

In the United States.

NATIONAL LEPROSARIUM AT CARVILLE, LOUISIANA.

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In recent years, the lowering of the mortality among the hospitalised lepers, the decrease in suffering from acute and chronic manifestations of leprosy and the increasing number of patients paroled as no longer a menace to public health, have combined to improve the morale and to accentuate the optimism of the already remarkably contented group in this hospital.

In the last twelve months, 73 new patients were admitted; six were deported as not being legally entitled to hospitalisation; 19 died, with a resulting mortality of 68 per thousand. Since the hospital was organised in 1894, one or more lepers have been admitted from all States of the Union excepting eleven. At the close of the fiscal year, ending June 30th, 1928, the population of the hospital was 293. Approximately one-half of the lepers are foreign born. Most of the native born have come from the Gulf Coast States, Louisiana, Florida and Texas.

Eleven patients were paroled, the largest number discharged in any twelve months period, and representing 4% of the mean population of the hospital. Since the Federal Government assumed control of the Hospital in 1921, 29 patients have been paroled, and but one has returned for further treatment because of relapse.

The proximity of the Leprosarium to New Orleans has facilitated visits by physicians. Lectures and clinics have been continued as a part of anti-leprosy propaganda; 91 physicians, 90 dentists, 104 medical students, and 12 nurses visited the hospital during the year.

Chaulmoogra oil continues as the medicament of greatest promise, and the recent method* of administering the crude oil hypodermically, in a relatively painless manner, has increased in popularity with the patients. Nearly two-thirds of all the lepers are now receiving bi-weekly intramuscular injections of Benzocaine-Chaulmoogra. The crude oil combined with Benzocaine administered orally in capsules is well tolerated by the stomach, and most of the patients take relatively large doses with a minimum of discomfort.

* Public Health Reports, Vol. 42, No. 49, Dec. 9, 1927.

It is remarkable that in a group of nearly 300 lepers, no major surgery has been indicated in the last year, and only 118 minor operations were performed. This is partly due to the constant adequate medical and nursing surveillance.

The various methods of applying physio-therapy, particularly toward the correction or prevention of deformities of the anæsthetic type of leprosy have been continued with the enthusiastic co-operation of many patients. During the year 38,736 treatments were given by a physio-therapist and three leper aides.

Special study is being given in the ophthalmologic clinic to prophylaxis and treatment of leprosy ophthalmia and various experiments are being performed with some degree of success in relief of the intense pain and photophobia so frequently associated with acute and chronic eye complications.

In the dental clinic, each newly admitted leper receives a routine examination and such treatment as may be indicated. Pyorrhœa alveolaris is common among newly admitted patients, and active corrective measures are promptly instituted.

Laboratory investigations during the year have been directed largely toward blood chemistry, and it is anticipated that the continued routine examinations of the blood of a large number of lepers over a long period of time will eventually bring to light some information on this relatively obscure subject.

With such a large group of lepers in relatively good health, the administrators of the Leprosarium are constantly at their wits end to provide adequate employment in order to prevent undue morbid introspection. An average of one-third of the leper population is continuously engaged in the performance of minor activities of the hospital; assisting the nurses in the care of the ill, blind and otherwise helpless patients; cleaning of wards and grounds; assisting in the laboratories, etc., and each leper so employed receives a monthly stipend for his work.

In so far as practicable, most non-technical work within the colony proper, excepting that in connection with the dietetic and laundry departments, has been performed by the lepers. The results in terms of work performed and the maintenance of proper morale have been satisfactory.

The proper employment of the time of the blind, mentally deficient or maimed leper gives greater concern, and a department of occupational therapy has been organised under a trained therapist to endeavour to employ the minds as well as the bodies of those especially stricken.
