J-Hospitals understaffing problem continues

By Renee Krause  
26 JAN. 1979

Another anesthesiologist resigned Tuesday from University Hospitals, leaving three full-time anesthesiologists on the staff.

Dr. Michael A. Cohen submitted his resignation and will finish his work Wednesday. Cohen, who completed his residency at University Hospitals Jan. 1, was working under a fellowship from the American Board of Anesthesiology.

Twelve anesthesiologists were on the staff about a year ago, including the chairman of the department, Dr. Joseph S. Kersey, who resigned in December, said in an earlier article, "Ideally the department should have 18 to 20 doctors."

Due to the staffing problem, only six of 13 operating rooms will be used beginning Feb. 1, said Dr. John S. McDonald, chairman of the anesthesia department.

McDonald said the department "will maintain the quality that we want" by using only the six operating rooms.

"Those of us who are here are working too hard," McDonald said. "As members come on the staff, we'll open up more operating rooms."

Cohen said, "I don't like working 60 to 70 hours a week."

A nurse in anesthesiology who requested anonymity said, "I can assume there won't be much surgery done and there probably will be less supervision."

The anesthesiologists have been spread very thin, according to one nurse. "People in the anesthesiology department are concerned about the care being given in the operating rooms," she said.

"If the conditions are still the same, I will not be working there," she said.

McDonald said the hospital can continue to function with the three anesthesiologists. The answer is to "limit the number of surgical cases that you do until sufficient staffing is available," he said.

Presently, University Hospitals can only keep pace with mandatory operations, said Dr. Manuel Tzagournis, associate dean of medicine. Patients with "elective operations" are told there is a waiting period, Tzagournis said.

These scheduling problems exist even though private doctors are sending their patients to other hospitals, according to another nurse of anesthesiology. She said the private doctors are aware of the problem and are sending most of their patients elsewhere.

The anesthesiology department's problem began with the adoption of a medical practice plan by the OSU Board of Directors in March. The plan requires the doctors to channel a percentage of their patient-care income back into the department.

Six anesthesiologists left University Hospitals July 1, including the chairman of the department.

Since July, five more have resigned, leaving a skeleton staff to handle the operations. As of September, "We had six good, well-qualified doctors on the staff," one nurse said.

She said the six anesthesiologists had been there for at least two years and one had been there for 24 years.

The reason for the latest resignations is uncertain. McDonald said, however, that "sometimes the changeover in command" is the reason.

McDonald took over the department of anesthesiology in September, replacing Dr. William Hamelberg.

Cohen had arranged to remain at University Hospitals for another year under a fellowship from the
American Board of Anesthesiology. On Wednesday, when his resignation becomes effective, 11 months will remain in that fellowship.

"I did not resign because of the practice plan," Cohen said. "I resigned because it's not a happy place. The morale is low and I don't enjoy my work anymore."

Cohen would not go into detail about his decision to resign but said: "I don't like being lied to, and I don't like being screwed over."

"I personally believe that hospital is going to become a tomb," Cohen said.

A nurse said the resignations have left many staff members concerned about the hospital's performance. "Our biggest concern is when you're calling for help and nobody comes," she said.

"These people may not die, but they get into more problems without qualified people in the operating room, people with enough experience," she added.

She said she expects help to come when she calls for it. "It has in the past, and it isn't coming now," she said.

The nurse explained that the anesthesiologist does not have to be in the operating room all the time, but should be available if complications arise.

The future staffing of the anesthesiology department is unsettled. According to McDonald, one doctor should be joining the staff Feb. 1 and two others by July.

McDonald refused to name the doctors because the appointments are not finalized.

Cohen's future is uncertain. "I'll be looking for a job in private practice or another fellowship in another hospital," he said.
Anesthesiology Uproar Continuing

By David Lore
Of The Dispatch Staff

Civil war in Ohio State University’s Anesthesiology Department has prompted two more resignations, an investigation by the university provost, and what one official calls “a misunderstanding” about some gas machines.

The turmoil, university officials fear, could jeopardize continued accreditation of OSU’s student nurse anesthesia program. A review team is expected on campus next month.

The Anesthesiology department last year lost nine doctors, including its chairman, mostly because of contention over the university-imposed medical practice plan, which requires physicians to rebate up to 20 percent of their fee income to the university to cover costs.

Since September, however, the department has been upset by friction between the new chairman, Dr. John S. McDonald, formerly of the University of Colorado Medical Center, and holdover doctors and nurses.

The most recent resignations are:

- Anesthesiology Resident Michael Cohen who, according to his wife, is leaving because of disagreements with McDonald touching on both departmental organization and medical care. Cohen finished his residency Jan. 1 but agreed to stay on through Wednesday.
- Eleanor J. Scott, director of the University Hospital operating and recovery rooms. According to Manuel Tzagournis, associate dean of the College of Medicine, Ms. Scott is quitting “because of a personality conflict with Dr. McDonald.”

The Department will be left with three full-time faculty members: McDonald, Dr. C. Merle Welch and Dr. Joseph Ondrej. Several anesthesiologists, including former Department Chairman William Hamelberg, are assisting the hospital on a part-time basis. There are also two circuit anesthesiologists working temporarily at the university, one of whom is also leaving this week.

University Hospital officials say they hope, however, to augment the full-time staff with two new doctors by next Thursday.

Because of continued staff shortages, however, Tzagournis says University Hospital will only use six operating rooms starting next Thursday. That will mean longer waits for elective surgery.

Two additional rooms will be used, he added, when surgeons can arrange the assistance of a non-OSU anesthesiologist.

OSU Provost Albert Kuhn said Friday the problem in anesthesiology consists mostly of personality clashes and “a lack of clear understanding about the responsibility of various actors in the surgical and recovery room.”

Although his investigation continues, he says he has appointed Surgery Vice Chairman Luther Keith as associate medical director for surgical services to coordinate duties of the various specialists.

At least one outside expert will soon be brought in to review the anesthesiology department’s operations, he said.

Tzagournis said he has no evidence that the McDonald team has allowed a deterioration of medical care. Mortality rates in the surgery room, he said, have not changed and he said he knows of no case in which a surgical death resulted from errors in the administration of anesthetic, “although that’s hard to determine.”

He acknowledged, however, that an unidentified anesthesiologist in a recent operation erred by using a weak anesthetic, resulting in the patient waking up and feeling pain before the end of the 15-minute procedure.

“THAT SORT of thing can happen, and we told the patient we were sorry,” he said. No disciplinary action was taken against the doctor, he said.

He disputed allegations by some dissident nurses that McDonald acted improperly in bringing two gas machines to OSU from the Colorado medical center last September.

Tzagournis says one of the machines belonged to Dr. McDonald while the other was transferred to OSU because of modifications necessary to McDonald’s research. OSU purchased a $5,750 replacement machine and sent it to Colorado to compensate that institution, he said.

Although the switch of machines between campuses was one of the arrangements for hiring Dr. McDonald last September, Tzagournis admits McDonald’s former boss, Dr. Anthony Andretti, was unhappy about the arrangements.

“It was a misunderstanding,” Tzagournis says. “His chairman at Colorado questioned it because he wasn’t aware of the details and he was unhappy about losing McDonald.”
U-Hospitals hire anesthesiologist; four now on staff

By Renee Krause

An anesthesiologist was added to the staff of University Hospitals Thursday.

Dr. Denman Shaw joined the anesthesiology staff, bringing the number of full-time doctors to four. The department is budgeted for 12 anesthesiologists.

Shaw said he worked in the OSU anesthesiology department for three weeks in September.

"I'm glad I can help out," Shaw said. He refused to comment on why he left the hospital in September.

On Wednesday, Dr. Michael A. Cohen finished working in the department after resigning Jan. 23. Cohen was working under a fellowship from the American Board of Anesthesiology and had 11 months of the fellowship remaining when he left.

The department has been plagued with problems since the adoption of a medical practice plan by the OSU Board of Trustees in March. The plan requires doctors to channel up to 20 percent of their patient-care income back into the department.

Six of the 12 anesthesiologists in the department left July 1. Five others have resigned since September, leaving the new chairman, Dr. John S. McDonald, with the responsibility of rebuilding the department.

Dr. C. Merle Welch, one of the full-time anesthesiologists, is in University Hospitals with what is believed to be bronchitis.

Provost Albert J. Kuhn said McDonald cannot recruit enough anesthesiologists by himself. He said Dr. Henry G. Cramblett, acting vice president for medical affairs, "is getting into the recruiting act."

Kuhn met with the nurse anesthetists Tuesday and said they "are helping me to see the problems more clearly." Kuhn said the nurses were "candid" with him and that he is following up on the problems.
U-Hospitals handling overload despite problems, dean says

By Renee Krause

Although problems continue at University Hospitals, Henry G. Cramblett, dean of medical affairs, stressed Tuesday that the hospital is handling the problems and patient load.

Cramblett, erroneously named in the Lantern Tuesday as William Cramblett, said the hospital is giving proper patient care and noted that "25 operative procedures" were scheduled Tuesday.

Cramblett said he ordered the closing of several operating rooms in order to alleviate the scheduling problems of anesthesiologists. Six of 14 rooms are now in use. Four full-time anesthesiologists are on the staff.

"I wonder about the propriety of physicians complaining anonymously who question the level of patient care yet who continue to admit and operate on their patients there," Cramblett said. He was referring to doctors who said they would discontinue use of the University Hospitals' operating rooms until conditions improve.

Cramblett said the problems with the anesthesiology department are being dealt with. Dr. Luther Keith, a surgeon, was appointed assistant director for medical services in January to help deal with the problems, he said.

In his capacity, Keith will be coordinating the implementation of policy with the fourth floor (operating floor) physician coordinator to insure maintenance of optimal quality of pre-operative, intra-operative, and post-operative management," according to a memorandum on Keith's appointment.

Other methods of handling the problems are the efforts and "vigorous recruiting" of John S. McDonald, chairman of the anesthesiology department. Assistant Administrator of University Hospitals Clifford Eldredge said recruiting was one of the main purposes of McDonald's trip to Los Angeles and Vail.

McDonald left Feb. 3 to attend a symposium which begins Feb. 9 in Los Angeles and continues in Vail through Feb. 16. Cramblett said McDonald made plans to attend the symposium six months ago.

Cramblett also plans to "protect" McDonald's time when he returns from the West to guarantee that he can perform his job efficiently. He said McDonald has the responsibilities of teaching, recruiting, researching and running the administration of the anesthesiology department.

Cramblett also denied contacting Dr. Antonio Aldrete of the anesthesiology department of the University of Colorado Medical Center as stated in a Feb. 6 Lantern article.

The anesthesiology department, however, is still having problems. A shortage of anesthesiologists and several emergency cases caused Dr. Paul Oppenheimer, who resigned from University Hospitals in June 1978, to come in and help in the operating room Sunday.

One anesthesiologist and one nurse anesthetist were scheduled to work Sunday. Normally, three members of the anesthesiology department staff are scheduled, Oppenheimer said.

One doctor said the situation Sunday was "normal" and three people could have handled the case load.

He continued, "No one schedules emergencies, but you have to be prepared for them and every other hospital is." The problem centered around the lack of back-up anesthesiologists at University Hospitals, he said.

Cramblett said the important fact about Sunday's situation is that the doctors handled the emergencies. He said Keith realized there was a problem Sunday morning and went into the hospital for "the total day."

Nurse anesthetists are concerned for the patients because of the anesthesiologist shortage, several said. "All we want is to give good anesthesia to every patient, and it's frustrating not to be able to do that," one nurse said.

Nurses are threatening to resign if the situation does not improve soon. "We're being made to feel guilty if they have to close the operating rooms," one nurse said.
Anesthesiologist Returns To Work At OSU Hospital

Dr. William Hamelberg, whose resignation as anesthesiology chairman at Ohio State University last summer sparked an exodus of campus doctors, is back at work this week at University Hospital.

Hamelberg says his tenure is temporary, to help during the absence of his successor as chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology, Dr. John S. McDonald.

McDONALD, ACCORDING to hospital officials, is attending an American Anesthesia Society program in Los Angeles and doing some recruiting for OSU. He is scheduled to return Feb. 19.

During McDonald's absence, Hamelberg says he has been given permission by St. Anthony Hospital to work full time at University Hospital, since there are only three anesthesiologists available to man six operating rooms. When he left OSU, Hamelberg became director of critical care at St. Anthony Hospital.

After McDonald returns, Hamelberg says he will continue to work one day per week at University Hospital.

DURING 1978, Hamelberg was one of 11 anesthesiologists who quit OSU either because of OSU's controversial practice plan regulating doctor income or because of opposition to McDonald's policies.

Asked Wednesday if he'd consider returning full time to OSU, Hamelberg said, "That's not out of the question, but the likelihood is not very great." "The question is up," he said, "but I'm still hung up on the practice plan."

Nurses Await OSU Bargaining Reply

A spokesman for the Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) said she expects an answer soon on whether Ohio State University will recognize the group as a collective bargaining unit for registered nurses in its hospitals.

But university officials indicated a decision is not just around the corner.

Madison Scott, vice president for personnel services, said, "So far as I know, there's nothing popping. We meet all the time with various groups."

PAMELA AMES, assistant director of economic and general welfare programs for the ONA, said university nurses "came to us last fall."

The 10,000-member state association has a collective bargaining program active for about 10 years with 24 contracts representing 2,800 nurses, she said.

A "strong majority" of the 500-odd nurses want ONA to represent them in drawing up a contract with the university, Mrs. Ames said. Nurses currently do not have a bargaining agent.

The nurses reportedly want a better pay scale and staffing changes such as more nurses per shift.

ANN GRANT, associate administrator for nursing at University Hospital, said she could only report that OSU received a letter from the ONA Dec. 13 asking for recognition, answered Dec. 27 and received another letter Feb. 2 which it now is preparing to respond to.
Nurses quit, seek assistance to remedy U-Hospitals’ ills

By Renee Krause

University Hospitals' nurses are resorting to resignation, threats of resignation and seeking help from outside sources to correct hospital problems.

Pat Rockwell, a nurse anesthetist, said she resigned from University Hospitals Friday because of emotional strain and pressure from working at the hospital. Her last work day will be Feb. 18.

"Nurse anesthetists have been pressured because there are so few anesthesiologists at University Hospitals, several nurses said. There are four full-time anesthesiologists on the staff.

Dr. Joseph S. Kersey, who resigned from the anesthesia department Nov. 15, said a medical center like University Hospitals needs 18 to 20 anesthesiologists. He said he came to this conclusion from investigations of the anesthesia departments' staff sizes at comparable institutions.

Nurses said they have been told by administrators that the understaffing problem will be resolved, but they have seen no improvement.

They have also complained about the level of patient care. The administration has answered those complaints by saying if nurses resign, they must take the blame for the closing of operating rooms, one nurse said.

Rockwell, who worked at the hospital for 10 years, said she resigned for health reasons. "My health is more important than this hospital," she said.

"It used to be a fun place to work, but the morale is at rock bottom," she added.

The problems in the anesthesiology department began with the adoption of the medical practice plan in March 1978. After the OSU Board of Trustees' decision to adopt the plan, six of 12 anesthesiologists resigned. Five more have resigned since September, leaving one member of the original staff working. Three doctors have been added, bringing the staff to four.

Although administrators insist "there are no problems," nurse anesthetists said the department is still in trouble.

"We're not the ones who got them (the administration) in the mess they're in," one nurse said. "If that's the kind of place they want to run, they're welcome to it," she said.

More nurse anesthetists have threatened to resign because the administration has not acted on requests made to them, one nurse said.

The nurses said the hospital is not a pleasant place to work because the problems have not been solved. "It's hard to give your very best when you're upset emotionally in the atmosphere you're working in," one nurse said.

The nurses' inability to give their very best under the conditions at the hospital results in poor patient care, she said, and "we don't want to be put in that situation."

"I know some individuals who will resign if conditions do not improve," another nurse said.

After a Dec. 23 meeting of nurses and doctors with President Harold L. Enarson, Provost Albert J. Kuhn was assigned to conduct an investigation into the problems of the anesthesiology department and other troubled departments.

Kuhn could not be reached for comment on the progress of the investigation.

Many nurses have promised to stay at the hospital until the investigation is completed. Kuhn also had the nurses promise not to speak to the press until he finished, nurses said.

Nurses are seeking outside help in order to make the conditions at the hospital more acceptable, Pam Ames of the Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) said. A "strong majority" of the more than 500 nurses at University Hospitals sought help from the ONA because of "their frustration in not being able to improve their working conditions in relation to patient care and economic benefits," Ames said.

"They have no input into the decision-making process," she said. If the ONA is recognized, the nurses will be able to influence decisions concerning them, she added.

The ONA is a professional association for registered nurses and does not represent any other group, Ames said.

ONA sent a letter to the hospital administration which asks that the association be recognized as the official representative of the nurses, she said, and response to the letter is expected next week.

Ames refused to comment on the details of the request because she does not want to obstruct the decisions of the administrators.

Due to the success of the ONA at other hospitals, University Hospitals' Nurses decided they would seek assistance because nothing else worked, Ames said.

Nurses said they tried talking to the administration themselves, but their efforts provided no solutions to the problems of the nurses or the patients.

"The nurses are very serious about this effort," Ames said. "They are concerned for the hospital and they want to make the changes they think will improve things," she said.
OSU Hospital Has 1 Anesthesiologist

The anesthesiology department at University Hospital was left with one full-time anesthesiologist this week after another anesthesiologist was hospitalized.

Dr. Joseph Ondrey, 36, of 7653 Cherry Field Place, Worthington, was in satisfactory condition Friday at University Hospital, recovering from what was diagnosed as a minor heart attack.

Dr. Denman Shaw, hired last week, is the only staff anesthesiologist within the department, from which 11 persons have resigned since last March because of an income-sharing plan adopted by Ohio State University trustees and because of personality conflicts with the new department chairman, Dr. John McDonald.

McDonald has been out of town attending conferences in California and Colorado for the last two weeks and is scheduled to return to work Monday.

Dr. William Hammelberg, former department chairman who quit over the practice plan, is working full-time until Monday, as is Dr. Robert Zimmerman, an Air Force anesthesiologist working at the hospital while on military leave. His last day is Sunday.

Dr. C. Merle Welch, another staff anesthesiologist, has been on sick leave since becoming ill in December.

The hospital is maintaining its operating schedule by using part-time anesthesiologists hired on a contract basis.

Hospital officials said another staff anesthesiologist is expected to join the staff next week.

Anesthesiology back on feet after start of new programs

By Julie C. Ford

Two years ago, the Department of Anesthesiology at University Hospital was criticized for being understaffed.

However, today the department is back on its feet thanks to several innovative programs instituted by department chairman Dr. John D. McDonald.

McDonald increased the staff from 15 to 66, he said.

The drop in personnel was accredited to a controversial practice plan instituted in the spring of 1978. This plan required staff doctors to contribute part of their income to the university. Because of this policy, most of the Department of Anesthesiology faculty and the department chairman quit.

At one point, the hospital had only two fulltime anesthesiologists working, forcing the shut-down of some operating rooms and a halt to resident training.

When McDonald took over in October of 1978, the staff totaled less than 15 people, "including secretaries, and everyone," he said. "We really had to start from ground zero."

The department now has 14 fulltime clinical and research doctors and 19 residents. The anesthesiology rotation for fourth-year medical students is so popular it is filled through 1982, he said.

McDonald’s innovative programs include the development of a computerized monitoring system for use in the operating room, a color video education program for residents and several diverse research projects, he said.

In addition, McDonald and Dr. Joseph J. Krye, two of only a handful of doctors around the country certified in both anesthesiology and obstetrics, are developing a 24-hour-a-day obstetric anesthesia service for the maternity ward, he said.

"A new mother should be getting the best care," McDonald said, "but too often, when a woman goes into labor in the middle of the night, the best people just aren't there."

Women who enter the hospital during the night usually have little choice — "you can be completely on your own (without any anesthetic) or you can be totally knocked out," he said.

McDonald said the former practice plan — and the bad publicity associated with it — have not hindered the department’s recruiting efforts.

"The bad publicity didn’t help, but when they came here and saw our department they made up their own minds."

The "chemistry" among the staff members is important, McDonald said.

"Every day, we have several lives in our hands. This can be a great stress," he said. "There has to be an effort by everyone. It has to be ‘we’ instead of ‘I’."
Department Lacks Medical Students For Training

Anesthesiology Program Is Ending

By Michael Salster
Of The Dispatch Staff

Within two weeks, University Hospital will stop educating anesthesiologists, the first time in 20 years the hospital has not had residents training.

The lack of medical students in the department has forced the residency review committee of the American Medical Association (AMA) to delay, at least until July, an assessment of the program, which has apparently fallen victim to the internal turmoil which has scarred the department for almost a year.

John Gienapp, executive secretary of the residency review committee, said Dr. John McDonald, chairman of the OSU Anesthesiology Department, told him an accreditation visit would be useless because of an absence of students in the program. McDonald told Gienapp the last resident, the only one in the program at present, finishes his residency at the end of February.

Gienapp said McDonald assured AMA officials the program would begin again after July if McDonald's attempt to recruit students is successful.

Dr. William Hammelberg, chairman of the anesthesiology department at OSU for 19 years before he quit last year in a dispute over a plan to force physicians at University Hospital to share private practice income, said that at no time during his chairmanship did the department lack residents.

THE ANESTHESIOLOGY department has approval for 16 residents in the program.

The residents are physicians who have completed medical school and are receiving specialty training in anesthesiology.

McDonald, in Vail, Colo., to teach a post-graduate course in anesthesiology, has been recruiting there and on the West Coast for two weeks.

HIS SUPERIOR, Dr. Henry Cramblett, dean of the OSU School of Medicine, said Friday he had talked by phone to McDonald.

"He has a number of people coming in to visit (the department)," Cramblett said. "He sounds very optimistic."

Residents in the department work closely with staff physicians in dispensing anesthesia during operations at University Hospital.

The Anesthesiology Department has been hard hit by resignations during the last year, first because of opposition to the practice plan, and then because of supposed personality conflicts with McDonald.

As of Friday, one full-time anesthesiologist was on the staff, with one hospitalized and the other on sick leave.

PART-TIME anesthesiologists, including Hammelberg, have been working at the hospital to help fill the vacuum caused by the resignations.

While the anesthesiology program will not be monitored by a national accrediting team until this summer, the nurse anesthetist program, under the OSU School of Allied Medical Professions, will be visited Wednesday through Friday by a three-member team from the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

Dr. Robert Atwell, director of the school, said the "unrest and uncertainty" within the anesthesiology department will not "preclude our being accredited."

The nurse anesthetist program has 20 students who are registered nurses.

ATWELL SAID because of the shortage of anesthesiologists at University Hospital, which has caused the closing of some operating rooms at the hospital, the school is sending its nurse anesthetist students to St. Anthony and Children's hospitals.

Students have always used those hospitals to supplement their training. Atwell said, but he admitted St. Anthony has been used more than in the past because of the shortage of operations at University Hospital.

The students spend a maximum of 68 hours in class and in operating rooms during the course of their study, Atwell said.

He said he was "not aware of any problems involving student anesthetists at University Hospital, despite reports by staff nurse anesthetists of problems dealing with McDonald."

Practice Plan Details Will Be Revealed Soon

Details of a tentative settlement reached last week in the fee dispute between Ohio State University trustees and faculty doctors are still being kept under wraps at the request of U.S. District Judge Joseph P. Kinneary.

The tentative settlement was negotiated Thursday by trustees, doctors and their lawyers. Trial of the suit brought by 200 doctors through the OSU Medical Society is set for March 19.

Dr. Howard D. Sirak, chairman of the trustees, said Judge Kinneary asked that no details be made public yet. Sirak said he expects the university to announce the terms during the next week and trustees to act on the matter at their March 2 meeting.

Medical Society members also must ratify the terms and probably will hold a vote in the coming week, attorney Samuel Porter said.

The doctors object to a medical practice plan adopted by OSU last March requiring them after July 1, 1979 to disclose income from treating patients on campus, reimburse OSU for costs associated with such treatment, and turn over up to 20 percent of such fees to the College of Medicine for medical enrichment programs.
Anesthesiology training stopped

By Renee Krause
20 Feb. 1979

The anesthesiology department of University Hospitals is no longer teaching residents because it has not been recruiting doctors to take specialty training in anesthesiology, several doctors said.

According to several staff members, Dr. John S. McDonald, chairman of the department, has not had time to recruit since he joined the staff in September. The department is approved to have 18 residents to work with anesthesiologists and help administer anesthetic.

According to several doctors, the primary purposes of University Hospitals are to educate students in the medical profession and provide patient care. The lack of residents in the anesthesiology department prevents the fulfillment of the first objective, they said.

The anesthesiology department has been plagued with continuing problems since six of the 12 staff members left July 1. Since that time five other anesthesiologists have resigned.

Two of the four full-time anesthesiologists on the staff cannot be scheduled for surgery because they are on sick leave. Dr. Joseph S. Onshry, 36, was hospitalized after suffering a heart attack on Feb. 14 and Dr. C. Merle Welch is on sick leave recuperating from bronchitis.

McDonald returned from a convention in Los Angeles and Vail, Col. Monday where he was recruiting anesthesiologists for the department, according to Dr. Henry Cramblett, dean of the School of Medicine.

Ex-OSU Doctor Blames Problems On Program

Dr. Thomas Reilly, an anesthesiologist recruited by McDonald, was supposed to join the staff Monday.

With two full-time anesthesiologists working, only four operating rooms are being used, a nurse said.

Cramblett refused comment on the situation at University Hospitals and said no other hospital administrators would comment to the Lantern, according to the Communications and Public Affairs office of the hospital.

Ex-OSU Doctor Blames Problems On Program

The former chairman of the Ohio State University Department of Anesthesiology admitted Monday his quitting last year "probably affected recruiting" of resident physicians for the department.

But Dr. William Hammelberg maintained the absence of residents beginning in March is due to disdain for the program by prospective recruits, not an absence of recruiting of medical students.

HAMMELBERG SAID even after he announced his intention to retire because of his opposition to an income-sharing plan, he continued to recruit students for the anesthesiology program.

"I sent people around to those individuals who decided to stay and make the program go," Hammelberg is "it in an interview."

But those recruited decided not to attend OSU because "when there's a change in (a department's) administration, some people just aren't interested" in coming into an unknown program, Hammelberg said.

"IT'S ALWAYS more difficult to recruit if those considering the program are aware of controversy" surrounding it, he said.

Dr. John McDonald, Hammelberg's replacement who became chairman in September, was unavailable for comment on whether he has been successful recruiting students for the resident program.

McDonald has been in Colorado and California the last two weeks and OSU officials said he was deeply involved in recruiting.
Ohio State University President Harold L. Enarson will get a report soon on the status of the university's Department of Anesthesiology, Provost Albert J. Kuhn said Thursday.

Enarson asked Kuhn, his chief academic officer, to look into problems last month as the number of anesthesiologists dwindled and news reports told of dissension among those left.

"AN OUTSIDE consultant has been in, an anesthesiologist," Kuhn said. "He indicated some other areas I should look into."

Kuhn said he also invited a hospital administrator to the campus but his schedule will not permit him to visit for about three weeks.

Kuhn said he still wants the administrator to advise him, but will prepare a report for Enarson in the meantime.

In a related issue, an accreditation team has agreed to postpone reviewing OSU's nurse-anesthetist program for six months.

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists decided on the delay to give OSU time "to solve our problems," Kuhn said.

THE 20 STUDENTS in the program are registered nurses. One problem is there are not enough faculty anesthesiologists to fulfill the requirement of one faculty member for every two students.

The program's accreditation stands until the review.

Problems in the anesthesiology department started about a year ago when the longtime chairman quit over a proposed plan that required university doctors to share their practice income with the college.

The plan led to a court battle, but a tentative compromise has been reached. OSU doctors discussed it Thursday, and the board of trustees was to consider the out-of-court settlement Friday.
OSU Hospital To Boost Surgery Schedule

By David Lore
Of The Dispatch Staff

University Hospital's restricted surgical schedules promise to improve throughout the spring and summer because of the employment of six to eight new anesthesiologists and four nurse anesthetists, hospital officials said Thursday.

The optimistic forecast came at a time when University has closed two-thirds of its operating rooms and faces the threat of a general nurses' strike beginning March 20.

THE HOSPITAL lost another anesthesiologist Wednesday when Dr. C. Merle Welch filed for retirement, effective April 1. Welch has been on sick leave for five weeks, and is not expected to return this month.

As of Thursday, there were three full-time anesthesiologists left on the University Hospital staff to man the five operating rooms still functioning. These doctors are the anesthesiology chairman, Dr. John S. McDonald, Dr. Thomas E. Reilley and Dr. Demmon Shaw.

A fourth anesthesiologist, Dr. Joseph Ondrey, recently suffered a heart attack and remains on sick leave.

Former Chairman William Hamelberg, now on the staff at St. Anthony Hospital, is working at University one day a week to assist during the shortage.

UNIVERSITY HAS been using four to six operating rooms in recent days, with several additional operating rooms available for use of local anesthesia, according to Clifford Eldredge, associate administrator.

By contrast, University's surgical staff had access to 14 operating rooms in the main hospital and three in Means Hall until last summer. With Means Hall operating rooms closed and only one-third of University's space available, many OSU doctors have been conducting surgery at other Columbus-area hospitals since last summer.

University Hospital surgeries have dropped by about 40 percent as elective cases have been postponed or redirected to other hospitals.

HOSPITAL OFFICIALS say the crisis results from a shortage of both anesthesiologists and nurses needed to staff the operating and recovery rooms. Welch is the 12th anesthesiologist since early last year to leave what was once a 14-person department.

McDonald recruited Dr. Reilley from the University of Miami (Fla.) a few weeks ago, and will add two of Reilley's former colleagues, Drs. Martin McCarthy and Liam McCarthy, in July and September respectively, according to Eldredge.

Other anesthesiologists set to join the OSU staff are Dr. John Durley from Memphis, Tenn., on March 19, Dr. John Lee Hoffer from the University of North Carolina on April 1, and Dr. Michael Howie from West Virginia University on May 1, he said. Two other anesthesiologists are still negotiating with OSU, he added.

McDONALD'S STAFF of nurse anesthetists, now reduced to nine, will be built back up to 14 by April 1, he said.

OSU officials are expected to reply Friday to the Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) on its request for a secret election to determine a bargaining agent for the hospital's 700 nurses.

ONA has given OSU a March 20 deadline for agreement without a strike, but as of Thursday, Eldredge said, the hospital has no plans to reduce its intake of patients or transfer patients to other hospitals.

University Hospital
Not Taking Patients

University Hospital closed its doors to new patients about 7 p.m. Saturday. Administrative Coordinator Jeffrey Lawson said it was a precautionary move in light of a possible nurses' strike.

Lawson said there will be no problem handling present patients and said the decision to halt admissions was made to ensure the best possible care for present patients and to avoid patient transfers in case of a strike. He said he did not know how long the policy will be in effect.

Emergency rooms were rerouted to other hospitals.
OSU Hospitals Hiring
10th Anesthesiologist
3-29-79

Ohio State University has hired a 10th anesthesiologist who is to start in June, Dr. John S. McDonald, Department of Anesthesiology chairman, announced Wednesday.

There are six in the department now, including McDonald, and a full-time researcher. The other four are to start between April and September.

THE DEPARTMENT at University Hospitals has been struggling back from a low of four full-time anesthesiologists after 11 doctors resigned in the wake of a plan adopted a year ago by the OSU Board of Trustees which required doctors to pay part of their private practice income to OSU.

A court fight was averted by a recent agreement, between doctors and the trustees, on a modified plan.

A hospital spokesman said the department originally had 11 anesthesiologists, but it was hoped eventually to have 15 because of new operating rooms in a hospital addition under construction.

McDONALD ALSO announced the names of four residents, medical school graduates taking additional training, who are to start in July.

OSU's anesthesiology residency program died at the end of February when the last doctor enrolled completed training. At that time, McDonald pledged to reactivate it by July. The department is approved for 16 residents.

The newly appointed faculty member is Dr. Bingumal Manawadu of the University of Colorado. He is a former colleague of McDonald's, said Edwin Crawford, vice president for public affairs at OSU.

"It's been said we cannot recruit. I think, in a reasonable amount of time, McDonald has built himself a faculty," Crawford said.

OTHERS WHO have accepted full-time positions and the months they are to start are Dr. John Lee Hoffer of the University of North Carolina, April; Dr. Michael Howie of the University of West Virginia, May; and Drs. Martin McCarthy and Liam McCarthy, not related but both from the University of Miami in Florida, July and September, respectively.

Currently on the staff are Drs. McDonald, Joseph Ondrey, Denman Shaw, Thomas Reilley, John Durliey and Suzanne Rouse, who is doing research.

The four residents named by McDonald are William Leak, Annette Prunte, Robert Orahoo and Wayne Triplett. Five others are to train in oral surgery, obstetrics, gynecology and general surgery as well as anesthesiology, McDonald said.

A SECOND researcher, assistant professor Ingvar Sodal, is to join Dr. Rouse in June to do biomedical-engineering research.

Hoffer has a doctorate in biomedical-engineering and Shaw has a doctorate in physics, as well as their medical degrees.

"They, too, will contribute significantly to the department's research efforts," McDonald said.
Fraud alleged at OSU hospitals

The state attorney general's office is investigating Ohio State University's anesthesia department for alleged Medicaid fraud, The Plain Dealer reported Monday.

The report comes in the second day of the newspaper's series on the state's largest medical school.

From its three-month investigation, the newspaper said it learned that the Ohio State University College of Medicine showed a lack of fiscal controls that may be costing the state thousands of dollars.

The newspaper alleged that OSU doctors, by forming private corporations which shied their incomes from public disclosure, may escape payment of money owed to the university for use of its facilities.

OSU employs 434 full-time doctors and another 1,416 practice part-time on the Columbus campus. With 938 students enrolled, it is one of the largest medical colleges in the country.

Four former OSU anesthesiologists said that Dr. John S. McDonald, chairman of the anesthesia department, routinely appoints senior medical residents as acting faculty members to supervise other residents in the operating rooms.

Two OSU surgeons gave the same account of patients being anesthetized by residents.

Medicaid regulations prohibit reimbursement when medical residents rather than faculty physicians administer anesthesia.

The attorney general's office also is investigating charges that faculty physicians have signed their names to official billing forms when resident doctors handled the cases. These Medicaid reimbursements allegedly were paid to McDonald's private corporation.

McDonald said he allows medical residents to supervise other residents only during their last month of residency. However, other doctors said that the practice occurs through the final years of residency, the newspaper said.

McDonald denied any violation of Medicaid regulations and said he was unaware of the investigation.

State Auditor Thomas E. Ferguson told the newspaper that running a state institution with the financial secrecy of a private hospital is bad public policy, but he added that he cannot impose stricter accounting procedures without policy changes by OSU itself.

Five years ago, the medical school imposed a practice plan, similar to a payroll tax on its doctors, which requires them to return to the school part of the fees collected from patients they treated in OSU facilities.

However, the newspaper pointed out, the OSU plan permits the doctors themselves to determine just how much they owe the college.

And because the doctors function as employees of private corporations, they are required to disclose income taken in. There is no way to determine if contributions made to OSU are commensurate with the profits of the medical corporations.

Last year, faculty doctors returned $1.9 million to the medical school, about a quarter of the school's total budget.

"I know who is scheduled to do the operation. I know what Medicaid or Medicare pays. I obviously have a good idea (of what doctors earn)," said school Dean Dr. Manuel Tzagournis. "But to answer your question, do I know exactly what is going on, or do I monitor their book? No. Should I? Maybe."

He also told the reporters, "The only accountability they have to me is they are taking good care of their patient; they're doing their teaching and they're doing their research."

The newspaper alleged that "corporate warfare among doctors" had resulted from the payment policy.

In one case cited by the newspaper, OSU surgeon Marc Cooperman was informed by other faculty doctors last summer that they would not cover his patients, after Cooperman attempted to withdraw as a shareholder of the University Surgical Associates, a private organization headed by surgery department chairman Dr. Larry C. Carey.

Cooperman's attorney charged that Carey in retaliation removed Cooperman from the list of doctors on call for the emergency room, depriving him of additional income.
OSU doctor blames errors, enemy for probe

By David Lore 10-3-84
Dispatch Science Reporter

The chairman of Ohio State University's anesthesia department in the College of Medicine blamed errors by employees and attacks by an unknown enemy for a state investigation of his Medicaid billing practices.

Dr. John S. McDonald said reports in the Cleveland Plain Dealer were the only source of information that he is being investigated by the state attorney general's Medicaid fraud section.

McDonald said he hasn't talked with investigators. But he said attorneys for Ohio State Anesthesia Corp., the faculty medical corporation, did contact the Ohio Department of Human Services last month about more than 100 cases in which he had been incorrectly listed as the physician-provider on Medicaid reimbursement forms.

THE ERRORS, which occurred in several years of billings, were found in August during an internal corporate audit and were reported to the state in September, McDonald said.

"The service was provided, but there was a mislisting," he said. "It certainly didn't do me any good. All the dollars go into one pot and are shared by everyone."

Stanley Sells, chief of Medicaid assistance in the Department of Human Services, said McDonald's lawyer contacted Medicaid claims review officers about the errors five weeks ago.

"The initial contact was by an attorney representing an anonymous provider," he said. "They wanted to know what the department's position would be in a given situation."

"WE DIDN'T know until last Wednesday who the provider was."

Assistant Attorney General Craig Morgan confirmed reports that the probe centers on faculty members filing Medicaid claims on services provided by medical residents.

The probe, in its preliminary stages, focused on McDonald, said Robert Tenenbaum, spokesman for the attorney general.

"It is not an investigation of the university or the medical school or the hospital," he said.

"We don't know the specifics of what they (at Human Services) are looking at. We're proceeding on our own."

Tenenbaum said the investigation began because of a tip from an outside source.

"FOR THREE years now, someone has been writing letters to different people at various levels, attacking me personally, saying I'm doing illegal things, jeopardizing patients," McDonald said. "I'm getting quite irritated about the whole thing."

McDonald was appointed in June 1976. He inherited an anesthesia department decimated by resignations during the practice-plan controversy over fees that OSU doctors return to the university from their private practices.

A spokesman for State Auditor Thomas Ferguson said Tuesday that examiners intend to take a close look at physician reimbursement to the university during an upcoming OSU audit. Rules for that reimbursement were set down in a 1979 settlement in U.S. District Court.

OSU President Edward Jennings met with the chairman of various medical departments on Monday to be briefed on the operation of the practice plan.
OSU doctor is cleared in Medicaid probe

By David Lore
Dispatch Staff Reporter

The state has dropped its Medicaid fraud investigation of Dr. John S. McDonald, anesthesiology chairman at Ohio State University. Now, the doctor may have begun his own probe to find his accuser.

McDonald, also head of Ohio State Anesthesiology Corp., a faculty billing company, has been under investigation since last September by the state attorney general’s Medicaid fraud section.

That probe, however, has been dropped for lack of evidence of any criminal intent in McDonald’s billing practices, said Luis Anderson, chief of the fraud section.

Robert Goldstein, assistant attorney general on the case, said the investigation was to determine whether Ohio State Anesthesiology Corp. was trying to defraud Medicaid by billing for the services of residents whose salaries were already included as costs in University Hospital Medicaid reports.

There was evidence of such “double-dipping,” Goldstein said, but there was also evidence that University Hospital was including in its reports the salaries of residents employed by Ohio State Anesthesiology.

“The fact was they were using people (residents) without regard to whether they were OSAC people or hospital people,” Goldstein said. “We have to demonstrate more than just a rules violation. We have to demonstrate an intent to violate.”

McDonald has not been available for comment this week.

Last October, he said the fraud investigation — and a continuing Medicaid audit in the Ohio Department of Human Services — came only after an internal corporate audit at Ohio State Anesthesiology revealed mistakes in company billing procedures.

McDonald’s attorney, William Fein, said Wednesday that the so-called “double dipp-
Auditors to scrutinize firm's Medicaid billing

Although a state Medicaid fraud investigation of Dr. John S. McDonald has been dropped, an audit of his firm's Medicaid billings by the Ohio Department of Human Services is continuing.

But William Fein, attorney for the Ohio State University anesthesiology chairman, said he and his client are not worried about the audit.

"Dr. McDonald has always said he would welcome an audit. It will show nothing is wrong," Fein said.

McDonald, who also heads Ohio State Anesthesia Corp., was out of town yesterday and could not be reached for comment.

The state attorney general's office has dropped its investigation of McDonald's company because it could find no evidence of criminal intent to defraud Medicaid, said assistant attorney general Robert Goldstein.

At issue was whether McDonald illegally billed Medicaid for services performed by OSU medical residents.

"We're not saying all his billings were correct," Goldstein said. "But we didn't have a violation of the spirit of the law, so we didn't feel we had a criminal case."

Fein was even stronger in defense of McDonald.

"Not only was there no criminal intent, I don't think anything was done wrong," he said.

If there were any mistakes in billing, it amounted to "a tiny sum of money," Fein said. "If it's wrong, we'll pay it back."

The attorney general's investigation was prompted by a series of anonymous letters accusing McDonald of fraud and sent to several state agencies, Goldstein said.

Fein said McDonald has no idea who sent the letters.