

AUCKLAND MENTAL HOSPITAL

Dr. BUCHANAN reports :—

I have the honour to present my annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1947.

The total number of cases under care was 1,936 and the average weekly number of residents was 1,311.

The shortage of medical, nursing, office, and domestic staffs has been a handicap. It has been most creditable that, in spite of this, we have been able to carry on as well as we have done.

Physical treatments on many of our patients continues to produce gratifying results and they are of great value on selected cases. Nursing-staff shortage has been a deterrent in carrying out more fully the treatment by leucotomy, but I hope that in the coming year we may be able to widen our field in this direction.

Occupational-therapy classes continue to fulfil a most satisfactory aid in our treatments—40 men and 82 women were discharged to their homes directly from these classes ; 56 men and 80 women were transferred therefrom to utility services in the hospital. A total of 249 new patients have attended the classes during the year.

The increasing number of admissions of senile cases makes the problem of bed accommodation increasingly difficult and adds a lot of extra responsibility to our already weakened nursing staff. Many of these old folk could be suitably looked after in other hospitals or homes than the mental hospital if outside nursing help was procurable.

Mantoux testing has been introduced as a routine, following the advice of Dr. Chisholm McDowell, of the Green Lane Chest Clinic. It is hoped that this will allay much expressed anxiety as to the exposure of staff to infection.

The appointment of a full-time Dental Officer is much appreciated, as also is the increase of dental equipment. It is to be hoped that before long an appropriate dental unit may be erected in the grounds and so avoid congestion in the dispensary.

We are fortunate now in having two Tutor Sisters, who are occupied in lecturing and supervising nursing technique in wards, and their duties also embrace the major part of dispensing until such time as we may obtain the services of a fully-trained Dispenser.

The acquisition of a 16 mm. projector is a great boon, firstly for staff training, and secondly in permitting pictures to be viewed in wards whose occupants cannot be allowed to attend the usual weekly 35 mm. screenings in the picture-hall.

A fine sports area is now formed, and though this encroaches on our farm land, it has been worth while because of the apparent pleasure it has given to both patients and staff.

Refrigerators for all kitchens are on order and many are already in use. Automatic sprinkler systems have been installed throughout the main building, Park House, and Male 3 Ward.

Maintenance has been carried out as far as practicable. However, the difficulty of procuring many materials has been a great handicap.

Once again I desire to express my sincere thanks to the various clubs and individuals who so willingly assist in making the lot of many of our patients happier and brighter. I would like specially to thank Mrs. Mathias and her band of helpers, who see to the stocking of the library.

We owe much to the interest taken by Mrs. Teape in assisting with our outings for the patients and to her regular visits as Official Visitor to this hospital. During December, Mrs. L. A. Hirst, J.P., Mrs. E. S. Winks, J.P., and Mr. F. Kay-Stratton were appointed as Official Visitors, and appear very interested in the work here.

In conclusion, I would like to record my thanks to the staff for their help and co-operation ; during these times their task is somewhat difficult.