



-- FEATURES

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Baptist Hospital Takes
SIDS Battle To Home Front

By Chuck Warzyn

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Steve and Marilyn Cooper's warm and colorful nursery is an unexpected place to encounter medical high technology.

Hanging from the ceiling above the changing table is a fabric balloon carrying a bar in the gondola. A windup mobile slowly spins Mother Goose characters above the crib. Winnie the Pooh and rag dolls watch a sleeping seven-week-old baby and an imposing black box that beeps.

The box is no toy. Two wires run from an opening in the baby's jumper to the box on the changing table shelf. Two lights labeled "heart" and "respiration" flash off and on.

It is a monitor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The baby, Patrick, is one of about 40 babies in the Memphis area currently on home SIDS monitors provided by the SIDS and Apnea Center at Baptist Memorial Hospital-East.

The center, an outgrowth of the hospital's Sleep Disorders Center, began testing babies for SIDS susceptibility in May 1982. That same month, monitors became available to take home, and in August 1983, the center began providing monitors free to families who couldn't afford them.

"Right now, the chances of a baby dying of SIDS are about two out of every 10,000 live births," said Nancy Caruso, neonatal nurse and nurse coordinator for the SIDS Center. "It rises to 20 in 1,000 if a sibling died of SIDS."

SIDS is a major cause of death in infants between the ages of one month and one year. It's a baffling ailment to physicians, medical researchers and couples such as the Coopers, who gave birth to twin boys at Baptist Memorial Hospital-East, one diagnosed as SIDS-susceptible.

Many misconceptions and misunderstandings have resulted from SIDS. The center's social work counselor, Carolyn Jones, tells of a Mississippi man who was jailed a year ago before being cleared of charges he'd killed his baby, in reality a victim of SIDS.

Unfortunately, she explained, many parents mistakenly feel they somehow could have prevented the death of their infant. Guilt is the most common emotion with which she must deal when working with the couples.

Experts say the only clear way to identify SIDS-susceptible babies in the newborn nursery is if they had SIDS siblings or experience apnea or bradycardia. Apnea, the temporary stopping of breathing, is believed to be caused by the central nervous system's inability to properly regulate breathing due to some abnormality. Bradycardia is an irregular heart rate.

The center, like a detective trying to stop a death before it happens, identifies potential victims through clues.

Three kinds of babies are examined: premature babies, those who have experienced 20-second pauses in their breathing and those with severe or chronic lung disease.

Babies identified as SIDS-susceptible are tested in the center's sleep laboratory. Infants who show signs of any irregularities during the test are candidates for a SIDS home monitor.

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One light on the monitor flashes each time the baby's heart beats, the other flashes as the baby breathes in and out. Should the baby's heart beat stop for three seconds or breathing stop for longer than the time designated by the attending physician (usually about 15 seconds), an alarm will go off, beeping once for each second over the time allowed. The heart and breathing alarms sound at different pitches to let the parents know what the problem is.

When a baby is diagnosed as being SIDS-susceptible, the center staff recommends the infant be placed on a home monitor, a recommendation Caruso says has yet to be turned down. The parents then begin a series of classes to learn proper care of their baby and the monitor.

Training sessions are individualized, but generally the mother and father receive one and one-half hours of training on the background and symptoms of SIDS and apnea and use of the monitor. A half-hour is devoted to learning to administer theophylline, a drug to assist breathing and reduce the chance of apnea. The parents also attend a cardiopulmonary resuscitation demonstration and practice the technique on an infant model. This demonstration doesn't constitute actual certification, and parents are encouraged to enroll in either an American Heart Association or Red Cross CPR course.

A mother and father will receive six to eight hours of training and counseling. They take a multiple choice test to check their retention of the material provided and when they leave the hospital they are given a packet of information which reviews their training.

The parents also spend one night in a hospital room with their baby to help them adjust to the monitor. After three months, the baby returns to the hospital for another test. If no more irregularities are recorded, the infant returns home for one more month on the monitor. Then, if a final test is passed, the baby is diagnosed as having passed the critical stage and is removed from the monitor.

Jones helps the parents adjust to having their baby on a SIDS monitor. "The main concern of parents at first seems to be 'Can I handle this?' Later, once they're used to the monitor and their baby is past the danger stage, they hate to give it up," she said. "We have to wean them by having them take the baby off the monitor for longer and longer periods of time."

The Coopers' (they asked that their real names not be used) twins were born in November.

"Two days after they were born, we had an incident in the hospital where Patrick stopped breathing and turned blue," Mrs. Cooper explained. Patrick was judged SIDS-susceptible. The couple and both sets of grandparents received training.

"My reaction at first to the monitor was to sit and stare at it," Mrs. Cooper remembered. "You never get used to it, you just get more comfortable with it."

Now the monitor has become part of the everyday routine. When someone is in the room with Patrick, the monitor's leads are removed and human observation and contact replace electronics. The young brothers sleep in the nursery across the hall from the master bedroom or in twin cradles at the foot of their parents' bed.

"We've had six or seven breathing alarms and one heart alarm since we came home from the hospital," Mr. Cooper said. But in each instance, Patrick stirred back to normal, either on his own or startled by the alarm. This is the first-stage response to an alarm. "If the alarm doesn't awaken the baby, you're supposed to rub his hands and feet," Mrs. Cooper explained. "If you don't get a response, you rub more roughly and then finally use CPR."

The Coopers say their son has been a champ, even developing a taste for the drug they must give him mixed with his formula to stimulate his breathing. "He's really been a good baby as far as all this is concerned," Mrs. Cooper said, admitting she has mixed feelings now that the time may be nearing when Patrick can be removed from the monitor.

But for the time being, the black box with its wires and blinking lights stretching out to a sleeping Patrick will remain guard with Pooh and the rag dolls, not so much a sign of concern for the present as a symbol of hope for the future.

Children's Home Worker Dies In Fire

MEANSVILLE, Ga. (BP)--Margaret E. Chastain, an employee of Georgia Baptist Children's Home, died in a fire on the Meansville campus Sunday morning, Feb. 26.

The fire, of undetermined origin, destroyed an off duty faculty apartment on the campus. Mrs. Chastain's body was found in the rubble.

A passing motorist spotted the flames about 2 a.m. and called the local sheriff's office. Two fire departments responded, but the apartment was engulfed in flames when they arrived.

Mrs. Chastain, 45, from Forest Park, Ga., had been working at the Children's Home six days when she was killed. She previously worked at Florida Baptist Children's Home.

Children's Home administrator L. Don Duvall said Mrs. Chastain is believed to be the first employee ever to die on a campus of the Children's Home. The home operates three separate campuses, in Meansville, Baxley and Palmetto. Duvall said the faculty apartment was valued at about \$50,000. It was covered by insurance.

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Texas Trailer Parks Are Mission Field

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
2/27/84

HARLINGEN, Texas (BP)--Texas Baptist volunteers are doing home and foreign missions with people from throughout the United States and Canada in an unusual ministry in the Rio Grande Valley.

Their mission field is the large trailer camps where a half-million "Winter Texans" come to escape the icy winters of Canada and the midwestern and northern United States.

The Winter Texans--mostly retirees--can enjoy the warm valley climate with beaches, lakes and a relatively low cost of living. And through missions minded volunteers they are also hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, some of them for the first time.

Local Baptists and volunteers from upstate churches are conducting regular worship services and Bible studies in more than 20 trailer camps. In one camp, Baptists have preached to more than 2,000 people of many denominations in a single service, said Robert Smith of Weslaco who helped begin the Winter Texans' ministry soon after becoming missions director of the Rio Grande Association in 1968.

Smith recruited and trained 13 couples, mostly retirees from upstate churches, who live in the trailer camps and lead Bible studies and worship services.

Another pioneer in the ministry is 70-year-old C.L. "Smokey" Boyle of Harlingen who coined the name "Winter Texans" to replace the vernacular "snow birds" with which the campers had been tagged.

Boyle, an unassuming but strongly evangelistic layman, has become so appreciated by campers he is invited to speak to large rallies in distant states and other countries.

"I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody about somebody who can save anybody," says Boyle, who spent 18 years leading youth ministries before switching to retirees. He recalls 13 "preacher boys" came out of the youth rallies he helped lead in Rio Grande Association.

Now he conducts up to five services per Sunday in the Winter Texans' trailer parks and city auditoriums.

On a Sunday morning, 500 retirees joined enthusiastically in "Gimme that Old Time Religion..." and other favorites.

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Then Boyle rose to say, "When I get to Heaven, I'm going to sing like that. I'm going to give a concert. Y'all come...but you gotta make a reservation...hello...."

The retirees say they like the folksy little lay preacher "because he speaks our language." Although he is preaching to people of every major denomination and many without church affiliation, Boyle pulls no punches.

"You eat the devil's corn, and he'll choke you on the cob," declares Boyle.

He is not permitted to give the standard "invitation" of most Baptist churches, but Boyle still tells them how to be saved.

"The slowest Christian in the world can outrun the devil's fastest horse," says Boyle. "Would you listen to Ol' Smokey just a moment. If you want to have a foundation under your soul and a joy in your heart, go out there under the palms or in your trailer and say to God, 'Would you be merciful to me and save me?' Do it today."

Boyle says only about one in 500,000 people come to Christ after 60 years of age, but he receives letters from those who've become Christians through the Winter Texans' ministries.

The work began with support from the Mary Hill Davis offering for State (Texas) Missions and is undergirded now by the Cooperative Program.

Boyle and Smith say it is the best advertising Southern Baptists can get, because the people soon will go home to other areas to share the things they experienced in the Valley.

Many of the Winter Texans have gotten involved in the ministry. For example, Mattie Reynolds of West Yellowstone, Mont., whose husband died recently, has found a special joy in helping lead out in the ministry at a large trailer camp near Harlingen.

Concerned residents at another camp near Weslaco were among the first to rally to the needs of families who were left without the basic needs of life after the December freeze wiped out the citrus and many of the vegetable crops in the valley.

Roberto Viveros, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Mission of First Baptist Church, Weslaco, reported at a Sunday evening worship service the Winter Texans' gifts had provided food for 42 families and paid utility bills for a dozen others.

The day to day ministries, as well as Sunday worship services, are done by Texas Baptist volunteers who live in the camps where they serve. Some of them work in conjunction with local Baptist churches.

Mission Service Corps volunteers M.E. and Pearl Wyatt, who are camp ministers in two parks in LaFeria, work closely with First Baptist Church, LaFeria, which sponsors Bible study in eight of the parks. Their goal is to reach Winter Texans and tie them into the churches.

The Wyatts developed the "Chapel on Wheels" ministry in California and served with the Texas Baptist church extension section to help get it started in Texas and Minnesota-Wisconsin where Texas Baptists have long sponsored mission work.

In the Valley, the Wyatts and other volunteers have developed an audio-visual ministry to share Christ's salvation and love with the people.

Blossom and Tommy Tinker of Lubbock retired after he spent 29 years in the United States Army and now work at the Sunshine RV Park in Harlingen.

They say many people who come to the services at the park admit they don't even go to church at home.

Ruth and Dick Becker of Burlington, Colo., decided at 52 they were just wasting time when they could be used of the Lord. So the Beckers, who are in the process of becoming MSC volunteers, sold their home and a coast-to-coast hardware business to get involved in ministering full-time.

Serving in a park at Donna, they lead Bible studies and worship services, make hospital visits and even conduct funerals where they are able to bring the message to many people.

"People ought to consider retiring early and really be useful for the Lord," Becker said. "There's nothing like it, the rewards are phenomenal."

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Consultation On Aging
Addresses Ethical Issues

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
2/27/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Christians who care about the aging need to do some listening as well as talking, participants at a Consultation on Aging were told.

The consultation, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, brought together representatives of denominational agencies, associations and local churches to assess the issue of aging and to consider ways to help churches deal effectively with it.

Paul Adkins, director of the Christian social ministries department at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, reminded fellow participants Southern Baptist leaders at all levels need "to start listening to older persons" as they plan programs and ministries targeted at senior adults.

"Too often," he explained, "we assume that we know and understand the needs of aging. If we talked with these persons, however, we might be surprised by what the real needs and concerns are."

Adkins and others also pointed to the the need for more "clinical research" to provide reliable data for planning denominational and local church ministries for the aging. Both the Home Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board, Adkins said, are equipped to contribute to such research.

Christian Life Commission Executive Director Foy Valentine stressed aging is "fundamentally an ethical issue" which challenges both churches and society.

He and other participants identified an array of important issues confronting America's senior citizens: continued usefulness, economics, communication, transportation, housing, health care, violence, intergenerational conflict, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, suicide, recreation and accelerated technology.

The group dealt with ways to help local churches "get a handle" on such issues. Roger Hauser of the family ministry department at the Sunday School Board, noted "tremendous diversity" among the aging complicates the challenge. "The question for the church," he said, "is how do we address this diversity?"

One strongly endorsed suggestion was the formation in local churches of support groups for older persons, particularly those separated from their families by death or distance.

Though the needs and problems abound, consultation members praised Southern Baptist progress in the field of aging, particularly during the last decade.

And Valentine, Southern Baptist senior agency executive, added a personal, upbeat note to the meeting. For the Christian, he noted, aging does not have to be a negative process.

"I, for one, count it a blessing to be 60," he said. "I'm more free than ever before, more experienced than ever before and richer than ever before in family, friends, relationships, challenges and opportunities."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story "Dissident Presbyterians Lose Church Property," mailed 2/22/84, in graf 6, please change the words "the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A." to "Presbyterian Church (USA)."

Thanks, Baptist Press

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