

Fibrillations send Bush to naval hospital

Power will shift to Quayle if medication doesn't work

BETHESDA, Md. — President Bush continued to experience an irregular heartbeat Sunday and his wife said he would remain hospitalized a second night at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Doctors added a second medication in an effort to stabilize the president's condition.

Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said that if Bush did not respond adequately to the medication, he could undergo a procedure on Monday that would shift the power of the presidency briefly to Vice President Dan Quayle.

The procedure would be an electrical cardioversion, described by Fitzwater as "a single application of direct electrical current to the heart — one very quick jolt." The purpose would be to restore the president's normal heartbeat.

Under the procedure, Bush would be under anesthesia for several minutes. Under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, Bush could — and would — shift presidential powers to Quayle.

Fitzwater said that the decision on whether to take the step will be made this morning and the procedure would follow later in the day.

"President Bush's medical diagnosis today remains essentially the same," Fitzwater said Sunday. He said Bush would remain overnight at the hospital to allow doctors to monitor his situation with an early decision on Monday on what steps to take next.

Fitzwater said there were indications that Bush was showing some response to the medication. Fitzwater said tests on Bush showed no sign of heart damage or any evidence of a heart attack.

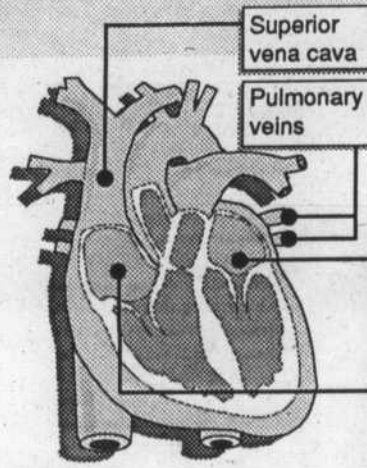
"I'm going home to bed. He's going to bed," First Lady Barbara Bush told reporters as she departed for the White House on Sunday evening. There was no official word from the White House on Bush's continued hospitalization.

Despite the continued hospitalization, Bush was in a jovial mood when he poked his head out of the window of his fourth-floor hospital suite to talk to reporters. "Don't worry about me," he said at mid-afternoon.

Aides had told reporters Saturday night that Bush was likely to leave the hospital early Sunday, but at mid-morning Fitzwater said Bush would spend the day at Bethesda and doctors would monitor medication intended to stabilize the president's heartbeat.

President Suffers Irregular Heartbeat

President Bush suffered shortness of breath while jogging at Camp David. He was diagnosed as having an irregular heartbeat, a condition known as atrial fibrillation. Irregular heartbeats can occur for a variety of reasons and do not necessarily represent a serious threat.



Atrial fibrillation
An irregular heart beat in which the atria (upper chambers of the heart) beat irregularly and rapidly.

Left atrium
Receives oxygenated blood from the pulmonary veins

Right atrium
Receives deoxygenated blood from the venae cavae

Heart

AP

Bush, 66, was hospitalized Saturday evening after experiencing fatigue and shortness of breath while jogging at Camp David. He was diagnosed as having an atrial fibrillation, a fast, irregular heart rhythm.

The condition, which strikes 1.5

million to 2 million Americans a year, does not necessarily pose a serious medical threat but can increase the risk of a stroke, according to medical specialists.

It can be caused by a variety of factors, ranging from a heart attack to a reaction to stress or fatigue.

Bush's heartbeat moves spotlight to vice president

WASHINGTON — Vice President Dan Quayle called President Bush at Bethesda Naval Hospital on Sunday before attending church services, as others mused about the man who is a heartbeat away from the presidency.

The president's hospitalization for an irregular heartbeat puts Quayle back in the political spotlight.

Bush "will have to answer to the American people about this issue," said Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, a potential Democratic presidential nominee.

"Does he believe... again in 1992 that the vice president is the best person in America to succeed him if he's unable to continue?" Clinton asked on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Bush and his aides have said that if he runs as expected, Quayle will be his running mate.

Dave Beckwith, Quayle's press secretary, said the vice president wasn't concerned with the political implications of Bush's hospitalization.

But political scientist Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute said Quayle's inclusion on the ticket would be an issue in '92.

Soviet unrest

Boarder tension increases after evacuation

MOSCOW — Tension increased Sunday along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border after Soviet paratroopers were airlifted into the region where 36 people have died in recent ethnic clashes, according to news accounts.

High-ranking Soviet Interior Ministry officials "unequivocally are calling what is happening a civil war between the two republics," the government newspaper Izvestia said.

Gen. Yuri Shatalin, the commander of Soviet troops in the border area, told Izvestia his soldiers were guarding an Armenian nuclear power station against a planned attack by Armenian nationalists. The plant's location was not reported.

A parliamentary commission formed by Russian leader Boris Yeltsin planned to fly from Moscow to Armenia to investigate the bloodshed, the Interfax news agency said.

Tass said Sunday that 200 paratroopers were airlifted by helicopter into the republic's capital of Yerevan

to protect military personnel and installations.

Russian radio said tension was growing again, and the official Tass news agency said Sunday the situation throughout the area had worsened.

Feuding between mainly Christian Armenia and predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan goes back centuries. It involves disputes over land as well as religious and cultural differences.

Hundreds have died since fighting broke out in the neighboring republics in 1987 over Nagorno-Karabakh, a verdant hilly area that is populated mostly by Armenians but has been under Azerbaijani rule since 1923.

The latest bloodshed involves the border villages of Getashen and Martunashen where fighting flared on April 29.

Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian charged Saturday that Soviet soldiers and Azerbaijani Interior

Ministry troops massacred 36 Armenian civilians in the villages.

The Soviet Defense and Interior Ministries blamed Armenia for last week's violence, saying the republic was "stepping up its efforts to create its own army" by encouraging vigilante forces. The ministries also accused Armenian media of a campaign to discredit the Soviet army and police.

Soviet officials said the deaths occurred when troops tried to disarm Armenian vigilantes in the villages, which have a combined population of 2,760.

Sporadic shooting continued through Thursday. Then the villages fell quiet, and helicopters evacuated dozens of wounded on Friday and Saturday.

President Mikhail Gorbachev met separately Friday with Ter-Petrosian and Azerbaijani President Ayaz Mutalibov.

Poison used to relieve arthritis

BOSTON — A genetically engineered drug that arms a human protein with a warhead of diphtheria toxin can dramatically relieve symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, doctors reported Sunday.

One researcher said the medicine, still in early stages of testing, may be the most important development in arthritis treatment since doctors began using a cancer medicine for advanced stages of the disease five years ago.

The treatment is a product of genetic engineering that welds diphtheria toxin to a protein that seeks out a variety of white blood cells that mistakenly destroy the lining of the joints.

The diphtheria-armed protein zeros in on these blood cells, enters them and eventually kills them. This stops their attack on the joints and relieves the pain and swelling that are the major symptoms of the disease.

"I think it has a significant potential," said Dr. K. Lea Sewell. "It's not a rerun. It's a new category of medication."

“It's not a rerun. It's a new category of medication.”

Sewell
physician

Some 7 million people have rheumatoid arthritis, according to the Arthritis Foundation, making it one of the two most common forms of arthritis.

Sewell, a physician at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital, outlined the results Sunday at a meeting in Seattle of the American Society for Clinical Investigation.

The treatment, known technically as an interleukin-2 fusion toxin, is produced by Seragen Inc., of Hopkinton, Mass. The same medicine is being tested elsewhere for use against some forms of blood cancer.

Beth Israel is the only hospital

using the new treatment for rheumatoid arthritis. Sewell said researchers there are recruiting patients for larger-scale testing.

In initial testing, 13 patients with severe arthritis took injections of the medicine daily for a week. Four showed dramatic improvement, while eight others had at least some response to the treatment.

"Three of them felt like they did not have arthritis," said Sewell. "It's really remarkable pain control. One lady went dancing. One woman said she felt like Cinderella."

Among these patients was a woman who suffered from 20 swollen joints and two hours of stiffness each morning. After the treatment, her only symptom was one swollen joint in an index finger.

Dr. David Trentham, who also worked on the study, said the treatment has the most potential of any drug developed since the benefits of methotrexate were recognized about five years ago.

Cyclone may approach coasts of Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh — Forecasters on Sunday predicted winds approaching cyclone strength for Bangladesh's storm-devastated coast, and news reports said survivors from last week's killer cyclone looted food trucks in one town.

Steady rain and inadequate transport upset distribution of relief supplies Sunday to the estimated 10 million people displaced from the cyclone, and relief officials and physicians said "secondary deaths" may start occurring soon in remote islands still awaiting aid.

The Red Crescent, the Islamic equivalent of the Red Cross, said the death toll in Tuesday's cyclone was likely to reach 200,000. The official count was put at 125,720. Newspapers predicted the toll would be 500,000.

A helicopter carrying the prime ministers of Bangladesh and Pakistan and Nobel laureate Mother Teresa over the disaster area made an emergency landing Sunday but returned safely to Dhaka hours later. State TV did not report any injuries to Mother Teresa, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia or Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif.

Of the food supplies reaching

the stricken southeastern coast, some packages were airdropped into the sea atop piles of dead bodies, newspapers said. Plastic containers of drinking water were dropped from 500 feet high, bursting on impact, a foreign photographer on one relief flight said.

As time began to run out for refugees without shelter or food, relief officials criticized the government for not coming up with a specific relief plan.

As an example of the country's lack of aid coordination, its political parties are conducting separate relief efforts apart from the government operation.

"The critical period has started. Famished men, injured men can only survive for four to five days under the circumstances," said Dr. Mohammad Musa of CARE International, a relief organization.

Gusty winds and rain, which continued Sunday, handicapped Bangladesh's fleet of 17 helicopters and a few fixed-wing airplanes.

The Weather Bureau Sunday forecast winds of 60 to 70 mph will hit nine northern districts as well as the eastern districts of Noakhali, which caught the lashing edge of Tuesday's storm.

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