

PUBLIC HEALTH

Survey of Physicians

A first step is taken toward solving the problem of how many physicians can be taken by armed forces and still care for civilian health.

► A FIRST STEP toward solving the problem of estimating how many physicians can be taken by the armed forces and still leave enough in a community to satisfy present demands for physicians' services is now available through a study of the Washington, D. C., Baltimore and Maryland situation.

The study, by Dr. Antonio Ciocco and Isidore Altman, of the National Institute of Health, U. S. Public Health Service, is reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Feb. 13).

From information furnished by about two-thirds of the physicians of the two cities and one state for one week in early fall, 1942, the statisticians were able to determine the present number of patients seen in one week by doctors of various age groups, male and female, Negro and white, and in general practice or specialties. Among many significant facts, the study shows the following:

General practitioners under 45 years of age, the group the armed forces are drawing on, have a patient load 25% to 50% greater than those between 45 and 64 years and more than twice as large as that of doctors 65 years and older.

This age difference is important because, as the statisticians point out, "in a community containing two physicians, one 35 and the other 65 years of age, one could maintain that the removal of the younger man will mean the loss of not one-half but of two-thirds of the physicians."

General practitioners who spend eight

hours in their office daily see on the average 140 patients weekly. Those who spend nine hours can be assumed to see an average of 158 patients weekly. On the basis of the figures, a weekly average patient load of 140 would require a ratio of one physician to 960 persons in Washington, D. C.; one to 970 persons in Baltimore; and one to 1,135 in Maryland.

A weekly average patient load of 140 for Washington, D. C., means an increase of about 22% over the present patient load or, considering the ages of the remaining general practitioners, since some younger doctors have already been taken into the armed forces, an increase of about 26%.

If an average weekly patient load of 160 is considered as a maximum, giving a ratio of one physician to 1,060 persons in the nation's capital, the increase over the present patient load, taking into account the ages of the remaining general practitioners, becomes 48%.

The present average patient load, the statisticians point out, already represents an increase of perhaps 25% over that of 1940. Increasing the patient load of a group of physicians by 40% over that of the present actually increases it by about 75% over that of 1940.

"Therefore, the pertinent question to be asked," they state, "before accepting any proposed value of the maximum patient load, is whether or not the remaining physicians are able to sustain the added burden."

Science News Letter, March 27, 1943

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Dr. Isaiah Bowman of Johns Hopkins Heads AAAS

► DR. ISAIAH BOWMAN, geographer and president of the Johns Hopkins University, has been elected president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Due to the cancellation of the New York meeting, the election by the AAAS council was conducted by mail ballot.

Dr. Bowman succeeds as president Dr. Arthur Compton, University of Chicago Nobelist, who as retiring president is scheduled to deliver the principal address of the annual meeting of this nation's largest general science organization if war conditions allow.

One of the nation's leading geographers, Dr. Bowman before he assumed the presidency of Johns Hopkins was head of the American Geographical Society and chairman of the National Research Council.

Science News Letter, March 27, 1943

GENERAL SCIENCE

Standards Will Help South American Trade

► INTER-AMERICAN standardization of industrial products will be promoted by a new department in the American Standards Association because of increased trade and closer cooperation with our South American neighbors.

Data on development and use of standards will be exchanged with government, industrial and technical groups. War requirements have speeded plans to provide Latin American countries with Spanish and Portuguese translations of standards which may be helpful in developing their industries.

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