

## Project Has Done Much to Improve Communications

nate patient care services at the patient (ward) level.

The members of the unit team, coordinated by the administrator, Mr. Ned Kearns, work together to keep open the lines of communication for not only the ward personnel and the patients, but also for the service departments that they as members represent.

As a team they meet together every week for the purpose of discussing the assignment of certain tasks, problems that have arisen, and any pertinent reports. Every two weeks the members also meet with the chiefs of their individual departments.

"The whole thing boils down to a matter of communication at a level at which the problem can be solved," summed-up Mr. Kearns.

Since its creation in 1964, the unit project has proven helpful in several ways.

Today there is more satisfactory bed utilization. Mr. Kearns learns early in the day what patients are expected to be transferred to or from his four wards. In turn, he notifies the housekeeping supervisor and rooms are made ready for the patients. This helps to alleviate bottlenecks in the Recovery Room as well as the Operating Room and also helps assure the patient that he will get the type of accommodation and nursing care he will need.

The presence of the unit has also been a help to the head nurses of the wards, for they have more time for patient contact and actual nursing. In the past these nurses were called on to supplement their already demanding schedules by taking care of many other administrative matters. Now the unit administrator is on call all day and night to "come and take charge" when necessary.

Today the quiet hour is taken seriously on the unit wards. Traffic is controlled. Intercom announcements are made requesting all visitors to leave. Hall lights are dimmed, and appropriate signs are placed in the hallways. Before the creation of the unit, there was simply not enough supervision to enforce the rules.

By improving the communications between the nurses and the dietitians, delays at mealtime and lost time in the X-ray Department have also been to a great extent overcome.

And, because there is someone on the wards all day who feels the responsibility for and who cares about the physical areas and who has the time to let someone else know about the necessary repair or replacement of an item, there is also today a much better program of "preventive maintenance."

When asked what had impressed him the most about his experience with the unit, Mr. Kearns replied: "The most impressive single thing to me has been the unreserved cooperation that the unit has received from *everyone*. I've never been turned down for anything. And this is so important, for there are virtually no problems that can be solved by any one person . . . and certainly none that I can solve alone."

The future of the unit? "If the project proves successful, administration units would be created in other areas of the hospital," explained Mr. Kearns.

The "success" of the unit seems readily apparent. Its successes have come with the efforts of many, not just one, or even five, but with the cooperation of all concerned. And that, indeed, is communications. And communications is what the unit is all about.

Unit dietitian Joanne Burleigh encourages patient Kenneth Kellum to consider fresh fruit when he checks his luncheon menu.



Mrs. Estelle Blackwelder, housekeeping supervisor on the unit, talks to Mrs. Sally Taylor and Mr. Walter Wortham who are getting a room ready for a new patient. The lights, floor, walls, blinds, bed, and all other furnishings must be cleaned with a disinfectant before the room is considered ready for occupancy.

