

MOTOR AMBULANCES.

With regard to these, I have come to the conclusion that they are best suited for suburban districts, and consider they should be utilized solely for this purpose. This will make for greater economy as regards upkeep, and also, I hope, will enable us to dispense with the services of the driver-attendant, as I consider that arrangements might be made with the Post and Telegraph Department to supply a driver at odd times when required. Special arrangements will have to be made for the packing of equipment for country districts, and local bodies will be asked to assist the Department in providing transport and accommodation, those districts doing so to be given preference when dental service is available for such.

EQUIPMENT.

This is a matter that has been giving me considerable thought, for whilst we have been fortunate up to date in being able to secure equipment from the Defence Department, saved over from the Dental Corps, the supply is nearly run out, and we shall have to be in a position to equip the dental nurses early next year. I have been in communication with firms in England and America as to suitable travelling equipment for the above, but have delayed taking any definite action, as I felt sure prices would fall. This has been so, and from latest advices there is a possibility of a still further fall. I am awaiting a list of all dental material held at Defence stores, where they are at present stocktaking, before preparing a list of requirements that it will be necessary to secure from abroad.

PROPAGANDA.

Leaflets have been printed and distributed to the staff for circulation to parents embodying short terse rules to be followed for the prevention of dental disease. Every opportunity is being taken by the Supervisor and his assistant and the nurses for talks with parents on the same subject, and there is every evidence that the information given is much appreciated. In conjunction with the Director of Child Welfare and the Director Division of School Hygiene I have assisted in the preparation of articles for newspapers. I would stress the importance of this branch of our work.

SECTION 2.—DENTAL NURSES.

If any of those who originally opposed the scheme of the provision of State dental nurses in this country still have doubts remaining in their minds I am sure a visit to the clinic would dispel such, for one cannot but be struck with the aptitude shown by the nurses after only two months' regular clinical work.

The first year's training of the thirty-one probationer dental nurses is now over, reports the Supervisor, Mr. Dunn, and the result has quite justified expectations. The greater part of the year was devoted to a thorough grounding in theoretical work—elementary chemistry and physics so far as they have a bearing on the study of human physiology; the elements of biology and histology; anatomy and physiology, with special reference to head, neck, jaws, and teeth; and materia medica suitable for a minor dental course. Towards the middle of the year purely dental matters were approached, and practice was given with the mirror and instruments on natural teeth set up in dummy jaws. In November some useful hygiene work was done for children under school age. Late in January Mr. H. M. Peacock joined the service, and the school was thus able to take over the work of the Thorndon clinic and to considerably extend it, at the same time releasing the dental officer for service elsewhere and dispensing with the attendant altogether. Since then the clinic has been so busy with the treatment of school-children that it has been only possible to carry on the lecture work intermittently. The figures for February and March will speak for themselves:—

1st February to 31st March, 1922.

Total number of attendances—						
Of school age	..	..	..	..	..	1,632
Under school age	..	..	..	..	..	227
						1,859
Number of children treated	..	..	..	..	..	1,061
Fillings in temporary teeth	..	..	..	..	..	231
Fillings in permanent teeth	..	..	..	..	..	444
Other conservative treatment (cases)	..	..	..	..	..	964
Extractions, temporary teeth.. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	1,314
Extractions, permanent teeth	..	..	..	..	..	291
Total number of operations	..	..	..	..	..	3,244

The probationers have without exception shown great aptitude for the work, handling the children with both tenderness and skill, and the parents with tact; and, considering the drastic measures often necessary for clearing up neglected and septic mouths, inflicting a minimum of pain.

A beginning has been made with propaganda work among parents by the distribution of pamphlets at the clinic, and by the delivery of addresses to parents at some of the schools. Those of the nurses that show special aptitude are being utilized for this service, and those selected have shown much ability and tact in executing the task accorded to them. It is proposed to extend this branch of the work during the coming year.

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