

# what's happening

Maine Medical Center  
Portland, Maine 04102

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## Bed crunch causes and cures are elusive

The planning for the major expansion and renovation project just completed at MMC was done in 1981. All the data and projections available at that time indicated it was designed and sized to carry the hospital into the 1990s. But no sooner had the hospital expanded than it was full again. The demand for beds is as heavy as ever, and volume is up dramatically in most departments.

The question of "what happened" can only be answered with a range of possible reasons at this point. Speculation is based on the experience here and that of other large tertiary care hospitals across the country—the only other hospitals experiencing increases in demand. It's only speculation, but some general conclusions may be drawn.

The dynamics of the population may account for some of the increase. The population in Greater Portland is growing, and like elsewhere the average age of the population is increasing. It has long been established that older patients use proportionately more hospital resources.

A great deal of attention is focused on referral patterns. A common theory is that many cases that some years ago would have been admitted to local hospitals are now referred to tertiary care centers. The threat of malpractice suits and resultant desire by physicians to absolutely minimize their risks are cited as possible reasons.

Changes in treatment and technology may also be responsible for increasing demand. It is often pointed out that medicine in general is allowing people to survive once-fatal illnesses only to develop other, more complex diseases. Cancer care is increasing, for instance, as survival times lengthen and more rigorous chemotherapy regimens require repeated hospitalizations.

A new technology like angioplasty can have an enormous impact on demand. 64 angioplasty procedures were performed at MMC in 1984, the first year they were performed here. Last year 265 were performed, a 314% increase in just two years. And the newest coronary disease interventions, specifically the use of clot-dissolving drugs following heart attacks, have also increased usage of hospital facilities.

The most tangible reason for the excess pressures on hospital beds is the under-supply of nursing home beds. A combination of state-imposed moratoriums on nursing home construction and unfavorable reimbursement incentives has created a critical shortage of beds.

On any given day, there are 25-35 beds at MMC occupied by patients who

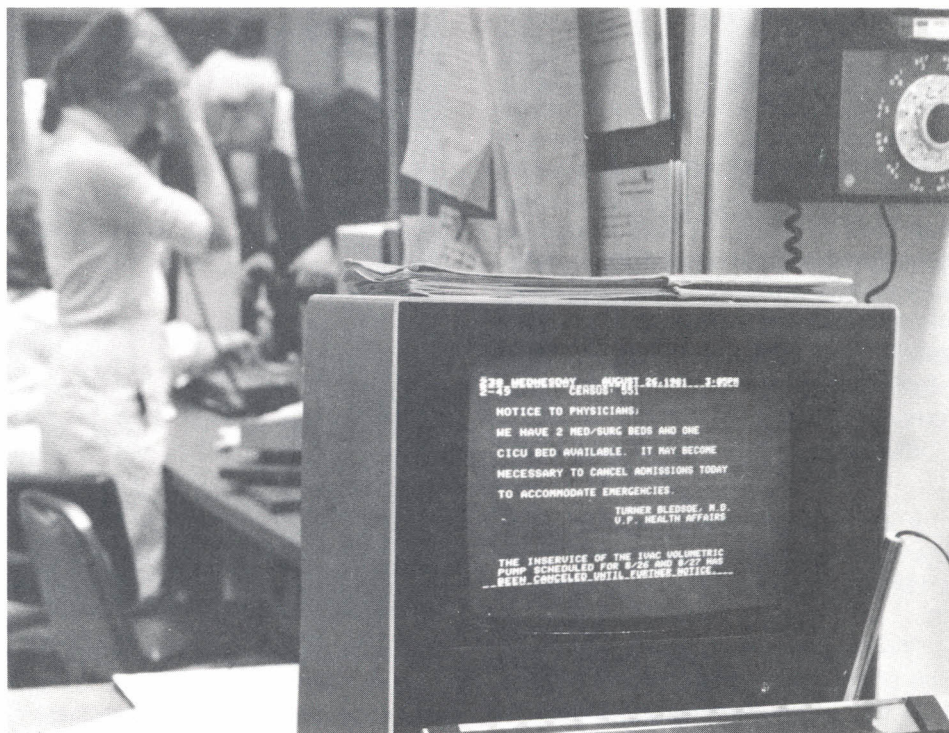
could be transferred to nursing homes if beds were available. Some 45 more in total are in beds at Mercy Hospital and the Osteopathic Hospital of Maine.

The problem is even more severe than

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## Service Awards Coffee is set for April 14

The April Employee Service Award Coffee for 1987 will be held Tuesday, April 14. It will begin at 9:30 AM in the Pendred Noyce Auditorium of the Dana Center, and is expected to conclude by 11:00 AM. Employees will be recognized for 5 to 35 years of service to MMC, attained between January 1 and June 30, inclusive.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH of an MIS terminal was taken for the 1981 MMC Annual Report, to illustrate the bed shortage. Similar messages are common again today. (A/V Photo)



## BEDS, from page one

those figures alone indicate, because of the length of time these patients remain in the hospital—often months. Consider the example of a patient who should be in a nursing facility and instead is in MMC for three months. During that period, nearly two dozen patients requiring 3-4 day stays could have been treated in that bed instead.

At the same time, the patient could be receiving more appropriate care in a long-term facility. Acute care hospitals aren't geared to the special needs of long-term patients, which include recreational and social activities.

Solutions to the demand problems are as elusive as the causes. There are limits to how much can be done to shorten lengths of stay, and how much overload can be absorbed by other hospitals. So far, the increase in demand is more than offsetting the gains realized from shorter lengths of stay and the shift from inpatient to outpatient treatment.

The one obvious and near-term solution would be to increase the supply of nursing home beds to free up existing acute-care beds. Maine Medical Center is exploring the possibility of acquiring or building a long-term facility. While MMC would not fare any better financially in long-term care than other operators, the patients would be receiving more appropriate care.

Another possible solution would be expanding MMC's bed capacity. Having just finished an expensive major expansion, the hospital would be cautious about committing to another unless it had exhausted all other possibilities. It would take as long as five years to bring new beds on line, so expansion must be considered a long-term solution. Forecasting demand five years in the future, of course, is still as risky as it was five years ago.

## Please Note

A physical inventory will be taken at the Warehouse and Onsite Supply Room on Monday and Tuesday, March 30 and 31.

The Warehouse will be closed to routine orders; departments should anticipate this and order enough supplies to get through. Emergency orders should be placed with Leo Camire, RP 550.

The Onsite Supply Room will function as usual throughout the inventory.

## EAC offering a New York state of mind

The Employee Activity Committee is on its way to New York City May 29, 30, and 31. The Big Apple can be yours for \$205 per person, based on double occupancy. Included: bus transportation, two nights at the Madison Towers Hotel (37th and Madison), full breakfast Saturday and Sunday, dinner Saturday, and a Broadway show. (You may fly down and back for an additional \$100).

The trip departs Portland at 8 AM Friday, May 29, and returns at 10 PM Sunday, May 31. Contact Beverly Cookson in the Cafeteria for reservations; reservation deadline is April 4.

## Thanks

*Special thanks to all the wonderful and caring physicians, staff members, and physical therapist who paid special attention to me during my stay on R6 (Orthopedics).*

*Everyone did an excellent job and I couldn't have been in better hands.*

*Thanks again!*

*Dorothy Amergian*

## "Children and loss" is workshop topic

When asked by a child "What is dead," many of us as parents and health professionals fall silent or are unable to comprehend loss or death from a child's perspective. Connie Korda, M.Ed., MMC's parent support group facilitator, says children learn to deal with loss and death by watching, listening, and talking to adults who are close to them. What they see and understand, she says, sets the stage for how they will deal with subsequent losses throughout their lives.

Korda and Pat Todorich, RN, MS, maternal-child health nurse specialist at MMC, will lead a workshop on "Children and Loss" Thursday, April 2, 3:30-5 PM, in Classroom 10. The session is planned for parents who wish to help their children deal with the inescapable events of loss and death in their lives, and will also be helpful to health professionals.

A film, written materials, and exercises and discussion will help participants gain insight into a child's perspective, remember how they dealt with losses in their own early lives, and learn how to discuss loss and death constructively with children.



**MAINE MEDICAL CENTER'S School of Surgical Technology held graduation exercises recently. Graduates were, front row, left to right: Pauline Collette, Lewiston; Wendy Searle, Portland; Jacqueline Lussier, Bath; Dan Auger, Topsham; Patricia Carlisle, Portland; Kim Pelletier, Madawaska. Back row, left to right: Donna Brayman, Kennebunkport; Joe Dukett, White River Junction, VT; Caroline Young, Portland; Mark Laplante, Portland; Rosemary Holtzman, Rumford; Rolando Amador, Freeport. (A/V Photo)**



## All invited to Parent/Child series

The Spring Parent/Child series from MMC's Office of Training and Development is continuing. Interested employees may sign up for one or more sessions by calling x2824. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

### How To Listen So Children Will Speak/How To Speak So Children Will Listen

Joan Martay

This presentation will focus on parent-child communication. Parents will learn specific skills they can use in order to listen more effectively. Participants will discuss how to be of assistance to any young person who is experiencing a problem. Parents will also learn how to express their feelings and ideas in constructive ways that will be heard by their children. *March 30, Classroom 3, 12:00-1:00 PM.*

### Children And Self-Esteem

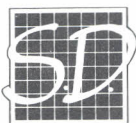
Colleen A. McKenney, M.A.

Children develop both positive and negative images of themselves as they grow. This workshop will explore some of the ways those images are formed and the ways we as parents can enhance the positives. How children view themselves in our families and in the world impacts on all their behaviors all their lives, and we can help make that view a healthy one. *April 13, Classroom 1, 12:00-1:00 PM.*

### Making The Most of Single Parenting

David Sanford, Ph.D., L.C.S.W.

In this session, David Sanford will talk about the dynamics of single parenting from the perspectives of both adults and children, focusing specifically on challenges and opportunities. Particular attention will be paid to the sorts of attitudes and approaches that make single parenting as happy and workable as possible. *April 27, Classroom 3, 12:00-1:00 PM.*



### Continuing Education

Nursing Staff Development

- **Critical Care Seminar: "Acid Base Balance,"** Sandra Bagwell, M.D.

Thursday, April 2

8-9 AM Classroom 4

and repeated 2-3 PM Classroom 2  
(1 contact hour requested from MSNA)

## Thanks

To Maine Medical Center,

*Labor Day 1986 marked the end of summer and started our mother's (Dorothy Yarrington's) battle for life. Dorothy was admitted to the Emergency Ward complaining of abdominal pains. Quick diagnosis and her basic situation led to the diagnosis of a ruptured ulcer. Surgery was indicated and accomplished that evening. She did very well for two days and then developed ARDS and her battle for life was on.*

*After five months in the ICU and one month in the R-4 Rehab unit she was released March 8, 1987. As of this date our mother is living with us at home and is progressing daily.*

*Our entire family would like to take this opportunity to thank the MMC: Emergency staff, Surgical staff, ICU staff, Rehabilitation staff, Support staffs; all individuals involved with making our mother's stay successful and comfortable for both our mother and our family. We were treated professionally and with dignity during a extremely stressful time for our family.*

*All hospital personnel were helpful, however one person (position) was extremely essential to our understanding of what was actually going on in lay person's language. This person, Mike Thibodeau, was critical to communication through setting up meetings, getting information, comforting and still letting us know the gravity of the situations as they developed. Mike also helped us communicate with the proper personnel for many of the critical situation questions which we encountered. Without Mike Thibodeau we would have been lost and may have made decisions which would not have been in the best interest of our mother and ourselves. Thank you Mike!!*

*Thanks again to all of you that came in touch with my mother and our family. We appreciate all of your efforts and the loving way you dealt with our mother. Mom thanks each of you and gives you her love.*

Sincerely,

The Dorothy Yarrington Family

## New Employees

**FOOD SERVICE:** Calvin Cramer Jr.

**EMERGENCY:** Lisa J. Abbott, Beth Krasniewicz

**PATIENT ACCOUNTS:** Delores A. Hicks

## MMC losing interest in weight loss class

Enrollments in the Weight Watchers at Work program at MMC have been declining. The Training and Development staff is puzzled by the loss of interest, and has concluded it means either 1) everyone at MMC is content with their current weight, or 2) there is something the staff could do but isn't that would make the program more desirable.

To find the answer to the more likely of those two conclusions, the staff asks that anyone who has a suggestion give them a call at x2824. Perhaps the hours aren't convenient, or the format isn't appealing, or the problem is something they haven't considered in the past. Whatever it is, if there's a change that is possible and would increase enrollments, they want to do it. The only alternative, in the face of declining interest, will be to cancel the program.

Please call x2824 with any suggestions.

## Please Note

There are still some spaces left in the Telephone Skills workshop, a 6-hour course which will take place on March 25 and April 8, 9 AM-12 Noon. The course is designed for employees whose jobs require high quality telephone communication skills. Interested? Call x2824 for further information and to register.

## Lenten Services are continuing

The MMC Department of Pastoral Services is presenting a series of Noon-time Interdenominational Lenten Services. The services will be held in the Chapel at 12 Noon on consecutive Wednesdays, and will be given by several Chaplains on the following schedule:

March 25

Chaplain Milbury

Chaplain Sims

April 1

Chaplain Cairns

Chaplain Monaghan

April 8

Chaplain Monaghan

Chaplain Milbury

April 15

Chaplain Milbury

Chaplain Cairns



# Marketplace

**FOR RENT:** South Portland near beach. 2 BR apt. in nice neighborhood. \$425/mo. plus utils. and sec. dep. No pets. Call 799-4710.

**FOR RENT:** Bramhall Street. BR/LR combination with KT and bath. Renovated building. \$400/mo. includes heat and all utils. Call 871-8953.

**FOR RENT:** Bramhall Street. New studio apt. with appliances, w/w carpets. \$345/mo. includes heat and all utils. Call 871-8953.

**FOR RENT:** Bramhall Street. 2 BR apt. \$550/mo. includes heat and all utils. Call 871-8953.

**FOR RENT:** Great Spring skiing-White Mountains, North Conway, NH. Condo rental. Call 797-5151.

**FOR RENT:** USM/MMC area. 1 BR apt. with KT, LR, shower, storage, parking. \$400/mo. heated. Call 774-6634 or 854-5742.

**FOR RENT:** Portland. New, modern, spacious 2 BR apt. with LR, DR, KT. Carpeted; lots of storage; off-street parking, near bus stop. \$545/mo. plus utils. Call 829-5320.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** Pleasant Ave. Female to share large 5 room apt. Deck; off-street parking. Avail. April 1. \$250/mo. plus 1/2 electric. Call 761-0510 eves. and weekends.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** Female to share sunny 2 BR apt. on Neal Street. \$47.50/wk. includes all. Call 774-4860 eves. and weekends.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** To share large 4 BR house in Portland 2 blocks from USM. Female nonsmoker preferred. No pets. \$170/mo. plus utils. Call 775-3875 eves.

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** To share Old Orchard Beach home. Very private; close to beach. Nonsmoker. No pets. Call 934-2668 after 4 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 1980 Toyota Tercel. 5-spd., sedan, AM/FM stereo, A/C, high mileage. \$1,000 or best offer. Call 879-4281 days; 773-3192 eves.

**FOR SALE:** 1983 Subaru 4-WD station wagon in excellent condition. \$4,500 or best offer. Call 773-1671 and leave message.

**FOR SALE:** 1982 Honda Accord. 4-dr. sedan, 5-spd., 30 plus mpg, 1-owner, excellent condition, front-wheel drive, AC, sunroof, CC, 4 new studded Vector snow-tires, 4 new all season tires. No rust; no accidents. Call 846-3977 Tues.-Fri. after 8 PM; anytime Mon. and weekends.

**FOR SALE:** 1982 Subaru GL wagon. 4-dr., 4-WD, cassette stereo, 4-spd., 35,000 miles. Good condition; no accidents. \$4,500. Call x2526 days; 799-5015 eves.

**FOR SALE:** 1985 black Dodge Caravan. 2.2 engine, 5-spd., 5 passenger seating, Ziebart rustproofing, AM/FM stereo cassette system, roofrack, 35,000 miles. \$7,500. Call 934-5198 after 5 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 1986 black/silver Chevy Celebrity. 2-dr., coupe, V-6, auto., 16,000 miles. Loaded with options. \$9,200. Call 688-4082 after 5 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 1980 green Volvo DL wagon. Standard transmission: many extras: meticulously maintained. Best offer near book value. Call 865-6958.

**FOR SALE:** 1985 Mercury Cougar. 8-cyl., overdrive. Loaded; mint condition. Must sell. Asking \$8,500. Call 883-4747 after 6 PM.

**FOR SALE:** 1984 Buick Regal. Hardtop, 2-dr., AM/FM stereo, tilt-wheel, PB, PS, cruise, mileage in low 50,000; excellent condition. \$7,000 or best offer. Call 799-9220.

**FOR SALE:** Master Craft sofa bed in brown/tan earth tones; excellent condition, \$400. Black pony harness and red cart; good shape, \$125. Call 688-4082 after 5 PM.

## what's happening

WHAT'S HAPPENING is published every Wednesday at Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine for members of the hospital community and for friends of the institution throughout Maine and northern New England. Comments, questions and suggestions may be addressed to Public Information Office, MMC, Portland, ME 04102. Telephone: (207) 871-2196. Wayne L. Clark, Editor.

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**FOR SALE:** 1846 bookcase and secretary. Empire design, solid and veneer mahogany; 13-pane doors on bookcase with original glass; top drawer folds down to make writing surface. Signed and dated by H. Lemeher and Holstein and "the crew." 11"x44"x85" high. Asking \$2,300. Call Cori or Sherry at 883-6749 eves.

**FOR SALE:** Cross airtight front loading woodstove. Could heat entire house. Never been fired. Made in Maine. 28"x19"x30" high. \$450. Call Cori or Sherry at 883-6749 eves.

**FOR SALE:** Atlantic Home E kitchen range. Woodstove; has coal grates, kerosene rings and burners. 46"x29"x29" high. \$450. Call Cori or Sherry at 883-6749 eves.

**FOR SALE:** Kenmore portable dishwasher with butcher-block-look top. Has water and power misers. Trouble free; excellent condition. Includes maintenance agreement until 5/88. \$250. Call Cori or Sherry at 883-6749.

**FOR SALE:** Hospital bed in good condition. Best offer. Call 283-3205.

**FOR SALE:** Everest Jennings Traveler wheelchair with foot rest, tray table, oxygen bottle holder; excellent condition, \$250. Hospital bed with monkey bar and traction set up, \$50. Call 767-5018.

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NON-PROFIT ORG.  
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