

PUBLIC HEALTH

New Medical Service Plan Would Give Treatment

Health Departments Should Not Confine Their Efforts To Preventing Sickness in Opinion of Careful Expert

A FAR-REACHING plan for "American democratic medicine," under which health departments would be responsible for both treating and preventing sickness, presented by Dr. Edward S. Godfrey, Jr., New York State Health Commissioner, in his presidential address before the American Public Health Association at Pittsburgh, has created a tremendous stir at the meeting.

It came as an answer to the challenge recently made in a public address by Dr. Nathan B. Van Etten, president-elect of the American Medical Association: Does America want Hitler medicine or Stalin medicine or some other foreign system of medicine?

When public opinion in America demands of its lawmakers a reform or change in an existing system, as it now seems to be demanding a change in the medical and health system, the change becomes the law of the land only after extensive public hearings and debates in the legislative body. This is the democratic, American system, Dr. Godfrey pointed out.

"Anything, therefore, which becomes law after being duly considered and enacted by an American legislative body, provided it is constitutional and legal, is American and is democratic. Name calling cannot make it otherwise," Dr. Godfrey declared.

Public health medicine, preventive as well as curative, delivered without distinction as to race, creed, occupation or income, for "no less than three-thirds of the people," is Dr. Godfrey's plan for America.

The present fee-for-service system prevents this plan for public health medicine being carried out, not only because the patient cannot afford to pay a fee for all his health needs but because the private physician treating a patient for one ailment would be accused of seeking business or chiseling if he suggested that the patient or his family needed treatment for another ailment or to prevent his getting sick again.

Under the public health medicine

plan, Dr. Godfrey insisted, the quality of service and the compensation to the doctor can be as good as, if not better than, under the present system.

A tremendous impetus has been given the movement for more and better medical and health care for Americans by Dr. Godfrey's daring proposals.

Revolutionary as is his proposal to put all medical and health matters under health department responsibility, 90% of the Association members are ready to back him up, in the opinion of a former president, Prof. C.-E. A. Winslow, of Yale University. Prof. Winslow said Dr. Godfrey laid down a policy but not a blue-print for working out a health program, and that the Wagner health bill also was policy-making rather than a specific plan for procedure throughout the nation.

Members knowing Dr. Godfrey as a deliberate careful thinker, slow to speak, and with wide knowledge and experience in public health administration, were amazed at the stand he took, but many of them were delighted. The feeling is that many health workers will be stirred to greater enthusiasm for the new movement in medical and health affairs because it was Dr. Godfrey, careful, deliberate and sound, who made such far-reaching proposals for solving the problem of delivering health to "three-thirds of the nation."

Two other former presidents of the Association injected a word of caution. Dr. Milton J. Rosenau, of the University of North Carolina, speaking immediately after Dr. Godfrey, predicted the coming of socialized medicine in America, but far in the future. He believes that it will come through the medical and not the public health profession, and asserted that "medicine should be master in its own mansion."

Dr. Godfrey's proposal is an ideal goal to be worked for, but it should be gone after one step at a time, in the opinion of Dr. Louis I. Dublin, another former president of the Association and third vice-president and statistician of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Com-

pany. The danger, Dr. Dublin said, is of reaching the goal and setting up the new system of medical and health care before there are enough well-trained and competent men and women to administer the plan and carry out its provisions.

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MEDICINE

New Light on Fever Cure Of Brain Syphilis

NEW LIGHT on fever treatment of paresis, the mental disorder resulting from syphilis, has been obtained through blood studies just reported by Drs. Harold E. Himwich, Karl M. Bowman, W. Goldfarb and Joseph F. Fazekas, of New York (*Science*).

During the fever treatment, the brain is much more active, as shown by the increased amount of oxygen consumed. The oxygen consumption was determined by measuring the amounts found in blood taken from the artery supplying the brain and from the internal jugular vein carrying blood away from the brain.

What effect this heightened brain activity during fever has on syphilis is not yet known, but Dr. Himwich and associates state it "warrants further investigation."

The studies were carried on at Albany, N. Y., Medical College, Bellevue Hospital and New York University Medical College in New York.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Electricity Changes Oyster's Heart Action

ELECTRICITY was used to change the mechanical and electrical behavior of oyster hearts, in experiments reported by Prof. Ivon R. Taylor of Brown University and Dr. Edward M. Walzl of the Johns Hopkins University. When the direct current was turned on, the contractions of the heart were less pronounced and briefer than usual, and the relaxations were more complete; directly after the current was broken, the heart muscles contracted to a greater degree than normal. The electrical waves generated by the hearts were altered in size and form during the passage of the applied direct current.

In many ways the oyster heart shows a behavior that is different from that of vertebrate hearts.

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Guinea pigs grunt in somewhat pig-like fashion.