

the greatly increased work done in the investigation of food poisoning outbreaks, and the trials of whooping cough vaccine and of gamma globulin antibodies for measles prophylaxis.

#### The National Blood Transfusion Service.

The rapid increase in the demand for blood continued. Although there were 374,000 donors enrolled some 200,000 more are needed for optimum working. Donor recruitment continued satisfactorily during the year, but more effort is required to enrol new donors, particularly in the London area where the donor panel is considerably below the optimum working size.

#### Nutrition.

Little change is shown, compared with earlier years, in the results of the clinical surveys of the nutritional state of school children, 94 per cent. of whom were found to be of good nutritional state. That of housewives remained less satisfactory, though the haemoglobin levels of samples of these women and of nearly 1,000 expectant mothers were very satisfactory.

#### Shortage of Nurses.

The difficulty of staffing hospital beds remained undiminished, especially in small general hospitals, and in the female wings of mental hospitals. Great efforts were made to meet these difficulties.

Sir Wilson Jameson points out that there is, after all, only a certain proportion of the young women of this country desirous of entering the nursing profession or who can be spared from other forms of employment, and that the solution to the problem lies rather in the more economical use of nurses than the recruitment of large numbers of additional nurses. Some of the ways in which this saving can be attained are shown in the Report.

#### Survey of Sickness.

The survey of sickness by the Social Survey field workers, based on the 70,851 monthly experiences obtained from 38,802 persons, showed no material difference in the amounts of sickness reported during the whole years 1947 and 1948. For men of working age there was no increase in medical consultations after the coming of the Act, and, while days of incapacity exceeded those of the same period of 1947, the December quarter figure was well below that of 1946. Women between 16 and 64 showed an increase of about 11 per cent. in consultations and 24 per cent. in days of incapacity compared with the previous year.

## PART II

### THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE.

#### "Right Use by the Public will take Time."

The introduction of the National Health Service on July 5th, 1948, was an administrative revolution, and the first concern was to avoid any breakdown in service to the patient. This was achieved. Of the first months Sir Wilson Jameson says: "The immediate advantages to the public of access to all forms of medical care without financial obstacle are great, but the education of the public in the right use of the Service will take time."

A great increase in demand was felt at once in the general medical, dental and pharmaceutical services and the supplementary ophthalmic service. There had been delays in securing dental treatment and in the provision of glasses, and doctors had crowded surgeries and visiting lists. Nevertheless, the professions concerned undertook a vast amount of extra work, and, on the whole, had been able to meet not unreasonably the requirements of the public.

"Perhaps the most striking feature," writes Sir Wilson, "was the demand for dental treatment. The people of this country have been notoriously neglectful of dental health. It is abundantly clear that they will use the Service now that it is put within their reach and that we must have a much larger dental profession to provide it. The number of people found to require spectacles was also far larger than anticipated and here again many, who must have been long conscious of their needs, will now be able to satisfy them."

*Hospital Service.*—This suffered the most radical administrative change, and 1948 was a period of adjustment rather than active development. While the new administration was settling down, long-term planning of specialist services was proceeding with a view to proper distribution of specialists.

The local health authorities took over their new duties—home nursing and ambulance service—and continued with their old ones. The ambulance service was especially hard-pressed and was sometimes abused, but the increase for the most part reflected past inadequacies. Home nursing and home-help schemes had greatly helped in reducing the need for admission to hospital. Moreover, this method of treating the chronic sick at home was, in many ways, an improvement on admission to hospital, since it kept these old people within the family circle, where lay their best hope of real happiness.

#### The Size of the Turnover.

The launching of the National Health Service involved a tremendous effort of organisation and administration. What this meant can be judged from a few figures selected from the administrative chapters of the report:—

#### Hospital Service.

*Hospitals:* 2,835 out of 3,040 voluntary and municipal hospitals vested in the Minister.

*Staff:* 300,000 transferred to Regional Boards and Boards of Governors.

*Beds:* 504,209.

*Patients:* 2,971,978 patients were discharged from (or died in), hospitals during 1948; and 9,883,129 new out-patients began attendance or a new series of attendances at hospital out-patient departments. The aggregate of attendances at these departments during the year was 44,375,624.

#### General Practitioner Services.

By December 31st, 1948, 21,466,755 people had placed their names on doctors' lists, in addition to the 19,540,597 whose names were already on lists under the old National Health Insurance arrangements.

#### Appendices.

Statistics of the many functions of the Hospital Service are published in appendices at the end of this Report.

## Record Post-war Blood Gifts.

### But 220,000 more Donors are needed.

GIFTS OF BLOOD to hospitals in England and Wales through the National Blood Transfusion Service totalled 125,956 during the first three months of this year—the highest number since the war.

Over 23,600 more donors joined the Service in the quarter, bringing the total strength up to 377,704.

Another 220,000 donors are needed to keep ahead of the steadily increasing demands of hospitals and to reduce calls on the individual donor.

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