

Acute Pulmonary Edema and Compression Garments

To the Editor: I read with interest the Case Report entitled "Acute Pulmonary Edema Associated With Placement of Waist-High, Custom-Fit Compression Stockings" by McCardell et al.¹ Their discussion cited no other cases of patients treated similarly who developed pulmonary edema. I contend, however, that numerous clinical instances have occurred. As a resident in internal medicine at the Syracuse Upstate New York Medical Center during 1960 and 1961, I treated a patient who was admitted for exacerbation of chronic heart failure. His extremely edematous legs, with edema to the upper thighs, were treated with Ace bandages applied in a figure-of-8 compression pattern. Within 2 hours, acute pulmonary edema developed, which responded to a digitalis preparation and intravenous morphine treatment.

We did not think this surprising because treatment of acute pulmonary edema at that time included the application of narrow tourniquets on 3 of 4 limbs sufficient to occlude venous return, which were then alternated, so that only 3 limbs at a time were occluded, but they were different limbs. Application of Ace bandages achieved the opposite effect.

I think an educated guess is that numerous such instances have occurred. The use of compression garments to treat lymphedema is effective, and in cases of congestive heart failure, the edema is not obstructed by diseased lymphatics but is waiting to be mobilized from the extravascular spaces.

John J. Nicholas, MD
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pa

1. McCardell CS, Berge KH, Ijaz M, Lanier WL. Acute pulmonary edema associated with placement of waist-high, custom-fit compression stockings. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 1999;74:478-480.

In reply: We thank Dr Nicholas for his comments. We agree that many similar episodes of pulmonary edema have likely resulted from compression garments. However, we were surprised to find that an extensive MEDLINE search for the years 1966-1999 failed to reveal any documented cases of pulmonary edema resulting from a similar mechanism. We appreciate Dr Nicholas's corroboration of our premise concerning the potentially serious consequences of even simple compression garments in the

patient with the potential for marginally compensated cardiac function.

Keith H. Berge, MD
Mayo Clinic Rochester
Rochester, Minn

Young John F. Kennedy Visits Rochester, Minn

To the Editor: The recent untimely deaths of John F. Kennedy, Jr, his wife, and his sister-in-law have produced an outpouring of sentiment regarding the tragic events connected with the Kennedy family. Scattered among these recollections have been stories about John's father, former President John F. Kennedy. A poignant, relatively unknown story relates to a visit he made to Rochester, Minn, in August 1940.

At that time, Kennedy had just published his first book, *Why England Slept*.¹ During the next 2 decades, the volume became a best seller, and 6 editions were published. Interestingly, in the foreword of the 1961 edition, Henry R. Luce opined that the small volume's message was as vital then as it was when it was first printed.

Kennedy's 1940 visit to Rochester was documented in an evening interview broadcast by a local radio station on August 13. Review of a disk recording of the event reveals some interesting insights into the thoughts of the 23-year-old Kennedy, whose father was then the ambassador to the Court of St. James's. Young John Kennedy had just finished his studies at Harvard, and the book was the thesis that earned him graduation honors in international relations. For the next 3 years, Kennedy planned to study law at Yale University.

In the radio interview, Kennedy was asked about any lessons that could be learned from England's slow awakening to the Nazi threat. In response, he stressed that we must always keep our armaments equal to our commitments and that any bluff will certainly be called.

Early in the interview, Kennedy was asked what his plans were for the future. He answered prophetically: "Well, I don't know exactly yet. I am interested more or less in working some time in my life for the government, but I haven't really decided as yet."

Clark W. Nelson, BS
Emeritus Mayo Archivist
Rochester, Minn

1. Kennedy JF. *Why England Slept*. New York, NY: Wilfred Funk; 1940.