

**Fear — both of the unknown and of death — make heart surgery a terrifying prospect. But at one hospital, Lois Butkovich**

**Provides a helping hand**

By ROSE WEBER  
Fear of dying and fear of the unknown are still the two biggest questions in the minds of those facing heart surgery. Helping patients and their families cope with those fears is as essential a part of treatment as the actual surgery itself.

Lois Butkovich, cardiovascular nurse clinician at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, is available to patients and their families from the moment of admission through and even after discharge from the hospital.

Her purpose is education of the patient. She follows heart attack victims, doctor's cardiology referrals and open heart surgery patients through their hospital procedure.

Most of her time is spent in the progressive care area explaining to the patient and his family with the



LOIS BUTKOVICH

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help of a heart model exactly what a heart attack is. "While they are in the intensive care unit their anxiety level is usually so high they aren't ready for learning at that time," she explained.

SHE SAID many heart surgery patients can be brought back to a normal life. "And that's important because most people feel they cannot return to a normal life after a heart attack. And that is not true. It's as much our fault as anything that they think that way," she said. Her face is the one constant reassuring sight in the bewildering kaleidoscope of medical staff which attends a heart patient.

Although the patient meets with the anesthesiologist, surgeon and clergy before the operation, it is Ms. Butkovich who is available to them through the entire day of surgery and answers the questions that plague them even after they have gone home.

IN FACT, patients have expressed a preference for her answers to questions because "she speaks English," not the complicated language of the physician. "The poor things are so accustomed to being left in the dark they can't believe I'm there," she said.

She also recruits the heart patients themselves to help her know what to say to other patients. "I have never been rolled down that hall on a cart so I have no way of knowing what it's like. So I ask them to tell me what frightened them the most that I didn't tell them about," she said.

SHE EXPLAINED that this gives the patients a good feeling of helping others. Many times she will ask a discharged patient to come in and talk to one who is having difficulty handling his fears. Death is the most commonly expressed fear and she said she believes in letting them talk about it. "It's usual to say, 'Oh, you're going to be all right, don't worry.' And that's not what they are looking for," she said.

They need to know that this fear is not unusual and they are not crazy for worrying about it, she continued. It is easier for families and patients to confide in Ms. Butkovich about their fears than in each other.

"I BECAME a nurse because I wanted to do patient care. So I keep my hand in by asking to be assigned patients when there are no surgeries scheduled. In May, 1973, Ms. Butkovich was promoted from her position as head nurse in cardiovascular care to clinician for the heart attack patients. In February 1974 the open heart surgery patients were added to her care.

"At first it was very difficult. Hospital personnel would see me walking around talking to people and they would wonder what I was doing," she said. But time has proved her role to be valuable and now she is being utilized to the fullest.

ALTHOUGH HER position is barely a year old, she already has more patients than she can handle. So she has devised a teaching program for nurses of heart attack patients. "They will do the same sort of



thing I do under my supervision. That way we can be sure all patients are properly provided for," the nurse said.

She will retain care of the pre and post-operative and open heart surgery patients.

The role of a nurse clinician is relatively new. It is a program that nurses may elect to specialize in

just as doctors select special services.

THERE ARE FOUR in service at Beaumont Hospital now—psychiatric, pediatric, new born-obstetric and cardiovascular. They would like to add one more for surgery.

Normally the nurse clinicians are required to have a master's

degree in addition to a bachelor's degree. However, Ms. Butkovich was promoted because of the expertise shown during her four and one half years as head nurse and her experience in a small hospital in the Upper Peninsula.

She also does staff teaching, coordinating nurses work on the different cardiac floors.

**Study skills to be topic**

Prof. Howard Murdock of Purdue University will be the instructor for a four-evening, 10-hour program of study skills and adjustment to college life for four branches of the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit. The course, being co-sponsored by Birmingham, Dearborn, Farmington and South Oakland Branch YMCAs, will be conducted at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College—Farmington Road at Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills. Classes will be conducted Aug. 5 through Aug. 8 from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The program is open to any high school graduate and other adults who are entering college for the first time or who wish to improve on their study skills. Information about registration can be obtained by contacting James Wiseman at the South Oakland YMCA.

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