

January 7, 1958

Mr. J. Hartley Blackburn
Board of Public Instruction
215 Manatee Avenue, West
Bradenton, Florida

Dear Hartley:

Dr. Sidney Smith was on the Northwestern Staff when I interned there but I never worked directly with him. He has the academic and surgical training background (M. S. after his M. D. at University of Chicago) of a specialist in cardiovascular surgery. I am sure that in his capacity of consultant to the Crippled Children's Commission and otherwise, he maintains and broadens his experience in this field.

The operation for mitral stenosis is one of the oldest and best established cardiac procedures, and if the point has arrived where symptoms are becoming bothersome surgery should be performed. The risk is minimal in such competent hands as Dr. Smith's.

I am sure that no surgical specialist would perform this procedure without an operating team and facilities for pre and post-operative care in which he had confidence and direction. It is natural, however, for the patient to question Bradenton's facilities, and the surgeon may be asked frankly if he regularly performs intra-thoracic surgery there. I shouldn't want to be among the first to be operated in a center where the amphitheatre and house staff were not experienced in the special problems concerned.

It is likely that Dr. Smith draws such problems from a wide area, and is establishing your hospital as a center in cardiovascular surgery. I have, of course, no first-hand knowledge of the hospital or doctor, but with the single reservation made, I should think Mrs. Neel would do well to have her surgery near home.

Congratulations on Anna Maria, and love to all.

Henry W. Blackburn, M. D.

HWB:mw