

The Midwife.

MATERNAL MORTALITY.

SUPERVISION OF MIDWIVES.

The Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, has carried the attack on maternal mortality a stage further by the issue of new regulations prescribing the qualifications of supervisors of midwives appointed by local authorities. Besides other qualifications the supervisors, who may or may not be medical officers, must have had adequate experience in the actual practice of midwifery. In a communication to local authorities the Minister draws attention to the use in the regulations of the title "Supervisor" rather than "Inspector," and emphasises the need for persons who in addition to the necessary professional qualifications and experience possess also the essential qualities of sympathy and tact so that they may be regarded as counsellors and friends of the midwives rather than as critics.

The regulations apply specifically only to those appointed on or after June 1st, 1937, but it is expected that the local authorities responsible for the supervision of midwives will review their present arrangements and make any changes which may be desirable in view of the qualifications now prescribed and the particular importance of making any such changes at the present time when the new national service of salaried midwives is about to be established throughout the country in pursuance of the Midwives Act, 1936.

Sir Kingsley Wood also draws the attention of local authorities, in a further communication, to the recently published Report on Maternal Mortality and endorses its main recommendations. Sir Kingsley urges each local authority to do all in its power to promote proper team work between health visitors, midwives and doctors, whether in general practice, attached to hospitals or clinics, or obstetrical specialists, provision for whose services ought to be included in every local authority's scheme.

Local authorities, acting where necessary in combination, should secure the establishment of "emergency units" or "flying squads" of skilled hospital staff to be available not only in the district of the hospital concerned but within a wide area surrounding it.

ANTE-NATAL SERVICES.

Sir Kingsley also asks local authorities to review their arrangements for ante-natal services, and draws attention in particular to the importance of having in each area a consultative ante-natal clinic, conducted by an obstetric specialist, to which routine clinics and general practitioners could refer cases of difficulty. Post-natal services are also in need of further development and more post-natal clinics should be set up, preferably in association with a hospital gynaecological clinic, so that diagnosis may be linked up suitably with treatment, which includes contraceptive advice where further pregnancy would be detrimental to health.

The Minister emphasises once more the importance of an adequate supply of milk or other suitable food for women throughout pregnancy and for nursing mothers. Every authority should consider the question of setting up a service of home helps, and dental treatment should be provided for expectant and nursing mothers.

Sir Kingsley reminds local authorities of the need to persuade women of the importance of ante-natal and post-natal care, and he makes certain suggestions to this end.

The national campaign about the health services which will begin in the autumn will deal specially with this subject. Women should be reassured that in the vast majority of cases childbirth is a natural physiological process which should be awaited with tranquility and confidence.

The setting up of a Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Norman Birkett, K.C. on abortion—a frequent cause of maternal deaths—is announced.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

APPLICATIONS OF STATE CERTIFIED MIDWIVES FOR APPROVAL AS TEACHER.

At the meeting of the Central Midwives Board on June 3rd, held at 1, Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Westminster, S.W., the following applications were granted on the recommendation of the Standing Committee:—

Margaret Brooksbank, No. 89659, Sorrento Maternity Home, Birmingham (district).

Miriam Cooper, No. 64319, Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham (intern).

Martha Edwards, No. 61800, Guildford Queen's District Nursing Association (temporarily, during the absence, through illness, of the approved teacher).

Mary Minto, No. 81062, and Lilian Monks, No. 76515, St. James's Hospital, Leeds (district) (temporarily, with a view to enabling St. James's Hospital, Leeds, to deal with the abnormally large number of pupil-midwives awaiting district training).

Florence Freda Rundle, No. 73571, Southmead Hospital, Bristol (intern).

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT AS EXAMINER.

The following application was granted on the recommendation of the Standing Committee:—

Robert Leslie Dodds, M.B., M.Ch., F.R.C.S. (Eng.), M.C.O.G. (for appointment as a supernumerary examiner).

The Committee considered a letter from the Medical Officer of Health for Gloucester regarding the calling in of medical aid by a midwife when she is recalled to a case after having ceased attendance thereon.

A reply to be sent to the Medical Officer of Health for Gloucester by the Board was agreed on, which contained the following clause:—

"With regard to the statement contained in the last paragraph of your letter, the Board desires to emphasise the fact that the Rules relating to the summoning of medical aid are concerned solely with the calling in of a doctor in an emergency by a midwife to a case which she is attending in the capacity of a midwife. If a patient who has been attended during her confinement and the lying-in period by a midwife acting as such sends, after the midwife has ceased attendance, for a doctor owing to the illness either of herself or her child and the doctor instructs the mother to send for her midwife, such midwife if she agrees to resume attendance will be acting as a nurse and not as a midwife and consequently will not be entitled to issue a medical aid form under the provisions of section 14 of the Midwives Act, 1918."

The Board was gratified to learn that the National Birthday Trust Fund has decided to offer four scholarships, each valued at £12 10s., open to candidates for the Midwife-Teachers' Examination attending the residential course at the City of London Maternity Hospital.

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