MINISTRY PAPER NO. 46

DENTAL AUXILIARY TRAINING SCHEME

The House is aware of the problems of providing adequate dental care for the population in general and for school children in particular.

The ideal ratio dentist/population is 1:2,000. In the United Kingdom there is one dentist to every 4,300 persons. The ratio in Jamaica is 1:20,000. By countries the ratios in the Western Hemisphere range from the richest, with a figure of 1:1,600 in 1964, to the poorest, where the ratio was 1:30,000 in the same year. In several countries of the region special courses are being created for auxiliary dental personnel.

A programme for the training of dentists by way of Government Scholarships tenable in foreign universities, has been in operation for several years and an impressive number of dentists have completed their training and returned home. But the number of those who leave again to seek better returns for their services and more attractive conditions in which to practise their profession, is also impressive and the difficulty of getting an adequate number of dentists into our services will remain for years to come.

As a supplement to the dental training programme, I am therefore adopting a scheme for training Dental Auxiliaries. Under this scheme it is proposed to recruit and train in Jamaica, school dental nurses who will be assigned to particular areas under the supervision of a Government Dental Officer to undertake basic dental care work among children up to the age of 15 years.

The duties of Dental Auxiliaries would embrace the following:

(i) teaching the principles of oral hygiene, using modern teaching and publicity methods not only to individual children...
children but to schools, parent-teachers' associations, women's organisations and similar bodies:

(ii) carrying out routine examination and treatment of children particularly in the Primary School stage:

(iii) maintaining a specific group of children in dental health and free from dental defects by examination and treatment at six month intervals:

(iv) to provide limited treatment, that is fillings of both permanent and deciduous teeth, and at a later stage, routine extractions:

(v) detecting malnutrition and lesions whose treatment require the services of a qualified dentist:

(vi) performing prophylaxis.

Similar schemes have been instituted with tremendous success in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom. Construction of the School began in December last on land adjoining the Children's Hospital, and the building is expected to be ready for operation towards the end of this year.

The necessary legislation for the control etc., of Dental Auxiliaries will be placed before Parliament in due course.

All the details of the scheme have been checked by a Consultant at the New Cross Hospital School in the United Kingdom and examined by Consultants from PAHO and UNICEF. The technical equipment and most of the supplies to a total cost of approximately £14,000 have been supplied by UNICEF.

The minimum staff required for the effective operation of the School is included in the Estimates which were presented to the House.

Our own needs in this field are so much above our resources that it will be necessary to recruit from overseas the senior.
senior technical staff required to run the School for the first two or three years.

Trainees will be required to have the basic minimum qualification of a Third Jamaica Local Certificate. It is proposed to recruit girls between the ages of 18 and 25 years only. It is also proposed that during their training, to be spread over a period of 2 years, the students should receive allowances similar to those paid to student nurses. They will also be supplied with material for uniforms and a uniform allowance equal to that paid to student nurses.

It is proposed that each graduate will be bonded to work in the Government Service for a minimum of 5 years. It is not contemplated that they will be allowed to work with private Dental Practitioners though the possibility of this may be considered in later years. It is not intended to recruit girls with qualifications so high as would qualify them to be trained as dentists, and thus be lost to the service. By these means we hope to ensure that we can rely upon the long service of all those recruited.

The School is scheduled for completion in time for the first intake of students to commence training in January 1970. Thus the first 20 students would be graduating and taking up duties in 1972. The School is being designed in such a way that it can be used as a Clinic for school children during vacations, and to facilitate its employment in this way, the trainees will work in terms running more or less concurrently with ordinary school terms.

The House is invited to note the proposals set out in this Ministry Paper.

Herbert W. Eldemire  
Minister of Health

Ministry of Health  
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