

Social Service Added to Health Team

Six-year-old David left the hospital one Saturday clutching his mother's sleeve in one hand and the diet and medication instructions his doctors gave him to control his recently diagnosed diabetes in the other.

Two weeks later David was back in the hospital again.

What happened?

There are nine children in David's family and his mother, who works all day, found it difficult to keep up with David's food restrictions and insulin injections. Try as she might, his mother could not give David the special attention he needed, and David got sick again.

The Medical Center has added a new member to its pediatric health care team to try to prevent situations like David's.

She is Mrs. Jean Rogers and her job is pediatric social service. Her purpose, said Dr. Samuel Katz, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, is to relate the goals health management set up at the hospital to the patient's family and community situation.

In David's case, Mrs. Rogers could have helped the medical staff gain an understanding of what factors were operating in the home and whether or not adjustments would have to be made in order for the medical plan to work. Then arrangements might have been made with various organizations in David's community so that the family could get the help it needed.

Financial aid might have been arranged to enable David's mother to give up her job or cut down her hours away from home. Services of a public health nurse in the community might have been enlisted to supervise David's injections or to instruct an older sister, or David himself, to give them. Homemaker services might also have been sought to help David's mother with meal planning and time scheduling to fit her son's medical requirements into the family scheme of things.

"After all," Dr. Katz explained, "even though the medical program we set up for a child may look workable while he's here, it doesn't do him any good if his home life prevents it from being carried out."

Mrs. Rogers sees her role as helping patients and their parents with any financial, educational, emotional or vocational



HOSPITAL—COMMUNITY LIAISON—Mrs. Jean Rogers, newly named social worker at the Medical Center, talks with a young patient on Howland ward. (photo by Bill Boyarsky)

problems or combinations of these that might have an effect on the patient's care.

In the course of a day's work, she might make suggestions to the parents of a child who refuses to take his medicine, spend some time cheering up a youngster whose parents are not able to visit, or find a long-term care facility for a child who cannot be treated at home after he leaves the hospital.

Working out agreements with public health, extended care, welfare and related agencies is also a large part of Mrs. Rogers' job. She must know where to refer a patient when an unusual problem arises.

In addition to aiding patients and their families, Mrs. Rogers will be teaching other members of the pediatrics staff at Duke about medical social work.

"Most of the pediatric residents will be going into private practice where they will not have the special skills of a social worker," Mrs. Rogers said, "so I feel it is important to teach them the fundamentals that can be useful with their own patients."

She added that these future practitioners will need to be able to understand the patient in his environment and to be able to utilize community resources when necessary.

Katz said that the department plans to add several more social workers to the staff as soon as the funds become available.

Mrs. Rogers comes to Duke from a position as a medical social worker at Newington Children's Hospital in Newington, Conn. She had previously been a social worker dealing with abused and neglected children and unmarried teenage mothers in Hartford, Conn.

A native of Fayetteville, Mrs. Rogers earned her B. A. degree in psychology and social science from Spelman College in Atlanta and her master's in social work from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. She is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and the Academy of Certified Social Workers.

Her husband, Randal, is a law student at North Carolina Central University.