

MEDICINE

Disease Prevention Urged

The Hoover report suggests cutting the costs of medical care and hospitalization by putting greater stress on prevention of sickness and disability.

➤ A FRESH slant on the medical care problem appears in the Hoover Commission report on federal medical services.

Cut the costs of medical care and the needs for hospitalization by spending more money and effort on preventing sickness and disability, is the gist of one of the commission's recommendations.

As an example of what can be saved in this way, the commission points out that diphtheria might have cost the nation \$30,000,000 in one year, 1947, instead of the \$600,000 it actually cost. The saving, with a saving also of 50,000 lives, is figured on the basis of what the disease would have cost if the mortality of the year 1900 had prevailed.

"Most alarming" is the outlook for future costs of medical care and the needs for hospitalization, if medical care is considered in terms of its organization as it exists today, the commission finds.

The costs for hospital care could be reduced directly by another method, the commission suggests. This is to provide for more patients to be cared for at the doctor's office or in clinics, what is termed "ambulatory care". But at present, the commission finds, the government is apparently committed to a reverse policy with huge sums of money being appropriated to build new hospitals.

The federal government is already giving medical care of varying degree to about one-sixth of the nation's population. Included in the approximately 24,000,000 Americans now getting government medical care are members of the armed forces and their dependents, veterans with and without service connected disabilities and merchant seamen who are beneficiaries of the U. S. Public Health Service Marine Hospital System.

The quality of this government medical care is "excellent" in some places, and not so good in others, the commission's task force found in its almost year-long study. The lower quality of care, where it exists, stems from the lack of overall central planning. Small Army and Navy hospitals, unable because of their small size and staffs to give the best medical care, exist almost literally by the side of large government hospitals with empty beds. These large hospitals are well staffed and equipped and give excellent care. Members of the armed forces would fare better if cared for in these larger institutions.

Medical manpower is now so short that a draft of doctors may be necessary to fill the Army's estimated needs. But well over half the armed forces' medical manpower

in the New Orleans area alone could be saved by unified hospital planning, and better care could be given military personnel, the commission states.

There might be enough nurses to go around, too, if government hospitals were under a unified plan. At present civilian hospitals are often forced to close whole sections because they cannot get enough nurses to care for the patients. At the same time, empty beds are found in many government hospitals which are bidding against the needy civilian hospitals for nurses.

National defense demands the best utilization of medical manpower, the commission points out.

"Where atomic warfare is a potential threat it is not feasible to take medical practitioners from their home communities. To do so would imperil civilian defense."

Best utilization of medical manpower would come, it is stated, from a full integration of the federal hospital system with non-federal hospitals.

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ASTRONOMY

Division in Universities Of Astronomy Field Urged

➤ UNIVERSITIES offering graduate work in astronomy should get together and more or less divide the field between them, Dr. Otto Struve of Yerkes and McDonald Observatories of the Universities of Chicago and Texas advocated at the teachers' symposium of the American Astronomical Society meeting in New Haven, Conn. Dr. Struve is president of the Society.

Duplication would be eliminated and greater diversity of courses made possible by an arrangement whereby some graduate universities would specialize more in theoretical research, others would continue to train students to be experimentalists, Dr. Struve pointed out.

It is almost impossible in one institution to say that one student should take a certain course of lectures from which another is excused in favor of, for example, putting together an amplifier for a photo-electric photometer, he explained.

At European universities, formal knowledge is stressed to a much greater extent than it is in the United States. Hence a student from Europe is usually far better equipped with a knowledge of advanced mathematics and advanced physics than are American students, Dr. Struve stated. This

is compensated for, however, by the fact that our students possess a greater manual dexterity and are therefore better equipped to do any kind of work that requires the handling, building and adjusting of instruments.

The average American student, on the whole, has more initiative than students who come from Europe, Dr. Struve remarked. This results in a greater desire to conduct research work than is customary among graduate students in Europe.

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ENTOMOLOGY

Honey of an Idea: Bees Pay for Club

➤ IT'S A, Bees and C's for students at Racine's William Horlick High School in Racine, Wis.

The bees, a whole hive of them, are both resident and paying members of the school's Science Clubs of America group. The bee colony is outside the clubroom window. And honey is sold to pay for club projects.

Through glass panels of the hive, young scientists study the ways of bees safely, while watching the work that pays club expenses.

Science News Letter, January 8, 1949

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