

The following is a summary of the operations performed and treatment carried out from January, 1922, to December, 1922: Fillings, 24,603; extractions, 25,436; other operations, 12,857: total, 62,896. The above figures include treatment performed by dental trainees. Besides the above, many children have been examined and teeth charted, duplicate charts being sent to parents, resulting in the treatment of many cases by private practitioners or at hospitals.

ACCOMMODATION.

Since my last report we have opened a clinic at Wanganui, and in a response to a circular sent through Education Boards, and personal interviews with Boards and Committees, I am pleased to be able to say that we have promises of suitable surgeries fitted up, free of expense to the Department, at Napier, New Plymouth, Invercargill, Avondale, Auckland district, Motueka, Westport, Greymouth, and Hokitika, and expect to be able to report shortly that several others will meet the Department in the same generous manner. The saving to the Department that will be effected can be readily estimated when it is pointed out that the average cost to the Department of fitting up, apart from equipment, rooms suitable for clinics was £140.

EQUIPMENT.

Up to date we have been equipping clinics with second-hand material from the Defence medical stores. As their stock was becoming exhausted I drew up lists of requirements to be purchased abroad for the new clinics being staffed by the dental nurses. Most of this has arrived. In this connection I consider it imperative that definite arrangements be made for the regular forward purchase and storage of equipment, so as to avoid being forced to buy in the local market, with the uncertainty of having orders fulfilled, together with its high prices.

SECTION II.—DENTAL NURSES.

The following report of Mr. Dunn, the Supervisor, speaks for itself:—

“The period of two years’ training for the dental nurses in my charge closes with the current month, and I beg to submit my report.

“Of the thirty-five probationers appointed in April, 1921, twenty-nine have completed the course laid down. One, I regret to say, is deceased, one left to be married, and four resigned under circumstances known to the Public Service Commissioner. These twenty-nine students have now completed two calendar years’ training, a period equal to three academical years, and they have made good use of their opportunities. After a period of some months’ introductory study and practice on dummy patients they began practical work in November, 1921, and since that time have been occupied under my personal supervision, and for a year under the careful instruction of Mr. Peacock, in dentally treating children in the large clinic which forms the principal part of the training-school. During that time 30,000 dental operations have been performed, chiefly on children of tender age. From the very first it was clear that you had made no error in supposing that women would prove themselves specially adapted to this work. During the period of training the trainees have been continually under my eye. I have seen that they have constantly improved in technical skill and manual dexterity, and I have now much pleasure in reporting that I consider them well trained and efficient for the range of work for which they are intended, and that you may with every confidence send them out to the stations to which you have allotted them.

“I should like to add to this report that I consider that one of the lessons learnt during the last two years is that it is neither just to the girls nor in the interests of the service to keep the work going on in the training-school for long unbroken periods. The constant strain of study work; the wear-and-tear of life among other girls in a large clinic; the nervous output resulting from handling so many children, often dental wrecks, and from dealing with so many parents, are altogether too heavy during the training-years; and I would submit that it might be better both for the trainees and the Supervisors to be able to *look forward* to fixed periodical vacations, rather than such rests should be given, as they have been in the past, when all have become stale and there are obvious signs of a general breakdown.”

With regard to the nurses who have completed their training, I expect to place most of these out towards the end of this or beginning of next month. In the meantime I am visiting the different districts to arrange for suitable clinics.

Fifteen new probationers were appointed in October, 1922, and are making good progress with their studies; but it will be some months before they will be able to take up any practical work. This will necessitate the closing-down of the clinic for some months, as the present staff is depleted, and the gradual reopening for children under school age on the plan followed last year.

PROPAGANDA.

This is not being neglected. During “Health Week” in Wellington the Department had an exhibit in the Town Hall which attracted a very considerable amount of attention, and the nurses in attendance were able to give valuable information to the many eager inquiries.

The nurses are instructed to take every opportunity of imparting useful information to parents, and, as a number of them are being placed out, good results may be anticipated.

Mr. Dunn gave two lectures on prevention of dental disease. I also have taken advantage in interviewing meetings of committees and parents of addressing them on the same subject. I cannot stress too much the importance of this branch of the work.

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