

Editorial Views

Symposium on Monitoring

Foreword

"To act as a monitor" is the dictionary's definition of the verb monitor, and a monitor is defined as "that which warns, advises, or instructs."

I fear that many doctors and administrators believe that purchasing attractive, expensive equipment and attaching it to the patient is the essence of monitoring. Of course, it is not, because mere data collection does not define monitoring. In order for data to warn, advise, or instruct, rules and logic must be developed in parallel with data collection. As data accumulate, the need for more or fewer data becomes apparent based on the established logic, and patient management programs become increasingly rational and explicit. These are then subject to testing for efficacy in any one of a number of ways, following which they can be modified rationally and explicitly. Patient care is continuously improved in the process, and truths concerning this extraordinarily complex subject gradually become evident.

This Symposium is a tribute to the perception of the entire subject of monitoring. Various experts discuss data collection, rules, and logic in a wide variety of settings in which monitoring has come to be important. Organization of present information and continued critical evaluation point the way to future developments.

JOHN W. KIRKLIN, M.D.
Department of Surgery
University of Alabama Medical Center
University Station
Birmingham, Alabama 35294



Gilbert's versorium (or electrical needle), from his *De Magnete, magneticisque corporibus, et de magno magnetis telluris, physilogia nota, plurimis et argumentis et experimentis demonstrata*. London, Short, 1600. The persistence of electricity in the concept of monitoring warrants tribute to the individual who coined the term "electric."—M.B.L.