

Reforms In Surgeon Ranks Are Demanded By Dr. Rankin

CHICAGO, Oct. 9 (AP)—The new head of the American College of Surgeons said tonight the college must end fee splitting, ghost surgery and the charging of exorbitant fees.

Dr. Fred W. Rankin, of Lexington, Ky., spoke after a ceremony at which he was installed as president of the college and 1,100 new fellows were inducted.

"Let us admit," Dr. Rankin said, "that there are still men in our profession—fortunately their number is small—who practice division of fees, who do ghost surgery, who perform unnecessary operations, and who charge exorbitant fees for their services."

The responsibility of the College of Surgeons, he said, is "to make every effort to end these practices" which have been condemned by the American Medical Association and by numerous state medical groups.

Dr. Rankin said that "in many respects surgeons carry the heaviest responsibilities of all physicians, if only because of the harm they can do."

For that reason, he said, and because the field of medical knowledge is too broad for any one man to master it, specialization is necessary.

"I am convinced," Dr. Rankin said, "that we do not have too many adequately trained specialists, and I am equally convinced that surgery is too often done by men of too little training and experience."

"This problem will not be solved by attempts to delineate the boundaries between minor and major surgery. Minor surgery, when done by an unskilled hand, is major surgery."

Dr. Rankin said that high ethical standards, "honesty, integrity and the stoutness of character to which we give the old-fashioned name of uprightness," are "still the spiritual values which men should live by."

Yet, he said, "there are some in our midst who do not recognize their obligations or who, recognizing them, lack the courage to live by them. They fall into the twin pitfalls of avarice and ill-gotten gains."

Dr. Rankin said that during the past year "attempts have actually been made in certain medical organizations to discipline the regents of this college who simply told the truth about these invidious practices in press conferences. These attempts did not succeed. I doubt that such attempts will ever succeed."

"But that the issue should ever have been raised at all leaves one wondering."

He posed the question, "Are some of our professional shortcomings but part of an evolutionary cycle?"

"For my own part, I refuse to believe it. The goal of our profession is still service."