

## DR. LAKE DISCUSSES HOSPITAL CHARGES

**Holds That They Are Reasonable Considering Time and Effort Involved**

(By George Burt Lake, M.D.)

One hears a good deal of grumbling these days, in certain quarters, about the high cost of hospital service; but really, when one stops to

think about it, are the charges actually so high, after all? And even if one decides that they are, the question of reducing them is not so simple as it may seem.

If one takes a comfortable room in a good hotel, one will pay five or six dollars a day for the privilege, and meals will cost three to five dollars a day besides. Does seven or eight—or even ten or twelve—dollars a day seem ridiculous as a hospital charge, when we remember that that includes, not merely meals, but also

the expert attention of a trained nurse?

Twenty-five years ago, when automobiles were considered a rich man's luxury and the output was small, one had to pay about \$1,000 for a Ford car, which today would look like a rat-trap. Now we can buy a far more efficient and beautiful machine for about half this sum. This has come about by producing a larger output with the same, or but slightly increased overhead.

If this plan works in an industrial plant, it ought to have some bearing on a hospital, and it does. If a hospital with one hundred beds has patients in only fifty of them, it will have to collect more from each of the fifty or "run into the red" and call upon its well-wishers to make up the deficit, as has happened with our Highland Park hospital. If we will think first of our own hospital, when we or our friends need such service, we will be contributing largely to its usefulness and prosperity.

### Not Only Factor

But this isn't the only factor. Many of us have come to the point where we wonder whether anything is good enough for us. When we go to a hospital, we demand the most expensive room in the place, and a special nurse, whether we need it or not, and these things cost plenty of money.

As a matter of fact, the food and service are just the same in a two-bed room, at five or six dollars a day or less, as they are in a fifteen-dollar-a-day private room: and a good many patients would be better off in the semi-private room than they would in the private one.

In our Highland Park hospital, all

the nurses are graduates, and the attention of the nurse on the floor is all that is really needed by nine out of ten patients. A private nurse is generally an expensive and wholly unnecessary luxury—even more so than the swanky private room.

If the operating or delivery room charges seem high to you, go up there some day and see the amount of time and effort that is expended in preparing sterile dressings, sponges and things; the number of pieces of linen which must be laundered every time one of these rooms is used; and the hours spent in preparing for and cleaning up after such use. And the time of a nurse costs money and is worth it.

Do laboratory charges appear excessive? Find out what the x-ray apparatus and the laboratory equipment cost; figure the expense of the education of the doctors and technicians; ascertain the prices of the supplies that are consumed in many of these examinations; then figure a reasonable interest and depreciation on this investment and see how things look to you.

Those who become sufficiently interested in our hospital to find out some things about it will be able to think more clearly and talk more reasonably when folks begin an outcry about the exorbitant costs of hospital service, and will gain a wholesome respect, or even admiration, for the people who are making it possible for us to have, close at hand, a cheerful, efficient and well-conducted place in which to be ill, if we should need it; and that may happen to any of us at a time when we least expect it.

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