

Growth of Services Outlines History

Duke University Medical Center has served more than 900,000 different persons since it opened its doors on that hot, humid day in July of 1930.

The figure is one of many statistics that combine to present a historical portrait of Duke Medical Center, a facility which has earned an international reputation in health care and research during its relatively short lifetime.

Medical Records Department statistics show that an average of 100,000 new patients have been seen at Duke about every four years. But as the patient load increases, the time is becoming shorter between each 100,000-patient block.

The Hospital keeps track of every patient by distributing what are known as history numbers. Anyone who has ever been seen at Duke for any reason - in the hospital, in the clinics, or in the Emergency Department - receives one of these numbers. Employees who are checked at the Employee Health Office get a number on their first visit.

The first 99,999 Duke patients received just a number. The history numbers of patients in subsequent blocks of 100,000 begin with a letter of the alphabet followed by five numbers.

For example, anyone who was among the second 100,000 patients at Duke has a history number beginning with the letter A; those in the 200,000 group have numbers beginning with B and so forth.

Earlier this summer, when Duke patients reached 900,000, medical records decided that the next letter coming up, I, might be confused with the number 1, so they moved on to the letter J.

Therefore, new patients seen at Duke currently receive history numbers beginning with J, and they know they are somewhere between the 900,000th and the one millionth patient ever checked at Duke.

When will Duke have its 1,000,000 patient? It could come as soon as next year or in 1972.

One of the reasons is that pre-employment physicals are now given to prospective employes and each of these people is given a history number. Also, student health assigns new numbers to Duke students.

In addition, of course, the volume of patients seen in Duke's many private and public clinics is increasing steadily. Also, as the Hospital attempts to shorten the length of stay of inpatients, this means

more patients can be cared for in the same amount of time.

The million figure, regardless of when it's reached, will not mean, of course, that there will have been only a million visits to Duke. The one million will mean the one millionth new patient.

One person may return many times. He would only be counted once as a history number, but his visits would be counted each time.

For example, during the period of July, 1930, to September, 1960, visits to Duke's outpatient clinics numbered 3,319,459, including 998,793 (about 30 per cent) to the Private Diagnostic Clinics (PDC).

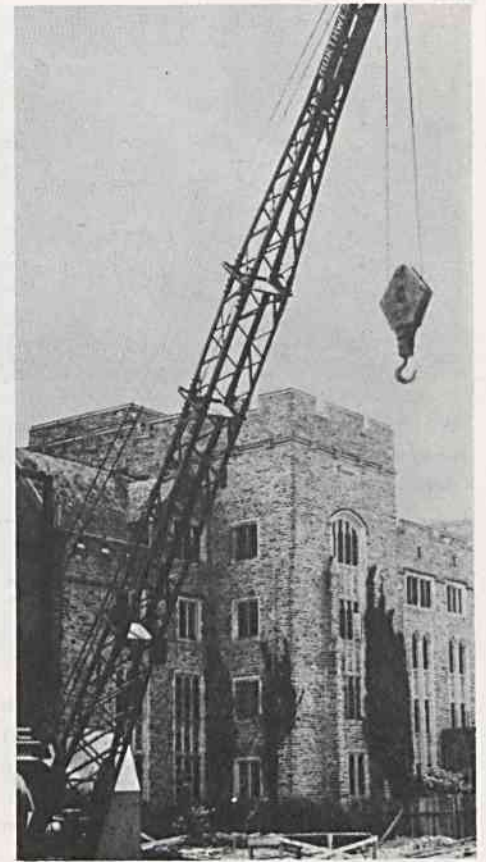
By September, 1965, the number of outpatient visits, including those to the PDC's, had risen to 4,457,167.

There are some other Duke statistics that go into the seven figures as well.

During 1969, the Medical Center served 1,438,118 meals and processed 3,733,787 pounds of laundry.

The number of laboratory procedures has nearly doubled in the past decade: 907,617 in 1960 compared to 1.75 million last year.

Other annual figures included these: 22,497 hospital patients, 1,414 births, 233,858 total days of care to patients, 11,644 operations, and 146,867 X-rays.



THE P. D. C. GOES UP — The Private Diagnostic Clinic wing was added to the Hospital a decade after it opened. This photo was taken in May, 1939, from a vantage point in what is now the visitor's parking lot.



FIRST LADY OF PT — Dr. Stuart M. Sessoms, hospital director, presents a limited edition reproduction of a drawing of Duke Hospital by medical artist Bob Blake to Miss Helen Kaiser at a retirement ceremony recently. Miss Kaiser headed physical therapy at Duke for 27 years. (photo by Dave Hooks)