

LARGE OVERCHARGE BY HOSPITALS FOUND

An audit of 665 hospitals in all geographical areas by American Claims Evaluation, Inc. of Jericho, N.Y., showed that 11 percent of all U.S. hospitals studied charged nearly a half million dollars to private industry for services never delivered, an article in the American Medical Association's *American Medical News* reported.

If those results held true for the rest of the hospitals in the country, the claims evaluation service estimated the total money spent on undelivered services could add up to as much as \$5 million.

June Novak, the director of American Claims, said the largest errors had been found in bills coming from southern California, southern Florida, New York, Texas and Massachusetts. She said that teach-



ing hospitals were the greatest offenders.

American Claims has been in the business of evaluating claims for two years, using nurses based throughout the country to aid in their audits. American Claims conducts its audits for the benefit of insurance companies, third-party payers, self-funded companies and self-insured companies.

DIALYSIS MAY HELP POISONING VICTIMS

Two University of Illinois doctors concluded that putting cyanide-poisoning victims on kidney dialysis machines may increase their chances of survival after using the technique to save the life of one such victim.

The artificial kidney machines, which are used to purify the blood of patients

with chronic kidney disease, buys time while doctors can administer the proper antidote, according to Dr. Richard J. Foley, now at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. Dialysis is especially useful in reducing poison levels in the body while doctors attempt to identify the poisoning agent, Foley said.

OSHA TO CONTINUE EXEMPTION PROGRAM

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has extended an experimental exemption program in seven states which was due to end Jan. 1. The program provided for general inspection exemptions for companies using comprehensive on-site consultation services.

Under the program, a company located in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi or Texas is exempted from general schedule inspections if it requests comprehensive on-site consultation and takes action to correct hazards found in the consultation. The experimental program began in 1982 and was originally scheduled to end January 1983. The deadline was extended to July 1983, January 1984, and now July 1, 1984.

In October, OSHA proposed revisions to its on-site consultation requirements that would establish a nationwide program similar to the experimental program.

NICOTINE GUM APPROVED BY FDA

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved a prescription chewing gum containing nicotine to help people stop smoking cigarettes, according to a *Chicago Tribune* article.

Studies show the chewing gum, called Nicorette, can double the success rate for people trying to quit smoking. Nicorette does not eliminate the desire for a cigarette but

can provide a short term alternative source of nicotine for people dependent on cigarettes, FDA said.

Nicorette contains two milligrams of nicotine per piece. The gum was developed in Sweden 12 years ago and is marketed there as well as in Britain and Canada. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals Inc. of Cincinnati will import the gum from a Swedish pharmaceutical company and market it in the U.S.

Charles Rogney, a spokesman for Merrell Dow, said the gum will sell for about \$20 for a box of 96 tablets and is likely to be in stores by March.

NIOSH IMPROVES ASBESTOS SAMPLING

A new method for analyzing and sampling for asbestos which increases the sampling sensitivity by a factor of four over the phase contrast count method currently in use, has been developed by NIOSH. According to a Bureau of National Affairs report, the new Method 7400 is capable of analysis of asbestos with statistical reliability below 100,000 fibers per cubic meter of air, the worker exposure limit now recommended by the institution.

The new procedure has increased the flow rate of sampling to four liters per minute in personal air monitoring and has decreased the filter size from 37 millimeters diameter to 25 millimeters diameter. The smaller area on which fibers are deposited allows the method to be twice as sensitive as the old procedure, according to David Taylor, chief of the Inorganic Methods Development section of NIOSH.

NIOSH has also standardized the microscope graticule which defines the area in which fibers are measured so that it is consistent in all microscopes. A test slide was added which enables fibers only 0.25 micrometers in diameter to be seen.

The Method 7400 is a revision of P&CAM 239 and is

scheduled to be printed Feb. 15. Copies should be available from the Government Printing Office within three months of that date, according to the report.

FOREIGN, U.S. GRADS VIE FOR RESIDENCIES

Increases in the number of U.S. citizens graduating from foreign medical schools and the number of foreign nationals graduating from foreign medical schools and seeking residency in the U.S., have resulted in a shortage of residency positions.

According to figures published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, applications to the National Resident Matching Program from U.S. citizens who graduated from foreign medical schools increased 273 percent between 1981 and 1984. The number of foreign graduates of foreign medical schools who applied to the program increased 312 percent over the same period.

The percentage of unmatched U.S. graduates trained abroad increased to 51 percent in 1983, and in both 1976 and 1983 three quarters of the foreign nationals trained abroad were unmatched for residency in the U.S.

SWEDISH SYSTEM PROVIDES DRUG DATA

An information service in Sweden, which has been called the most advanced information system for the registration of drugs and drug control in the world, may be used by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) according to an article in *Sweden Now*.

Per Manell, head and founder of the Swedish Drug Information System (SWEDIS) visited the U.S. and met with officials from FDA about using the system, the article stated.

SWEDIS is a joint effort of the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare's pharma-