By night, Medic One raced off from Harborview Medical Center. Later, the coronary-care team headed by Dr. Kimberly Curtis, right, prepared a patient for transportation to a hospital.

Photos by Bruce McKim
In Wheels

F A SEATTLE resident slumped over, the victim of a heart attack, last year, the odds were against his surviving. Of approximately 1,500 heart-attack deaths during 1969, 60 per cent came before the victim even reached a hospital coronary-care unit.

Today things are different. Seconds after a family member or co-worker of the victim places a call for help, the sharp beeping of alarms sounds at Harbortview Medical Center. It's the signal for a doctor and two fire fighters to spring into action and Medic One, the Mobile Intensive Coronary Care Unit of the Seattle Fire Department, is on the way.

With an average time per run of nine minutes, the brightly painted red and white van has sped to the patient's side with all the portable equipment that could be found in any hospital.

A Fire Department aid car will have responded to the emergency call to give first aid until Medic One arrives. The big "hospital on wheels" brings to the scene battery-driven electrocardiogram monitors, pacemakers, heart-lung resuscitators and defibrillators (electrical shock devices to correct heart-beat disorders) along with all necessary medication.

At the site the three-man Medic One team will work on a patient up to 30 minutes in order to stabilize the heart beat and allow the patient to breathe on his own. The unit then transports the patient to any hospital with a coronary-care unit. The age of Medic One patients thus far has ranged from 17 to 70. More than a dozen of these actually were clinically dead when the unit arrived on the scene.

Medic One, the only 24-hour-on-duty unit of its type in the United States, was begun with a $175,000 grant from the Washington/Alaska Regional Medical Program of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Washington State Health Department and Washington State Heart Association also responded with financial support. The University of Washington School of Medicine administers the grant.

Each of the 15 fire fighters working in the program has had more than 40 hours of emergency coronary-care procedures under the direction of Dr. Leonard Cobb, chief of Harbortview's cardiology unit.

The van they use is 22 feet long and cost $28,000. It has a patient island in the center so that the doctor and aides can work on all sides.

Medic One has made about 500 runs since going into operation. Doctors who have worked in the program say that seven or eight "permanent, long-term" saves of clinically dead persons have been made. In addition, the doctors and fire fighters have been able to give preventive care to some 40 or 50 others.

CONTINUED

WHY WE ARE SURE OF EVERLASTING LIFE

Of all the questions that confront a human being, none is so important . . . none so perplexing . . . as:

What happens after death?

A few will contend that there is no life hereafter . . . that man spends his days in a blank nothingness like animals. But for most people, there is a natural and instinctive hope that life on earth is only the first step toward a more joyous eternal life to come.

This instinctive hope, however, carries with it no conclusive proof that there is a life hereafter, and no obvious "blueprint" showing how to attain it. Because of this, many are bewildered—uncertain of the earthly way of life that will determine their eternal destiny.

Catholics, of course, do not claim that they alone are capable of having a greater knowledge of eternity than is available to anyone else. But where some may be confused and uncertain, the Catholic finds certainty in his Church for that time when "the night cometh that no man can work."

You may hear it said that this is only a blind and superstitious faith . . . that Catholics are merely "whistling in the dark" . . . that the Catholic Church doesn't know any more about God's plan for our destiny than does anyone else.

On the contrary, Catholics believe that the way of life prescribed by Jesus Christ is God's own plan for our salvation. We believe further that Christ established the Catholic Church to perpetuate His teaching—and administer His Sacraments—and that it has done so from the time of Peter down to this very moment.

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THE SEATTLE TIMES Sunday, August 9, 1970 27