

4. *Medical Officers.*

There are two Medical Officers in the Hospital—Dr. Gow, the Medical Superintendent, and Dr. Ramsbotham, the Assistant Medical Officer. Under their charge they have approximately seven hundred patients of both sexes. Upon the Medical Superintendent devolves the whole work of supervision of the Hospital, and also of the farm of 350 acres attached to it. He, therefore, has little time to devote to the medical work, which almost wholly devolves upon the assistant. Naturally, a number of the patients require very little, if any, medical attention. The attention, however, required by the others, and to which they are entitled, appears to me to be too much to ask from one or even two Medical Officers. I understand that in a hospital of this size in England the medical staff would consist of the Medical Superintendent, two Assistant Medical Officers, and a Pathologist, who would act as Relieving Medical Officer when necessary. The Sunnyside medical staff is at present deficient. Dr. Hay, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals, stated that an Assistant Medical Officer is being provided. If this is done it will relieve the position to a great extent.

5. *Attendants.*

The rules and instructions laid down for the guidance of attendants are as near perfection as possible, and they appear in the main to be faithfully obeyed and carried out.

At the Sunnyside Mental Hospital there are 370 male patients and a staff of forty-five attendants, including the head attendant. Of these, two are always on night duty, and at the present time two others are on night duty in charge of one case. This leaves forty available for day duty. Of these forty, 25 per cent. are always on leave, which leaves thirty on duty. According to the evidence, the proportion of attendants to patients should be one attendant to every eight or ten patients. As it is, there is only one attendant to every twelve patients. This proportion is often increased, owing to sickness amongst the staff.

It is in evidence that the attendants work thirteen hours and a half one day and eleven hours and a half the next, and have three half-hour periods off during the day for meals. They have ninety-two days' leave during the year.

The number of hours worked by an attendant during the year is 3,411, equal to nine hours and a half each day for 365 days; or, allowing meal-times off, for the actual days worked, it comes to over eight hours for each day of the year, including Sundays.

The work of the attendants is not heavy physical work, but during the hours they are on duty they are almost constantly on their feet, and have to be on the alert watching those patients under their charge. It is admitted that the work is nerve-racking, and probably a greater strain than mere physical work.

Only two attendants are on duty during the night in the Sunnyside Mental Hospital. One remains in the infirmary ward, where the epileptic patients sleep, and the other patrols the building once an hour. This patrol takes three-quarters of an hour. For the proper care of the patients there should be an attendant on duty on each floor. The size of the building can be imagined from the fact that it takes the attendant three-quarters of an hour to make his round.

I am of opinion that the staff is inadequate in numbers and is overworked. It cannot, therefore, be possible that patients receive the care and attention they are entitled to.

The lack of a reception ward and a hospital ward at the Sunnyside Mental Hospital was brought under the notice of the Government as far back as 1904—nine years ago—by the then Inspector-General, Dr. MacGregor, and all that has been done since is to build a reception ward on the female side of the Hospital and to acquire a site for one on the men's side. In the meantime the number of patients has increased, thus accentuating the overcrowding of nine years ago. The State has assumed the care and control of mental defectives, and it should be the first duty of the State to provide what is necessary for their well-being.