

## PUBLIC HEALTH

# Medical Care for Aged

Medical care for the needy aged is now becoming a reality. The AMA and insurance companies are offering various plans to meet the problem, Faye Marley reports.

► MEDICAL CARE for the needy aged is now becoming a reality regardless of the "ways and means."

Even while the Administration's Social Security proposals are temporarily bottled up in the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, diverse improved ways and means are being offered for the needy aged.

The American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and all types of insurance companies are now facing the problem and are offering various plans.

Medical attention for the growing numbers of those over 65 is provided to some extent by Federal-State joint action in the Kerr-Mills law being put to work in 38 states.

Abraham A. Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, opposes Kerr-Mills and all similar mechanisms on the grounds that they are expensive and restrictive, requiring a certain income and ignoring higher-income persons who may be faced with serious illness that could wipe out lifetime savings.

Medical care for the aged, Secretary Ribicoff believes, can only be adequate under Social Security.

The Administration plan (King-Anderson bill) is being pushed for action during the present session of Congress, but because of its Social Security administration proposal, the bill is officially opposed by the AMA, which brands it socialized medicine. Chances for passage of the bill are very slim, its opponents say.

The Kerr-Mills law has the support of the AMA, AHA and Blue Cross. Blue Cross announced (January, 1962) a "historic decision" to finance a more comprehensive system with assistance from the Government to those retired aged who need help in purchasing it.

The American Hospital Association House of Delegates at a January meeting in Chicago adopted a policy statement which said "to improve the effectiveness of state programs under the Kerr-Mills Act, more attention must be placed on adequate reimbursements to participating hospitals and other health care institutions."

AHA went on to say that the "tax source of the funds" needed by Blue Cross for its new program was "of secondary importance to us" so long as the Social Security Administration does not administer the prepayment system, which should be voluntary and nonprofit.

The Blue Cross proposal to take care of hospitalization problems of the aged was followed later in January by a proposal of the AMA and the National Association of Blue Shield Plans that would provide surgical and medical care "for all persons over

the age of 65" at a cost estimated at about three dollars a month per person.

Until a few years ago, commercial insurance companies considered the aged too great a risk to continue policies except through "conversion" plans. At that time, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired school teacher, began pioneering for noncancelable policies, and today, Dr. Andrus says, all large insurance companies have improved their plans for the aging.

Dr. Andrus, president of the National Retired Teachers Association, and the American Association of Retired Persons, first won over the Continental Casualty Company of Chicago, which wrote policies for the teacher members.

In 1958 Continental launched its 65-Plus plan in three states and in 1959 broadened its program to include all states. Recently, Continental announced a national combination insurance package including short-term and extended hospitalization plans.

A report in June 1961 to the Special Committee on Aging, of which Sen. Pat McNamara (D-Mich.) is chairman, pointed out that aged persons in relatively poor

health are least likely to have hospital insurance. Many companies offer policies for individual and family hospital-surgical expense plans guaranteed for a lifetime, but all require the applicant to be of normal health.

• Science News Letter, 81:83 February 10, 1962



**TACTICAL RADAR**—A highly mobile radar system provides information in three dimensions of range. It was developed by Sperry Gyroscope Company, Great Neck, N. Y., for detecting supersonic aircraft.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

## Report Recreation Needs

► OUTDOOR recreational needs of the expanding population were the focus of a comprehensive report submitted to the President and Congress by a commission headed by Laurance S. Rockefeller.

In the five-point program, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission outlined measures necessary to assure Americans enough areas and facilities to relieve excess energy and maintain physical fitness during their increasing leisure hours.

The Commission report suggests ways to make more effective use of existing recreation resources and to acquire new areas, particularly shoreline.

The five major points were: to establish a strong national policy on outdoor recreation; to set up guidelines for management of recreation resources, including increased usage of land; to expand and modify present programs (by possibly building more recreation areas in overly populated areas); to establish a bureau of outdoor recreation in the Federal Government; and to start a grant-in-aid program to encourage State work.

The report, according to Mr. Rockefeller, sets no real yardstick, either in land or money, for the Government. The Commission was established only to review the problems and to make suggestions. Since

this is done, it is up to others to respond with specific legislation and implementation, he said.

The Commission found that 90% of all Americans engage in some form of outdoor recreation. Increased leisure time, income, education, and mobility will raise individual participation levels.

They found that driving and walking for pleasure are the most popular activities, followed by swimming and playing games, sightseeing, bicycling, fishing, sports events and picnicking.

The report stressed pollution abatement, purchasing of additional land, developing scenic highways and parks, encouraging use of private lands and establishment of primitive areas as "wilderness areas."

Mr. Rockefeller told SCIENCE SERVICE that hopes are high that the report will have an effect on passage of the Wilderness Bill now in Congress, as well as give a foundation for other legislation for improved and increased recreation areas. The Wilderness Bill seeks to preserve Federal lands already set aside as natural areas from outside interests.

Eight congressmen and seven private citizens, including Mr. Rockefeller, made up the Commission.

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