Outlook on Lifestyle

DR. GOTT



Peter Gott, M.D.

Hospitals can be hazardous

By Peter H. Gott, M.D.

Are hospitals hazardous to your health? In many cases, yes.

Although hospital care is necessary for most serious illnesses or surgery. you do -- quite literally - take your life in your hands when you go to one Hospital administrators argue that, yes, mistakes are made - after all. medicine has become impossibly complex and sophisticated in the last 20 years, and the more "moving parts," the greater the chance for erfor, However, the administrators inast, hospitals remain safe meccas for patients with complicated diseases

This is a valid observation. Truly, medical surgical diagnosis and treatment have blossomed into difficult disciplines. Doctors do much more to sick people than they did a generation ago - and, clearly, millions of grateful, healed people owe much to the have the experience and judgment wonders of modern technology.

Nevertheless, I do not behave that this fact is an excuse for the multitudinous mishaps which plague our hospitals

eations of surgery happen, even in the best hands. They provide the treets of medicines and procedures are often

unavoidable. However, the final responsibility for patient care rests with the caretakers - in particular, the attending physician 'sorgeon, who is the comvalent of the commanding officer

If you carefully read the news reports about Andy Warhol and Libby cton, who noth died at New York Hosoffal, you man have been struck by a amiliar pa tern. Both patients were os because or poor efinical judg ment. Warhol's private duty norse failed to recognize that he was having trouble (from a heart irregularity) in time to call for assistance. Zion's primary-care givers, three juntor restdents, did not appreciate how sick shewas, by the time her heart stopped, resuscitation was fittle.

In most teaching hospitals, primary patient care is placed in the hands of junior assistant residents, young doctors who are one or two years out of medical school. Of course, they are supervised by more experienced senior residents or by attending physicians who have completed their residencies. However, this supervision is often "retrospective." This means that the assistant residents perform duties and provide treatments, which are often rendered at night, and their actions are approved or disapproved the next day

Unquestionably, this is a heck of a way for inexperienced doctors to learn patient care. It is fast, brutal, stressful and effective. Unfortunatebecause young doctors simply do not

to be able effectively to assess the needs of dangerous's ill patients. Inessence, they have not learned to recdon't care what the numbers show help

believe me they do their young wards do not get hands on supervision and may compound their mistakes out of pride embarrassment or ignorance. There is an old saw in medical circles. A doctor know: more right after medical school than at any other time in his life. However, he lacks experience and, under certain circumstances. This quality can be as impore-

Experienced nurses, too, play a erucial role in educating young dectors. These professionals frequently identify sick patients who need help often they know what to do before young residents even appear on the scene Unhappity really experienced nurses are becoming scarce. he cause of scandalously low pay and poor work-satisfaction. Therefore, doctors and nationts are seeing fewer nurses on the folor and those that are available (c. 4ess capacie)

In my opinion, the abover to the problem of nospital hazards requires. a tightening of the communication: network between pattern and staff. Someone has got to run the show suct. as a patient advocate as Poordinate the sometimes complex care offered in modern nospitais. That someone should be the attenders doctor Suchfully trained by success must be present or readable (variable to supervise their patients care and the activities of other destors involved in that care

Before an need hospitalization ly, it is a system that is error-prone, or if you are the landly member of someone who is hospitalized find out the name of the attending physician and make sure that he or she is willing to commit to being integrally involved. Den't trust your health or ognize that "this patient looks sick, I the health of a loved one to reputation. A fancy title or office address. Machines make mistakes Compli- Something is going on here and I need may be impressive during the day but at night, or when the crunch is on. When attending physicians distance you need an experienced doctor to be themselves from night work and in your corner literally. This type

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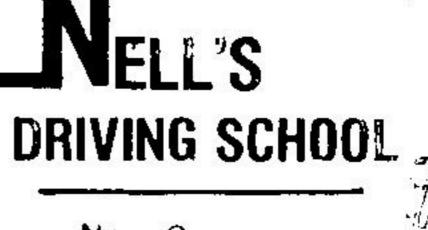
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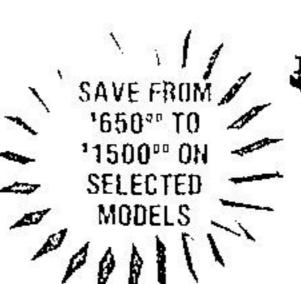


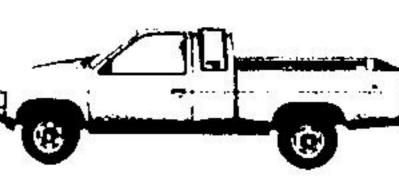
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Brother does more than apartment-sit

By Meg Whitcomb

DEAR MEG: I'm employed in my home and work five hours a day. I've worked for the same company for 13 years and like it because it gives metime to do volunteer work in the afternoons.

My problem is my brother, who was laid off and has nothing to do. Almost every day he brings a different surffriend over and uses my bedroom when I'm out. He can't take them home because he lives with the folks.

I can tell he's been here bécause he makes up the bed wrong. Last week we had a big fight because I asked for my key back. I'd given him one so he could keep an eye on the place. (I live alone.) I don't want him to hate me for life. On the other hand, I resent what he's doing. - LITTLE SISTER, DU-LUTH, MINN.

DEAR SIS Tell big brother you're not running a motel and that you want your key back now. He won't hate you for life. He doesn't have time.

DEAR MEG - My 16-year-old 'daughter has a terrible weight problem. Debbie was plump as a child, but in the past year she has become obese. Our doctor, who has given her a sensible diet, says she should lose 50 pounds, but she can't stop eating.

Debbie is so self-conscious about her body that she won't go to the beach or wear shorts. The more lonely and depressed she gets, the more she stuffs her face.

Her father and I have tried everything, from offering her \$10 for every pound she loses to trying to diet with her. Finally we stopped even mentioning the subject because she got so upset. Any ideas? - AT WITS' END,

SPOKANE, WASH

DEAR A.W.E.: With overweight teens, parental pressure no matter how well-meaning compounds the problem. One way to help is through a program called Shapedown, which is designed especially for adolescents with weight problems. There are 400 chapters nationwide. For the one nearest you, write Shapedown Balboa Publishing, 101 Larkspur Landing, Larkspur CA 94939 or call (4lo; 461) 8884 Shapedown will help Debbie stick to a healthy weight-control regimen. That will put her ahead of the

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