

THE NATIONAL HEALTH.

IMPERIAL SOCIAL HYGIENE CONGRESS.

The Imperial Social Hygiene Congress, held at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, from May 12th to 16th, and opened by the Right Hon. J. Wheatley, M.P., Minister of Health, organised by the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, was of great interest and importance, several of the papers referring to the work of nurses in relation to Venereal Disease.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE IN VENEREAL DISEASE CLINICS IN TORONTO, CANADA.

Miss Frances Brown, Supervisor of the Venereal Disease Nursing Department of Public Health, Toronto, Canada, on the afternoon of May 13th presented a paper on "The Public Health Nurse in Venereal Disease Clinics" in Toronto. We take from her paper some of its most important points:—

HISTORY.

"The entry of the public health nurse into the field of venereal disease prevention, in Toronto, dates from the war. For some years before that time workers with public health and social service training had been employed in venereal disease clinics in certain hospitals in Canada and the United States. Since 1920 the public health nurse has been an integral part of the Canadian Government scheme for the control of venereal disease.

NURSES IN VENEREAL DISEASE CLINICS.

"The regulations of the Provisional Board of Health in regard to nurses read as follows:—'All venereal disease clinics receiving government grants shall employ a full time social worker, who shall be a nurse, a graduate of a recognised training school.' This requirement called forth, at first, some opposition from certain clinicians who contended that social service work had no place in the treatment of venereal disease. The Board, however, stood firm, and the opposition has rapidly disappeared as the public health nurse has demonstrated to the physician that she is his greatest ally in securing and maintaining an efficient clinic.

"There has been some controversy over the question as to whether the graduate nurse or the trained social worker is better qualified to do hospital social service work. In my own mind there is no doubt but that the nurse has the advantage in this particular branch of hospital work. She has the medical and technical knowledge without which it is difficult to understand all the factors involved in handling a venereal disease case; her training has made it easier for her to separate, in her own mind, the moral from the physical side of the question, and, what is perhaps most important of all, has taught her the importance and absolute necessity of professional secrecy.

"The nurses employed in these clinics, with the exception of those in one hospital, are furnished by the Department of Public Health, City of Toronto, the Provincial Board paying \$500.00 toward the salary of each nurse, the City paying the remainder and reserving the right of supervision of the work done by her.

DUTIES OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES IN VENEREAL DISEASE CLINICS.

"The duties of the public health nurses in venereal disease clinics may be dealt with under the following heads:—(1) Duties in the clinic. (2) Duties in the homes of the patients. (3) Duties in relation to the community.

"The public health nurse is present at all clinics for the purpose of interviewing patients, keeping records, instructing patients in regard to treatment, and in fact to do anything which will contribute to the smooth running and efficiency of the clinic. In each of the hospital clinics a pupil nurse is detailed to assist the physicians in giving treatment and to be responsible for clinic management

and supplies. The public health nurse is thus free to attend to the duties which more particularly belong to her.

"Each new patient, upon admission to a venereal disease clinic, is seen by a physician or the public health nurse, and a medical and social history made out for him. The record forms used are provided by the Provincial Board of Health, and are used in the clinics throughout the province. The social case sheet contains, in addition to the usual questions regarding age, nationality, religion, occupation, &c., inquiries which aim to bring out information concerning the underlying causes of the moral delinquency which led to infection with a venereal disease.

"The nurse in the venereal disease clinics makes every effort to gain the confidence of her patients, and makes them feel that she is interested in their welfare and that of their families. Since clinics have grown so large there is little time for the personal touch between physician and patient, and the patient is apt to be looked upon as a case rather than a human being. The personal interest is very necessary in these clinics, since many of the patients are very sensitive about their condition, and feel that they cannot talk about it even to their best friend. The nurse, by gaining their confidence and explaining any difficulties and misunderstandings that arise, is the most important factor in keeping up clinic attendance, and keeps the patient coming to a clinic long after he has lost interest or hope in his own cure.

"While there is no attempt made by the nurse to moralise there is no doubt that the presence in the clinic of one whom these patients regard as a 'good woman' has a good and refining influence upon the patients and raises the moral tone of the clinic.

DUTIES OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE IN RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY.

"While the first interests of the public health nurse is in the cure of the patients attending the clinic, it is inevitable that her interest will finally extend to the conditions outside the clinic which are responsible for a never ending supply of new venereal cases. The public health nurse is in a strategic position to gather statistics and formulate conclusions regarding the relation between venereal disease and such social conditions as professional prostitution, the lack of custodial care for the mentally defective, lack of education and lack of wholesome recreation. The nurse, who is doing good work, will not rest until she has brought this information to the attention of the agencies organised to deal with it.

"The nurse in venereal disease clinics is an important factor in the education of those with whom she comes in contact—other nurses, social workers, teachers, &c.—in regard to the nature of the venereal diseases and the methods for their prevention.

CONCLUSIONS.

"In the newest field of public health nursing in Toronto, that of venereal disease, the public health nurse has already proven her value. Her presence in the venereal disease clinics has resulted in raising the moral tone of the clinics and increasing the efficiency of the work done by them. Through her efforts many cases of venereal disease have been discovered in the community outside, as well as bad social conditions which would eventually lead to venereal disease. The public health nurse's opportunity for service in this field is wide. To fully profit by this opportunity, she should be a person of unusual qualifications, which include a sound technical training, a wide experience of life; if possible, additional public health or social service training; and, perhaps most important of all, a personality which includes a fund of sympathy and a love of human beings. Given all this, she can only do her work well when she receives the support and co-operation of all the agencies for social betterment in the city in which she works."

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