



Intercom

duke university medical center

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 43

November 3, 1972

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

'Every Move Counts' in Duke's O.R.

It's 5 a.m. on one of Duke Hospital's surgical wards. While most of Durham sleeps, a patient who is scheduled for 7:30 surgery is quietly awakened by one of the ward nurses who wishes him a good morning. Soon a patient care attendant arrives and prepares the patient, carefully shaving the portion of his body which will undergo surgery and bathing him with antiseptic soap.

The nurse checks the physician's pre-operative orders and the patient receives any medicines necessary for his procedure. If he has any jewelry, hair pieces, or false teeth, they are collected and labeled for return after the operation.

The ward nurse then accompanies the patient to the operating room receiving desk where they are met by an O.R. nurse. After a series of identification and procedural checks which include questioning the patient himself, an attendant wheels him into one of Duke's 18 operating rooms.

When an anesthetist has completed his task of attaching a blood pressure cuff, administering anesthesia, and beginning any intravenous fluids which are required to maintain life during surgery, the patient drifts into a sleep which may be the most important of his life.

The decision to operate on the patient may have been made by his physician and a surgeon several months before the actual operation or only a few days. After plans have been completed and the case thoroughly discussed by the doctors, the staff of the operating room becomes involved.

While residents and anesthesiologists are assembling, reviewing, and coordinating schedules submitted by the nine services which use the facilities—gynecology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, otolaryngology, urology, general,



CONCENTRATION—Bundled up like Bedouin tribesmen to prevent the spread of infection, members of an Operating Room surgical team carry out one of the 14,015 surgical procedures which took place at Duke last year. (Photo by Lewis Parrish)

thoracic and plastic surgery—members of the housekeeping staff are keeping the operating suites "squeaky clean."

While medical supply assemblers are sterilizing instruments in autoclaves and arranging them on trays to be taken into the O.R., administrators are doing their part to see that everything runs smoothly from day to day and year to year.

Nurses, the backbone of any hospital, are indispensable in the operating room, whether they are supervisors, registered nurses, or licensed practical nurses. They make schedules, count sponges, scrub surgeons' hands and help them don surgical gowns, set up the O.R., order drugs, comfort patients, handle laboratory specimens, stand up for hours at a time, assist in surgery, perform

dozens of other tasks, and still find the time to help train future operating room workers.

In addition to the traditional O.R. staff, a large number of support personnel play a larger role year by year. X-ray and nuclear medicine technologists, operating room technicians, medical photographers, educational film makers and medical artists are among those represented.

Surgery at Duke is then, to coin a phrase, "a big operation." Last year alone there were 14,015 procedures, including everything from small procedures to open heart surgery.

The O.R. is like the hub of a great wheel, and the Acute Care Unit, the Intensive Care Nursery, the Blood Bank,

(continued on page 3)