

Nixon Taken Off Critical List, Vital Signs 'Stable'

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LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 3 —Former President Richard M. Nixon was taken off the critical list today as he spent "his best morning since" he re-entered a hospital here for treatment of phlebitis, his doctors reported.

Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's physician, described his patient in a bulletin as "alert" and maintaining a normal temperature and stable vital signs after having "slept at intervals throughout the night."

"We have the most encouraging report to give you since former President Richard M. Nixon entered Memorial Hospital for this admission" the night of Oct. 23, Dr. Lungren said in the bulletin that the medical center issued at 9:30 A.M., California time.

Today, for the first time, he's going to be sitting up on the side of his bed," the bulletin said.

'Quite Ill'

As Mr. Nixon is lifted up to dangle his legs, a team of intensive care nurses headed by Connie B. Hamilton will monitor Mr. Nixon's blood pressure and pulse, among other factors. Miss Hamilton, asked if the former President had had a chance to watch television or read a book, told reporters: "He is physically quite ill, and I doubt very much that he feels like doing anything."

Miss Hamilton said that Mr. Nixon and the nurses conversed about his care but said the hospital did not allow her to discuss the specifics. However, she described Mr. Nixon as "an extremely warm, human person."

Miss Hamilton said that the number of intensive care nurses attending him had been

reduced from six to three for each 24-hour shift.

In Dr. Lungren's bulletin, he said, "Today, Mr. Nixon will go on a soft food diet, that is such foods as custards, mashed potatoes and pureed meats and vegetables."

Despite the more encouraging report, Dr. Lungren said he was "keeping open the intravenous" in case of another emergency in which it became necessary to inject medications rapidly.

Mr. Nixon, 61 years old, remains in the same intensive care unit in which he has been treated since his phlebitis operation last Tuesday. He was placed on the critical list when he went into shock six hours after the operation, which was designed to prevent a potentially fatal blood clot from traveling from his left leg to his lungs.

Continued Monitoring

Today's bulletin said that Mr. Nixon "is now under" sub-intensive care which is a step down from critical care. We are continuing to monitor Mr. Nixon with such monitoring as continuous E.K.G. [electrocardiogram] and central venous pressure."

The central venous pressure is measured through a tube that was inserted into Mr. Nixon's neck and pushed down into the superior vena cava just as the large vein enters the right side of the heart.

Mr. Nixon's latest central venous pressure was not mentioned in today's bulletin. Dr. Lungren has reported just one such value previously. It was 8, which is on the low side of the normal range for the pressure in the central portion of the body's venous system. Doctors often use the central venous pressure as a guide to

the state of the circulatory system of seriously ill patients.

The former President's was reported as 98.8, his blood pressure 140 over 80 and pulse 72 with a sinus rhythm.

"All three of these vital signs are normal," Dr. Lungren said.

Greek Derivation

Vital signs generally include the respiratory rate, which Dr. Lungren's bulletins have omitted. A source at the hospital said that the medical team had been concerned about pulmonary atelectasis in Mr. Nixon's case. Atelectasis, a term derived from the Greek word for imperfect expansion of the lungs, leads to a reduced surface area for the physiologic exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide as Mr. Nixon breathes. Atelectasis, a common post-operative complication, can be aggravated by pneumonia.

Dr. Lungren said today that Mr. Nixon "has been and will continue to receive intermittent positive pressure breathing treatments." In such therapy, a machine forces air into the lungs under pressure. A respiratory therapist, he said, "administers 10-minute treatments about every four hours."

In the last two days, Mr. Nixon has received another transfusion of platelets, his ninth since Thursday when Dr. Lungren said the patient suddenly developed a low platelet count. Platelets are disk-shaped elements that play key roles in blood clotting.

Today's bulletin did not mention Mr. Nixon's platelet count. On Friday, Dr. Lungren said Mr. Nixon's "platelet count has risen from a low of 69,000 to 180,000 this morning following transfusion of eight units of concentrated platelets." Hematologists consider a platelet count of 180,000 below the normal range.

Still Anemic

Dr. Lungren's bulletin said Mr. Nixon's hemoglobin count was 12.4 grams, up from 11.6 on Friday. However, today's value showed that Mr. Nixon still was anemic despite the transfusion of six pints of blood since his episode of shock. Hematologists said they would consider about 15 grams a normal hemoglobin count for Mr. Nixon. The hemoglobin count is a measure of the number of red cells in the blood.

Miss Hamilton, head of the intensive care nurse team, said that when Mr. Nixon's condition was critical he was attended by six nurses on a 24-hour basis. Now she said, one nurse is with Mr. Nixon all the time. A back-up nurse is elsewhere in the hospital.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Nixon and her two daughters, Julie and Tricia, are allowed to visit Mr. Nixon for five minutes each hour, 24 hours a day. "They've been extremely sensitive to his needs," Miss Hamilton said.