

MEDICAL TREATMENT OF EX-SERVICEMEN

During the past year there has been a considerable extension of activities to deal with treatment of ex-servicemen suffering disabilities due to war service.

The medical officer in charge of treatment in Wellington has now the assistance of a War Pensions medical officer in each city or town in which a Registrar of War Pensions is situated, and there are now nineteen part-time pensions medical officers attached to the Department. From the records made available to each medical officer, treatment is authorized locally instead of from Wellington, while ex-servicemen have the benefit of applying in person to the officer authorizing the treatment. Facilities for treatment of ex-servicemen at all hospitals are made use of by the Department through the local medical officers, whose main duty is to guide and help ex-servicemen into the channels of treatment best suited to their cases. The system has been working very satisfactorily and has helped considerably to deal expeditiously with applications for treatment of war disabilities.

In addition, an orthopædic specialist was appointed to look after the interests of amputees in respect of their treatment and fitting of artificial limbs. To obtain the best possible service from such appointment, the specialist proceeded to England and America to study the most modern treatment of orthopædic disabilities, as well as the most up-to-date treatment of amputations and the fitting of artificial limbs. Close touch is now kept by the specialist with all amputees, and the fitting of all new limbs is superintended either by him or by close liaison with orthopædic specialists in other centres. A very much improved service to amputees has thereby been effected.

In order to relieve the pressure on the Wellington Hospital due to the large number of ex-servicemen requiring out-patient treatment, a physio-therapy clinic under the control of the Wellington Hospital Board was established at the War Pensions Office in Tory Street, Wellington. Since it was opened on 7th May, 1945, 640 patients have attended the clinic and 16,776 treatments have been given. The establishment of this out-patient centre has been an outstanding success.

Medical treatment to war pensioners during 1945-46 cost £58,302 (this item includes the cost of treatment of pensioners resident in overseas countries).

Railway concessions to ex-members of the Forces pensioned for total and permanent disablement, and those with locomotor disabilities on permanent pensions in excess of 50 per cent., cost £4,986.