

AUCKLAND MENTAL HOSPITAL

I have the honour to present my annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1948.

The total number of cases under care was 1,985 and the average weekly number resident 1,333, an increase of 49 and 22 respectively.

The shortage in staff continues and naturally affects the scope of treatment. The fact that senile cases constitute a large percentage of our admissions aggravates the position. Physical treatment of patients proves itself of worth both in respect to leucotomy and electro convulsive therapy. Of the former, eleven cases have been treated, and the results are in a few dramatic, in others less so, but in nearly all there is an alleviation of symptoms. There is, of course, still expectations of further improvement at later dates. Electro convulsive therapy is invaluable not only for its curative properties in conjunction with psychological treatment, but also as a restraining factor in hitherto recalcitrant and difficult cases. After all the years electro convulsive therapy has been done here, predicted dire results have not transpired.

Our contact with the public in extra-mural work still demands a great part of our time. It is obvious that if shortage of medical officers persists, services in this respect will need curtailment.

Public hospital clinics are held and pension examinations are made twice weekly. There is also an increasing demand from the Courts for reports on accused men and prisoners.

The Psychological Clinic with our new Welfare Officer does most useful work. Many cases are referred to it by the Courts and the Education Department. The Welfare Officer has proved herself of worth in investigating home backgrounds not only of children, but of patients in the mental hospital.

Occupational therapy continues to expand. The number of new patients attending classes was 199. Those discharged direct numbered 116, whilst 94 patients were transferred from class-rooms to utility work within the hospital.

The training of 7 attendants from other mental hospitals for three months should be of benefit to the Department. These trainees showed a keen interest and appreciation of the value of the work.

The main public works that have been done or are now under way : Refrigerators to all kitchens ; painting the exterior and interior of several wards ; commencing alterations to Male 9 Admission Ward.

Like ourselves, the Ministry of Works suffers from shortage of labour, and this is reflected in the difficulty of overtaking many of our shortcomings.

Good work has been done in refurnishing of wards on both sides of the institution-- this has been done on a generous scale and is appreciated by every one.

While it is impossible to mention all the many individuals and organizations who have taken an active interest in the patients' welfare and to whom our thanks are due, I would like to acknowledge our indebtedness for the unflinching assistance of the Mental Hospital Committee of the Hospital Auxiliary, the Grey Lynn Ladies Committee, New Zealand Red Cross Society, and the Returned Services Association.

To finish, I would like to record my very great appreciation of the work and co-operation the staff has given me throughout the year. It has helped greatly to ameliorate difficult times.

H. M. BUCHANAN, Medical Superintendent.