

# what's happening

Maine Medical Center  
Portland, Maine 04102

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January 7, 1981

## BC/BS helps Poison Control help consumers

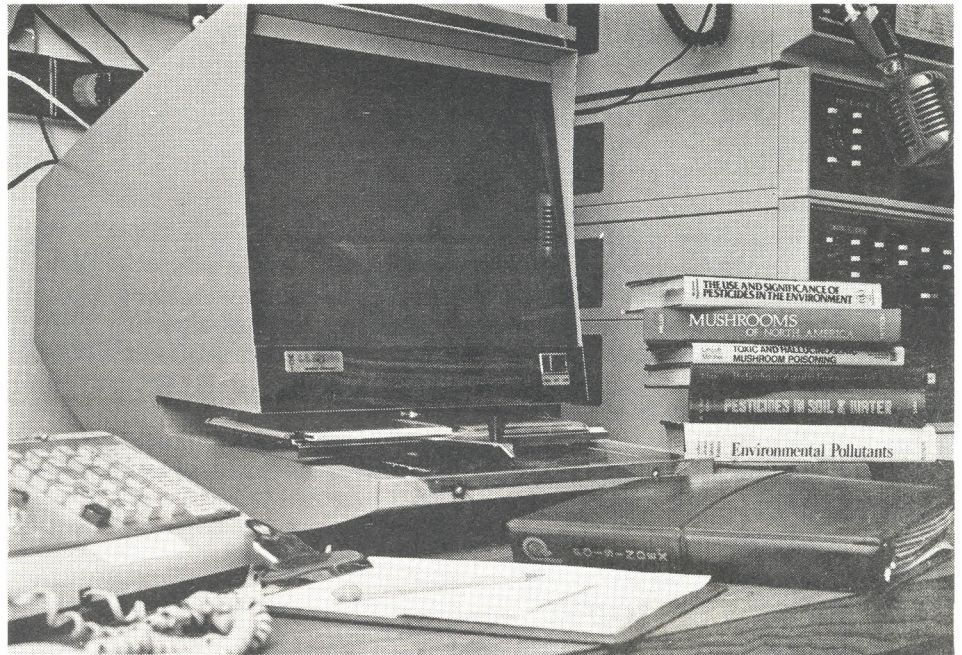
The Board of Trustees of Maine Blue Cross and Blue Shield believes the Maine Poison Control Center will save the company and its subscribers money in the long run, and the Board recently voted a \$35,000 grant to the Center to demonstrate its support. Part of the insurance company's cost containment efforts, the grant will cover over 27% of the Center's 1981 budget.

The Poison Control Center, located in the Emergency Department at Maine Medical Center, maintains a 24-hour a day, 365-day a year poison information service for individuals and medical professionals, a service available anywhere in the state by dialing a toll-free number. Most of the 10,000-12,000 calls the Center handles each year are from individuals -- people worried about their children, relatives, friends, or themselves -- seeking information about suspected poisoning.

Characteristically, the technician at the Center will take the information, determine the toxicity of the substance, and suggest appropriate treatment. Some callers are referred to a hospital emergency room or private physician, but for nearly 75% of the callers, no further medical action is necessary. Still, the technician calls back in an hour to make certain all is well. The cost to the consumer? Nothing, not even for the initial phone call.

If there were no Poison Control Center, the next best option would be a call or visit to a hospital emergency room. On the average, this procedure would cost a minimum of \$55, plus gas. Based on statistics recently developed by the Center, the cost of handling the Center's annual workload by other methods -- calling and visiting the hospital emergency room or calling a private physician -- would be an estimated \$600,000, or four times the

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SOME OF THE "TOOLS OF THE TRADE" at the Maine Poison Control Center are shown above. The microfiche system, called the "Poisindex," has information on over 250,000 substances, and the Center's library, a small portion of which is shown here, covers specific topics ranging from mushrooms to pesticides. The microphone ties the Center to the REMIS communications system. (A/V Photo)

## Public Cable health channel does MS series

The Public Cable TV company of Portland has 30 channels, some for regular commercial stations, some for educational programming, some for public access, and some for news, weather, and TV schedules. It also has a very special educational channel, Channel 23, with health-oriented programming developed and produced locally by the Health Education Channel.

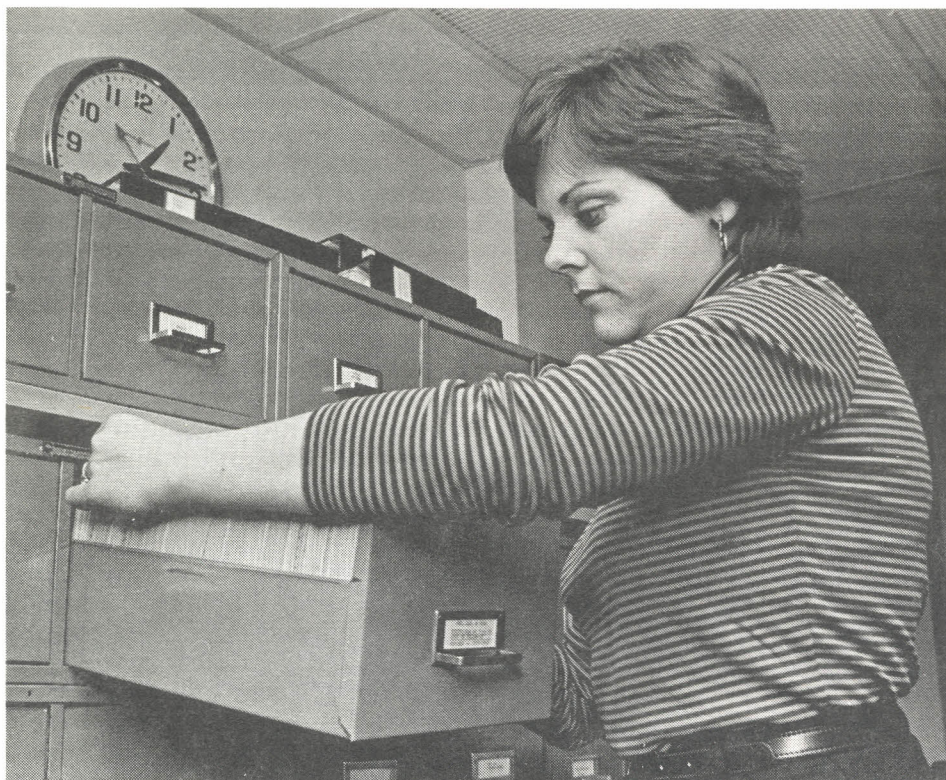
The Health Education Channel, Inc., is a non-profit, tax-exempt health consortium made up of representatives from over 30 health, education, and social service agencies in Greater Portland, including Maine Medical Center. HEC uses Channel 23 to broadcast "targeted" health education program-

ming for the benefit of specific population groups.

HEC is working on programs dealing with low-income nutrition, teenage maternity, and a continuing series of monthly programs focusing on specific topics such as cancer, exercise, and January's topic: Multiple Sclerosis. Several MS-related programs will be repeated throughout the month, and the climax will be a call-in session featuring Robert Slater, M.D., of the National MS Society and MMC's Director of Neurology E. Charles Kunkle, M.D..

The MS programs may be seen daily all month, at 12 Noon and 7 PM. The call-in session will follow the regular programming at 7 PM Thursday, January 29. For details or further information, call HEC at 871-2203.





**ABSTRACTOR PATRICIA KILMARTIN** examines a card in the **MMC Cancer Registry**. The Registry has been accredited by the American College of Surgeons for a three-year period. Accreditation depends largely on the quality of the records in the Registry, according to Director of the MMC Cancer Registry, Alice Rose. (A/V Photo)

## Genetic screening is *Hard Choices* topic

What should a pregnant woman do if told the child she is carrying is notably defective -- should she abort, or knowingly bring into the world a child that is not normal? What should a man do if told he possesses a possibly lethal trait that could be passed on to his children -- should he consider limiting his choice of mate or decide against having children?

Today, in many cases, medicine is able to predict just how normal children will be before they are born, and in the future this could mean that the abnormal need never be born at all. Yet who is to decide what is normal and what is not, and which fetuses should be aborted and which should not -- we, our neighbors, the government?

"Genetic Screening: The Ultimate Preventive Medicine?," one of six programs in the *Hard Choices* series being telecast in Maine by MPBN, explores the social and ethical questions emerging as a result of the ability to predict prenatally the health of a child. Willard Gaylin, M.D., President of the Hastings Center: Institute of Society, Ethics

and Life Sciences, hosts an examination of several genetic diseases, among them PKU, a disease causing severe brain damage; sickle cell anemia, a disease mistakenly associated only with Blacks; Tay-Sachs, a fatal disease affecting Ashkenazic Jews; and cystic fibrosis, an illness involving respiration.

The show goes on to demonstrate how the options of prenatal testing and genetic counseling have affected parents of children with genetic diseases. Legal and moral issues are considered, and Michael Kaback, M.D., of the University of California, Los Angeles, notes that "there's not one of us that's perfect. So if we get good enough and we can pick up slighter and slighter imperfection, then we can look at every pregnancy as being a candidate for intervention because of imperfection." Dr. Gaylin concludes: "Genetic screening of the unborn offers us a great opportunity for reducing human suffering by reducing the instances of genetic disease. . . But just how normal do we want the human race to be?"

This episode of *Hard Choices* will air January 9, 1981, at 11 PM on UHF Channel 26 of the Maine Public Broadcasting Network.

## What you don't know can cost you money

The federal Office of Consumer Affairs recently developed a quiz designed to help health care consumers learn about medical costs and take action to cut costs. The questions and answers reveal some little-known and often misunderstood facts about health care, such as:

- In 1979, the average American spent \$943 on health care.
- The health-care dollar is divided as follows: hospitals, 40¢; doctors, 19¢; drugs, 8¢; nursing homes, 8½¢; and miscellaneous fees 24½¢.
- Cost-saving measures include: using outpatient surgery, doing pre-admission tests on an outpatient basis, and asking your doctor to release you as soon as you feel up to it.
- Outpatient and office surgery can save from \$100 to \$300, depending on the nature of the problem.
- Good ways to waste money include: asking your doctor to admit you overnight for routine tests and using the emergency room for routine problems.
- Using the emergency room for routine problems is much more expensive than using a private physician. The doctor usually charges only one-fourth to one-third as much as the emergency room.

## Please Note

The Outpatient Department Continuing Education Committee invites MMC health care personnel to the December program of its "Community Resources" series. Les Bennett, Supervisor of the Adult Protective Unit of the Department of Human Services, and Judy Fletcher, Assistant Maine Attorney General, Legal Counsel for Adult Protective Cases, will discuss "Protective Services for Adults."

The session is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, from 8:30-9:30 AM in the R1 Conference Room. CEARPs have been requested from the Maine State Nurses Association. Coffee will be served.

The Cellular Immunology Lab of the Foundation for Blood Research has been awarded a grant of \$8,950 by the Kidney Foundation of Maine to study correlation of HLA type and polycystic kidney disease. Dr. Paula Romano is Director of the Cellular Immunology Lab.



## Cirillo appointed to nursing position

Alice Cirillo, RN, has been appointed Director of Medical/Rehabilitation/Psychiatric Nursing at Maine Medical Center. She has been Interim Director since last January, and was named to the Director's post after a lengthy search.

Cirillo received her BSN from St. Mary's College at Notre Dame, and is currently matriculated in the Boston University Master's Degree in Nursing Administration program at the University of Southern Maine. She served as Director of Nursing Services at the Osteopathic Hospital of Maine before coming to MMC one year ago.

## Thanks...

We wish to thank all our many friends, who shared in so many thoughtful ways during the death of our beloved, Rev. Richard Queen.

*his daughter, Judith Castle, OPD  
his wife, Mary Queen, Housekeeping*

To all my co-workers and friends at MMC, my sincere thanks for all your thoughtfulness and kindness on my recent retirement.

*Hope Woodbury  
C.H.A., Housekeeping*

**GRANT**, from page 1  
Center's budget.

The cost-benefit ratio of the Center's operation is impressive, and it saves thousands of dollars annually in medical costs that would otherwise be spent by the consumer or third-party payors such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield. The Center's own figures estimate that for every dollar it spends, it returns anywhere from \$3.79 to \$4.75 in savings on other medical care. Blue Cross, in announcing its grant to the Center, said it was approved "as a means of alleviating expenses for inappropriate emergency room visits, thereby saving health dollars."

Blue Cross is providing funding for other cost containment measures as well, including a statewide energy audit project for hospitals, a diabetic control project, and changes in Blue Shield reimbursement policies to allow payment for chemotherapy treatment received in a physician's office and for office surgery performed by Plastic and Hand Surgical Associates of South Portland. The office surgery project is expected to save up to \$50,000 in 1981, and ease some of the strain on area operating room schedules, including those at Maine Medical Center. Cystoscopy set-ups at Maine Urological Associates of Portland will now be covered as well.

## PBS health show looks at coping with asthma

The next episode of *Here's to Your Health*, PBS's series on consumer health, will examine a disease that afflicts nine million Americans. "Asthma" explores the progress in treatment of this non-contagious lung disease, and takes a close look at the special problems of the pediatric asthma patient. The show includes interviews with young asthma sufferers and discussion of the treatment of asthma with Robert Strunk, M.D., director of pediatric clinical services at the National Asthma Center of the National Jewish Hospital in Denver.

MPBN's Channel 26 will broadcast the show Thursday, January 8, at 7:30 PM.

## Exhausting work is well in progress

What's going on behind those plastic curtains in the Cafeteria? It's the final step in bringing the Cafeteria into line with the MMC Smoking Policy and Education Committee recommendations. The designated smoking area will have two large exhaust fans to help eliminate excess smoke from the area. Work to install these fans began Monday and will continue through the week.

During the time the construction work is going on there has been some small amount of disruption. There is a 10' x 10' plastic enclosed scaffold set up first in one area by the patio and then another on the Brackett Street side as the fans are installed in the wall.

## Medical Briefs

The American Academy of Pediatrics warns that giving honey to your infant as baby food may produce infant botulism. Botulism is a form of food poisoning caused by a neurotoxin from the *c. botulinum* bacterium, and it produces severe muscle weakness and even death.

The Academy's Committee on Nutrition and Committee on Infectious Diseases endorsed a recommendation by the National Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta that honey should not be given to infants younger than six months of age. The risk has not been positively defined, but the Academy suggests following the recommendation until more data is gathered.



**CHIEF HOUSEKEEPING AIDE Hope Woodbury has retired after 21 years at MMC. After her party, Hope's friends and coworkers (including supervisor Lee Forest, on her immediate right) surrounded her for a group photo. (A/V Photo)**





WINTER MAY HAVE COME IN COLD, SNOWY, AND WINDY, but some things are making winter weather a little more bearable this year. Aside from a few minor problems, the new Orthopedic entrance is proving to be a vast improvement over the old one, shown above. (A/V Photo)

## Marketplace

**FOR RENT:** Condominium unit at Evergreen Valley. Kitchen facilities, sleeps 4, available week of 1/17. Call 797-2623 after 7 PM.

**FOR RENT:** Condominium in Cape Elizabeth. Nice neighborhood, near schools, 2 BR. \$400/mo. Call 799-4255 after 6 PM.

**FOR RENT:** Western Prom apt., 2 blocks from MMC, 1-2 BR, kitchen, LR, bath, furnished or unfurnished, stove & refrig., \$300/mo. includes heat and utils., sec. dep. Call 775-0970.

**FOR SALE:** K2 model 255 skis, 200 cm., with look nevada bindings, ex. cond. (formerly their top model). \$120 or B.O. Call David at 772-3225 after 6 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Colonial-style couch, never used, must sell. Call 854-9630 after 5 PM.

**FOR SALE:** Dressmaker portable sewing machine, automatic zigzag. \$75. Call 883-3586.

**RIDE WANTED:** From Brunswick to MMC, work hours are 8 AM - 4:30 PM, somewhat flexible. Call Jill at 729-0863 after 6 PM.

## New Employees

**HOUSEKEEPING:** Sharon Allen, Patricia D'Andrea

**MEDICAL RECORDS:** Lorraine Gagnon  
**MEDICAL REHABILITATION:** Anne Catanzano

**PARKING:** Robert Leeman

**PATIENT ACCOUNTS:** Roberta Kingsbury

**RADIOLOGY:** Laura Wnek

## 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 the Editor, Public Information Office, MMC, Portland, Me., 04102. Barbara Burns, Editor.

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## Excess vacation time? Use it or lose it

The Maine Medical Center's Personnel Policy Manual is quite specific about accumulated vacation time, stating that "some carryover of vacation eligibility from one calendar year to the next is permitted; however, such is limited to two weeks, and further restricted to the extent that actual vacation time taken during any calendar year may not exceed two weeks of carryover plus the normal maximum vacation time to which an employee is eligible."

This policy has been loosely observed in the past, and as a result many MMC employees have well over two weeks of carried-over vacation time saved up. Mary Lou Kiley, Interim Director of Personnel, says that beginning January 1, 1981, those employees will have two years in which to trim the excess down to at least the allowed two-week accrual. Any employee with so much accumulated time that taking it within the two-year period would cause undue hardship to the employee or the department may make special arrangements. These arrangements must be approved by the employee, manager and administrator concerned.

## Morphology

**FIRST RULE OF  
INTELLIGENT THINKING**

*Save all the parts.*

**FIRST LAW OF REPAIR**

*You can't fix it if it ain't broke.*

**FIRST LAW OF BRIDGE**

*It's always the partner's fault.*

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