



# Intercom

## Duke University Medical Center

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### Measuring Up to Nursing Care Standards

By David Williamson

If luxury hotels treated their guests the way patients sometimes get treated in hospitals across the United States, most of them would not be in business very long.

While any strict comparison of services offered by hotels and hospitals is unfair to health care workers, unfortunately for patients, changing hospitals is not always as easy as changing hotels.

In an effort to assure consistent, high-quality care for their own patients, nurses here have designed a unique program that first defines specific patient care goals and then allows nurses to determine if those goals are being met.

#### Most Comprehensive

The project, known as the Quality Assurance Program in Nursing (QAPN), may be the most comprehensive of its kind in the nation, according to Wilma Minniear, director of nursing services, who set the plan in motion.

"'Quality assurance' is on the lips of nurses all across the country," Miss Minniear said. "The concept of accurately measuring the quality of care a patient receives while he or she is in the hospital began in the 1950s, so that in itself is not new."



**TAKING NOTES ON NURSING CARE**—Brenda Green, an MLPN on the Neurosurgical Unit who also serves as an interviewer for the new Quality Assurance Program in Nursing, chats with a patient on Holmes Ward to get his views on the care he has received. The hospital-wide interviews are a key source of information on the performance of nurses as a group, according to QAPN director Mary Ann Peter. (Photo by Jim Wallace)

"What is new," she said, "is the practical application of such a program that lets every nurse know exactly what patient goals to strive for and what nursing care patients should receive. At the same time, it gives her an objective way to determine how she is measuring up to optimal standards."

#### Defining Standards

Mary Ann Peter, QAPN project director, said "quality assurance" began at Duke with a defining of patient care standards.

First, nurses on all levels got together to describe common denominators of care for all hospital inpatients, regardless of age, physical status and location, she explained.

Second, nurses with specialized experience defined individualized "patient population" standards for persons suffering from the same illness or who undergo the same kind of therapy.

#### Similar Care for Similar Illnesses

Patients who receive kidney transplants constitute one population, for example, and barring other problems or complications, receive similar nursing care.

"If a nurse wants to check herself on what she should do for kidney transplant patients, she can consult the comprehensive entry for that

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### Cancer Answers: Just a Phone Call Away

By William Erwin

More than 3,000 people have called the Cancer Information Service here since its toll-free telephone line opened six months ago.

Set up by the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society with funds from the National Cancer

Institute, the service gives physician-approved answers to almost any question about cancer.

The number is 800 672-0943. Callers in Durham, Butner and Creedmoor can dial 286-2266.

"We've had a lot of calls from white women," said Dr. Diane McGrath, director of the service.

"Now we'd like to encourage more calls from the black population and from men in general."

#### Distribution of Callers

More than 1,000 calls came from six counties, Dr. McGrath said. Durham County leads the list with 245 calls, followed by Wake, 235; Mecklenburg, 212; Cumberland, 150; Guilford, 142; and New Hanover, 109.

Media coverage led to the volume of calls from these countries, Dr. McGrath said.

"We've had calls from 97 of the state's 100 counties," she said, "but none at all from Cherokee County, Clay or Gates." Other mountain and eastern shore counties produced only a handful of calls each.

"We're talking about a low density population in some of these areas," Dr. McGrath said. "And for some people, cancer just isn't that important."

#### Detailed Answers

Some callers say they're surprised to find that the service doesn't give "yes" or "no" answers.

"We go into much more detail," Dr. McGrath said. "And we mail out reading material, if it's available, to those who ask for it."

Staff members and volunteers at

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### University Opens Office Downtown For Employment

Duke moved its employment office off campus to the Roberts Building at 505 S. Duke St., yesterday.

Herbert Aikens, associate director of personnel, said the downtown location will allow better access to job information at the university and medical center for prospective employees.

Duke's job turnover is about 2,500 a year, Aikens said.

The new office, in Suite 7, will be the first contact point with the university for jobseekers. It will have a current listing of openings and receive applications for employment.

Aikens said the central campus employment office will handle processing of new employees for the payroll, all transfer requests, interviews and referrals.

He said persons who filed applications at the current location of the employment office on Campus Drive will not need to refile at the Roberts Building.

The new office will be open from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays, Aikens said.

