

are in a turmoil until it does. It is often kind if you leave them alone for a few minutes and return when they are steadier and can talk clearly with you.

Then you might ask, „Do you have any questions?” or „Is there anything bothering you as to the cause of the illness?” or „What do you fear?” It is important to recognize that almost everyone, especially parents, feel guilty about a loved one's illness. They may remember attempting to abort the child or neglecting it, or they may blame the other parent or feel that the disease was inherited. It is our job as physicians to discuss their guilt feelings and to explain the cause of the illness if any.

At the end of the first discussion with the relatives, leave them with something positive. Help them to return to the patient with control and a smile; in fact, urge them to do this.

It is extremely important to plan with the relatives. The practice in pediatrics is to tell the parents as much as possible about the therapeutic medical or surgical regimen. Then their role as parents is explained: for example, to watch for bleeding, signs of infection, shortness of breath, etc. Next, we review how we as a team can benefit the patient by treating him as a normal person (no Christmas in July), by showing no extremes of emotions which would communicate anxiety to him, and by helping him to live a full life without time and money traveling over the country searching for a cure if none is possible.

As you can see, it is important for the doctor to spend time with the relatives, especially as the end draws near. As you learn to know and to understand them, it is possible to minister to their souls as well as to their loved one's physical needs. Now is the time that they will turn either to or against God. As you indicate that you are interested in them spiritually by offering to pray with them or to call their minister, priest, or rabbi, the relatives will give you insight into their spiritual status.

Perhaps they have rebelled against God because of their sufferings: „Why has God done this to me?” You can point out that God calls us from our rebellion through pain and shatters our illusion that we are able to live without Him. As C. S. Lewis states, „God whispers in our pleasure, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”<sup>1)</sup> Often only through pain will men listen to God and accept Jesus' love and the peace which God has to offer.

Relatives will often question God's goodness if their loved one is a Christian or an innocent child and is suffering. Jesus teaches that it is inevitable in our world that His children will suffer. „If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you,” Jesus said, and further, „In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” We can remind them that Jesus, who was without sin, suffered the death of the cross.

Peter suffered, and yet was able to write, „Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers