

National Blood Transfusion Service.

The steady increase in the use of blood transfusion reported in former years continued and although 114,000 new donors were enrolled making a total panel of 369,167, the recruitment to keep up and increase the strength grows a more and more arduous task. The continued help of the voluntary services has been invaluable, while the fighting services have provided 12 per cent. of the donors.

Tuberculosis.

Deaths from all forms of tuberculosis showed a remarkable decline of 10 per cent. from those of 1948, the lowest previously recorded. This decline was due to a reduction of 8 per cent. in deaths from respiratory tuberculosis, compared with 1948, and one of 19 per cent. in deaths from "other forms" of tuberculosis. The latter numbered 2,356 in 1949, a drop of 539 (18.6 per cent.) on those in 1948, or 1,725 (42 per cent.) less than those in 1939. At a conservative estimate, 30 per cent. of these deaths from other forms of tuberculosis are due to infection by bovine strains of the tubercle bacillus, conveyed by milk. In this country some 80 per cent. of liquid milk is now heat-treated and heat treatment of the remaining 20 per cent. would still further reduce these deaths from other forms of tuberculosis.

The long waiting list for institutional treatment continued to be the most urgent problem during the year under review (since 1949 the numbers on the waiting lists have started to fall) the lack of staff still being the major cause of the shortage of accommodation.

The importance of finding the primary infective case by contact examination is emphasised, the chronic ambulant infectious patient presenting an important problem.

More than 1,200,000 persons were examined in 1949 by *mass miniature radiography*, bringing the total since October, 1943, to over four million, 95 per cent. having no abnormal chest condition. Previously unsuspected but active tuberculosis of the lungs has been found in less than 4 per 1,000—i.e. some 16,000 cases in six years. Mass radiography also reveals other chest abnormalities such as intrathoracic malignant disease while they are still amenable to treatment.

Rheumatic Diseases.

1949 will be memorable in the history of medicine for the discovery of the beneficial action on patients, with rheumatoid arthritis of *cortisone*, an adrenal hormone, and of A.C.T.H., a hormone of the pituitary gland. Both unfortunately are biochemically complex, difficult to manufacture and scarce. The whole of the cortisone and A.C.T.H. which could be obtained in this country during 1949, was made available to the Medical Research Council for scientific test work and none was used for purely clinical purposes.

Deaths attributed to *rheumatic fever* (329) were fewer in 1949 than in any previous year, and there were fewer notified cases of acute rheumatism than during the previous year in all three of the areas which began notification in 1947. Mass radiography brings to light many cases of chronic heart damage due to rheumatic fever.

Cortisone and the adrenocorticotrophic hormone of the pituitary gland have much increased the importance of *special centres* for the diagnosis, treatment and investigation of *chronic rheumatic diseases*, and it is fortunate that a number of such centres, able to take prompt advantage of any new discovery had already been established in association with teaching hospitals in London and the provinces. The work of nine of these special centres is briefly indicated.

Nutrition.

The nutritional state of 3,000 school children was assessed; the proportion (0.7 per cent.) of "bad" nutritional state continued low. Determinations of hæmoglobin of women before and after labour in the Manchester area, showed the

general level to be entirely satisfactory. The diet of 500 schoolboys belonging to low income families determined individually over a week in several towns were generally found to be sufficient in all the important nutrients.

Survey of Sickness.

During the year, people were sick and consulted their doctors more than in 1947 and 1948, but, whereas the increase in sickness was concentrated in the first half of the year, which included the period of an influenza epidemic, the increase in medical consultations was apparent throughout the year. The amount of incapacity reported, which had increased sharply in the second half of 1948, remained above the amount reported before the start of the National Health Service apart from the exceptional first half of 1947. The distribution of sickness in different age groups and between certain broad categories of disease is shown.

International Health.

Chapter VIII records the work of the World Health Organisation. The work of the Western Union Health Committee was fruitful; one result was that health control of air traffic was simplified by treating the five countries as one area for this purpose.

Accidents in the Home.

The number of fatal domestic accidents fluctuates between five and six thousand every year, of which about 20 per cent. are among children under five, and about 60 per cent. are among people aged 65 or over. Burning accidents from unguarded fires, including electric and gas fires, are common, while scalds, due often to handling pots of tea and saucepans of hot liquid in the kitchen, take a heavy toll of life of young children. Fatal accidental coal gas poisoning increased and particularly affects old people.

The reduction of home accidents should, indeed, form an important part of modern preventive medicine. Details of the fatal cases are reported but the incidence of non-fatal cases and the measures to prevent their occurrence could provide epidemiological work for the medical officer of health and his staff.

Port Health Administration.

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