

Home medical treatment replaces hospital stays

HOUSTON (AP) — Until almost the middle of this century, a hospital stay was not a widely accepted health care option. Medical treatment for everything from birth to death generally was administered in the home.

Today, spurred by soaring hospital costs, changes in insurance programs that put the squeeze on hospitals to discharge patients more quickly, and the technology to provide a scaled-down version of the same equipment available in a hospital, home care is one of the fastest-growing segments of the health industry.

The National Association for Home Care estimates that 4 million people will be cared for at home this year, with expenditures topping \$12 billion, up from \$2 billion in 1980. By 1990, expenditures for home care are expected to hit \$18 billion.

New high-tech home health organizations are providing the same care that the patient would get in the hospital at a greatly reduced rate.

"We bring the hospital into the home; personnel and equipment," said Steven Fields, president and chief executive of Curaflex, a Houston-based home health care company. "We can do it for 30-70 percent less than institutional costs."

Fields questioned why a patient should pay for a room, bed and television at a hospital when he already has these at home. Besides, health

care in familiar surroundings improves the patient's spirits and hastens his recovery, he said, and also helps the overall quality of life for the family.

"A hospital is no place to live," Kathy Sudela, a registered nurse and director of home care services for Texas Children's Hospital, said. "Some of these patients could be in a hospital for a long, long time."

Michael Lumpkin is an 8-year-old leukemia patient who is familiar with long hospital stays. He spent two years of his life in the hospital.

Since coming home three months ago with nursing and intravenous therapy provided by Curaflex, he can lead a more normal life, his mother, Liz Lumpkin, said. He can enjoy the things other children take for granted, such as playing baseball, riding his bike or even McDonald's.

"Emotionally (being home) has helped Michael, you don't know how much," she said. "And emotionally is how you get through this and any disease."

Having Michael home also has helped the family lead a more normal life. Before Liz Lumpkin heard about Curaflex from a friend, she and Michael stayed at M.D. Anderson hospital while her husband was at the family's home in northwest Houston taking care of his two daughters.

"Now Michael is in his own room,

and we are like a family again," Lumpkin said.

But why has home care suddenly emerged as an alternative to a hospital stay?

"I think hospitals are getting pressure from third-party payers to get patients out faster because the real bulk of the profit dollar is usually made within two or three days of admission," said Dale Ross, president and chief executive of HMSS Inc., a Houston-based home care company that concentrates exclusively on home intravenous therapy. "Once a patient gets into a convalescent stage, it doesn't provide the same profit margin for the hospital."

Along with pressure from the government and insurance companies to keep costs down, the patients also seem to prefer home care, he said.

"Patients love it," he said. "Imagine three weeks of therapy at home vs. three weeks in a hospital. And you're not talking about the added expense of baby sitters and travel costs and parking for a hospital. Most of us like to have control over our lives, so we don't want to be around hospitals with people taking care of us and sticking us and poking us."

Ross said his company chose to specialize in the IV therapy segment of home care because it made more sense from a business standpoint.

Hotel owners base business on customer's necessities

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Sam Barshop never intended to become a big-time hotel manager when he and his brother, Phil, conceptualized La Quinta Inns in 1968.

But today the Spanish-style motels, which Barshop says offer customers necessities without frills, has expanded to 200 properties in 29 states. Analysts say that of the nation's 2.8 million hotel rooms, 25,000 of them belong to La Quinta. Barshop is confident that the San Antonio-based company, which had \$174 million in gross revenues last year, will continue to grow and prosper in a highly competitive industry.

"Our price-value perception was and still is with the commercial traveler," Barshop says. "We hit on something that worked. We don't know how to run bars and restaurants and we don't want to."

"We want to give our customers a clean, quality room in prime locations without many of the amenities — we have no 24-hour room service and no bell boys with their hands out," he says.

In 1968, San Antonio hosted HemisFair, an international exposition that attracted millions of visitors from around the world.

Like other developers, Barshop and his brother realized that hotels would be needed, so they teamed up, borrowed \$45,000 and built the Spanish-style inn across the street from the main plaza where the festi-

vities were held.

They built another hotel near the San Antonio International Airport the next year and the idea, Barshop says, became an overnight success because the hotel's ideology was to serve the guest's basic needs of sleeping, showering and shaving without the expense of having a restaurant, bar or large meeting rooms.

That ideal still holds true today and Barshop says that is why his company has been successful. Last year, the hotel's net earnings were \$3.1 million on revenues of \$174.48 million.

He recalled that his venture into the hotel industry was a fluke.

"Basically, we were in the real estate business, but the motel business' return on investment was so much better than anything else that we decided to spend more time in it and this is what developed," Barshop said.

Although it does not operate restaurants, La Quinta has property available at each hotel site for an independent restaurant to operate.

"I've always said we are the only hotel company that knows the minimum of what we are going to make on the restaurant because we have a guaranteed day-rental agreement," Barshop says. "That's the advantage of owning property, but not operating a restaurant."

Because it owns and manages all its properties, Barshop says La Quinta, with more than 6,000 em-

ployees, is able to implement new programs and projects virtually overnight.

"If we don't like something we can change it and we don't have anybody else to blame but ourselves if things don't work," the balding, 60-year-old Barshop says.

Mike Mueller, an analyst who follows La Quinta for San Francisco-based Montgomery Securities, agrees.

"Because they own or manage all of their hotel properties they are able to be very consistent in their operation and in the physical appearance of their properties," Mueller said. "They invest very much in refurbishing and redecorating the rooms."

According to Mueller, "In some other franchise properties the qualities tend to be very uneven and that's something that's worked to La Quinta's advantage."

In 1986, Consumer Reports rated La Quinta first among hotels with rates of \$40 and under and eighth among hotels in the \$40-\$79 range, the analyst said.

"I think from the standpoint of operations it is one of the best run chains in the economy segment of the country," Mueller said.

Another successful La Quinta management technique is the use of husband-wife management teams at each of its motels.

"We think it works well," Barshop says.

Plano woman raises money for Mexican worker's burial

PLANO (AP) — Carlos Saldana died before he had a chance to meet Maria Posada, so he never knew the kind gestures she has extended to him and his family.

And ironically, it was not until Saldana was struck by a car and killed while walking on Central Expressway that Posada had ever heard of him.

Since then, the Plano woman has spearheaded efforts to raise money and made arrangements for his body to be taken back to his home in Mexico so he can be laid to rest there and so he would not be buried as a pauper in the unfamiliar surroundings of Collin County.

All of Saldana's family is in Tamaulipas, Mexico, which is more than 12 hours from here.

Posada said the family is very poor and could not afford the almost \$1,000 it would take to have his body shipped home.

"When we called them to let them know what the expense would be, they said they didn't know what they would do," she said.

Thursday, Posada, 22, her 3-year-old son and two members of a church, began the 12-hour drive to Mexico in a van carrying Saldana's body.

"I just couldn't leave it here with no one taking over it," she said. "He has no family here whatsoever."

The 24-year-old Saldana, who worked as a laborer in Plano, was killed Aug. 20 after he walked onto the northbound lanes of Central Expressway and was struck by a car, police said.

The Collin County Medical Examiner's office ruled Saldana died of multiple injuries and acute alcohol

"When we called them to let them know what the expense would be, they said they didn't know what they would do (about the expense of transporting him)."

— Maria Posada, fundraiser for Saldana family

intoxication at a local hospital in Dallas.

Police had been called shortly after 10 p.m. that Saturday and told that an intoxicated Latin male had left a service station and was walking toward the highway.

Before officers arrived, Saldana, wearing blue work pants and no shirt, had climbed over the concrete construction barriers, which crowd the road, and onto Central Expressway, police said.

He died an hour and 40 minutes after he was struck by a 1985 Cadillac driven by an Allen man.

Posada said she doesn't know why Saldana was on the highway, but that he must have been disoriented.

For a time, police weren't sure of Saldana's identity and had a difficult time finding any family members here or in Mexico.

He had no identification except an Immigration and Naturalization work visa. Saldana had applied for amnesty, Posada said.

Posada learned of Saldana when his family telephoned Posada's boyfriend in Plano, whose aunt in Mexico had, at one time, employed a member of Saldana's family.

Posada, who lost her job as a meat packer Aug. 4, got two Plano busi-

nesses, Plano Tortilla Factory, 1009 E. 18th, and Cantu's Video and Gift Shop, 1832B Ave. K, to put containers on their counters to collect money to send Saldana's body to Mexico.

"And I had a bake sale (in front of Cantu's)" she said. "I raised about \$30 to \$40. At the tortilla factory, we raised about \$50."

Lorina Espinoza, owner of Plano Tortilla Factory, said, "She told me (about the situation). It just sounded real sad, so I helped her out."

Another \$600 was raised from donations solicited by Saldana's friends and roommates.

A church donated \$160 toward the funeral expenses and another church lent Posada the use of a 1983 Chevrolet van to take Saldana's body to Mexico.

Gonzalez Funeral Home in Dallas, which prepared the body for burial, made legal arrangements for Posada to transport the body to Mexico.

Posada said although it was rough raising the money, she kept believing.

She said Saldana's family has been really appreciative of her efforts.

And, she added, she feels good about being able to help, even though she never knew Saldana.

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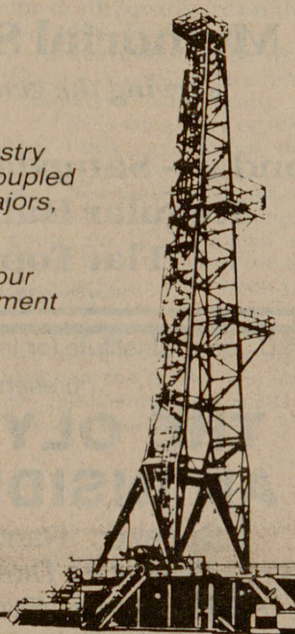
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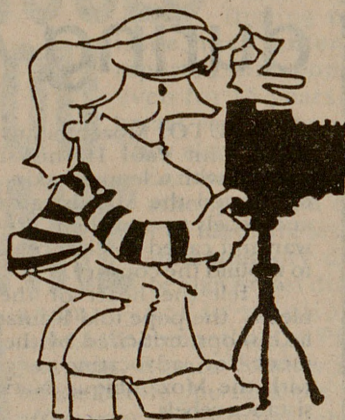
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