

ADMINISTRATION.

The low incidence of infectious disease during the past year was of material help in keeping the administration expenses of the Department down to a minimum. There has been, in addition, a continued drive for economic management and internal reorganization by readjustment of duties.

Public Hygiene.—The Division of Public Hygiene has paid considerable attention to problems relating to sewerage systems, water-supplies, and general sanitation.

Dangerous Drugs.—As a signatory to the League of Nations New Zealand must exercise control over narcotic habit-forming drugs included in the Geneva Convention. Steps have been taken more effectively to control dealings in drugs in hospitals, both public and private. There is no evidence to show the presence of drug taking or addiction as a general menace, but it is felt that the administrative machinery should be applied with a view to preventing as far as possible any undesirable development. Dr. T. F. Telford, Medical Officer of Health, Christchurch, reporting on this problem, states,—

“Systematic inspection has been made of chemists’ shops and their records investigated. Hospital records, both public and private, have also been looked into. It is unsatisfactory to report that there still continues to be carelessness shown in regard to the keeping of records and also in the sale of dangerous drugs to people not entitled to obtain them.”

A communication was sent to and published by the editor of the *New Zealand Medical Journal* reminding doctors of their responsibilities, referring to the attitude to be taken with certain classes of cases where the supply of drugs is a necessity owing to the nature of the patient’s disability, and generally seeking the co-operation of the medical profession from a preventive viewpoint.

Antimony Poisoning: Enamelware.—Following on the receipt of a memorandum issued by the Ministry of Health, London, drawing attention to the danger of antimony poisoning from enamelware of inferior quality, the Department in conjunction with the Dominion Analyst examined a wide variety of enamelware of different brands on the market. It was found in some cases that this ware contained fairly easily soluble antimony compounds. The public were warned of the risks, and the trade was duly advised as to the necessity for ensuring that all enamelware sold must be free from that element.

Vaccine Station.—Dr. P. P. Lynch, Director of the Government Vaccine Station, reports that vaccine lymph sufficient for 20,000 tubes was prepared, and that there is in stock vaccine lymph equal to 50,000 tubes.

Vaccine lymph is being supplied regularly to our District Health Offices and also to the Fijian and Samoan Governments and to the Government of New South Wales.

The vaccine lymph is being maintained at a high titre. This is necessary as we require to keep a sufficiently large supply of vaccine lymph on hand to meet a sudden demand throughout the Dominion.

School Hygiene.—The school medical and nursing services have given special attention to measures for protecting the health of children. There has been a great extension of the children’s health-camp movement, and the Department has given assistance, where possible, in providing services of School Medical Officers and nursing staff. Marked benefit has been given to undernourished and delicate children during the year by this means. As already mentioned, the Department has co-operated with educational, municipal, and voluntary organizations in making available a daily ration of milk for school-children, necessitous cases being supplied free of charge.

Nursing.—Among matters to which special attention is drawn by Miss Lambie in her report are the purging of the registers of nurses, midwives, and maternity nurses; improvements in nursing technique in public hospitals; the necessity for preliminary training schools for pupil-nurses; and educational work of district nurses.

Dental Hygiene.—The Director presents a review on current dental problems, and in doing so draws attention to the fact that the resistance of teeth to dental disease is directly influenced by the constitution of the diet. An extensive investigation into the cause of dental diseases was inaugurated, and in this connection the comparative statistics of such diseases among Native and European school-children given in the report are of interest.

The total number of operations performed by the staff was 623,625, an increase of 4,235 on the previous year. There was a decrease of 5,425 in the number of extractions performed.

Among other matters mentioned in the report are the need for keeping the Register of Private Dental Practitioners up to date; more uniform system of dental treatment at out-patient departments in public hospitals, and the excellent co-operation being received from the School Dental Committees.

Hospitals.—Although hospital-maintenance expenditure generally showed an increase, this was in most cases compensated by an increase in the collection of patients’ fees, and expenditure for the year was very close to that estimated.

During the past few years considerable reductions in expenditure have been effected and wherever possible maintenance repairs and painting of buildings have been deferred. In a number of cases this expenditure cannot be further postponed without serious depreciation to the buildings.

By a system of quarterly statements the Department now maintains a close watch on the financial position of Boards. This has resulted in much closer budgeting by Boards.

In accordance with the recommendation of the National Expenditure Commission the Department has decided to transfer practically all of its hospitals to the control of Hospital Boards. In pursuance