedside.

The former President and the man who pardoned him were alone in the room. But nurses were looking in, as they always do, checking Mr. Nixon's condition, visually and through sophisticated electronic monitoring equipment.

Nixon aide Ronald L. Ziegler, who was also looking in, said Mr. Ford's visit was kept short at the doctors' request.

Mrs. Nixon and daughters Tricia and Julie spent most of the day at the hospital. Ziegler said they often peek in at the former President through the glass window and visit him for short periods of time when he is feeling strong enough.

When Mr. Ford first came to the hospital he greeted Mrs. Nixon and the Nixon daughters. Ziegler said Mr. Ford

"embraced" Mrs. Nixon and offered her his best wishes. Leaving the hospital, Mr. Ford described Mr. Nixon as "obviously a very sick man, but I think he's coming along very well." Despite the signs of illness, the President said Mr. Nixon "showed a great deal of strength mentally and I think physically in meeting this very serious challenge."

"I told him I talked this morning to my wife Betty. She indicated to me that all of our family are praying for his full and complete recovery."