



The Times/CHRISTOBAL PEREZ

Dr. John Knight says a defibrillator like this could have helped save a woman who went into cardiac arrest and died on an airline flight on which he was a passenger. Five U.S. carriers have agreed to put defibrillators on their planes.

Doctor pushes airlines to add medical equipment

■ Shreveporter appears on 'Good Morning America' today.

By NITA BIRMINGHAM
The Times

Imagine knowing how to save the life of a 25-year-old woman suffering cardiac arrest but watching her die because of a lack of proper medical equipment.

That's what happened to Shreveport surgeon Dr. John Knight last December on a Delta flight. A frustrated

Knight has since become an active proponent for better life-saving equipment on airplanes and improved medical training for flight attendants.

He took his story to one of the nation's major newspapers, The Washington Post. Crews from a Toronto television magazine show and *Good Morning America* interviewed him; the *GMA* segment is scheduled to air today on KTBS-3. A crew from the TV magazine show, *Extra* will be in town Wednesday to interview Knight.

Knight doesn't consider himself an activist but said he was willing to go to great lengths to prevent a recur-

rence of his experience.

"It's gotten some attention, and that's what I wanted," he said.

Knight apparently has done more than attract media attention. His concern and involvement helped move the federal Aviation Medical Assistance Act through the legislative process, said Jim Coon of the House Aviation Subcommittee. The act is awaiting the president's signature.

The act requires major air carriers to report on-board medical incidents to the Federal Aviation Administration for a year, Coon said. The FAA then will determine what med-

ical equipment should be added on airplanes.

The FAA's requirements for medical kits today are the same as they were in 1986, with the exception of the addition of latex gloves, according to the subcommittee. Kits are supposed to include a stethoscope, blood pressure monitoring device, three sizes of airway tubes and drugs for allergic reactions.

Coon expects Knight's medical kit recommendations to be heard when the FAA evaluates the data it collects. Knight already has drafted a list; it includes a defibrillator and advanced airway equipment. The

kit would equal the cost of two first-class airline tickets, he said.

Coon said five U.S. carriers — including Delta — already have voluntarily agreed to put defibrillators on their planes. A defibrillator uses an electric shock to restore normal heart rhythm.

"I think as a result of Dr. Knight's experience, the associated publicity and the knowledge that there was potential need for this, a lot of the airlines went ahead and fast-forwarded their effort," said Rep. John Cooksey, R-La.

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