

Volunteer nursing aids in hospitals, by L. N. Hudon, *Les Cahiers du Nursing*, Montreal, n° 2.

We all know that for a long time the St. John Ambulance Association, the Red Cross and the Civil Defence service have been giving many willing pupils courses in the theory and practice of nursing; these are extremely useful especially in case of emergency. In addition to this primary training, since 1957, they have also been giving courses in home nursing, not only with the aim of providing patients with the usual care but also the better to help doctors and nurses in the event of disaster.

Last year a further step was made by the institution of a hospital training programme consisting of forty-four hours work under supervision in the hospital; this forty-four hour schedule is split up into weekly periods of eleven hours spread over three, not necessarily consecutive, days. It is not merely a question of contributing a certain number of hours' work free; the object also includes extra training in theory and practice in the hospital wards.

The immediate aims of the programme are to increase the number of non-professionals capable of giving doctors and nurses in emergency hospitals efficient assistance in the event of disaster; to constitute a reserve of experienced volunteers upon which hospitals may draw at any time. There is of course no intention to set up a new professional body, but to train volunteers willing to help regular hospital staff without of course taking their place.

In small groups of about a dozen, under the supervision of a hospital nurse, they become familiar with equipment (linen, appliances, medical supply, etc.); the hospital working schedule (meal times, the medical rounds, etc.); the patients (name, ailment, treatment, etc.).

The persons chosen for these courses are those who have successfully followed the home nursing courses (or the equivalent), have good health, are amenable to discipline, are punctual and comply with other requirements. Each candidate is escorted by a nurse. After the course, a report on each volunteer must be submitted by the nurse escort to the local Civil Defence Organization and the St. John Ambulance Association, which gives a copy to the candidate concerned if requested.

That is by no means all however. As far as possible these volunteers will come back to the hospital to devote some of their time to work there and to further training. In case of need they may take part in evening courses, conferences, practical exercises in disaster procedures, etc.

Several Montreal hospitals have co-operated in the training of groups of volunteers. In Quebec, the Laval hospital has the distinction of being the first to have tried this experiment a few months ago; it is gratified with the success achieved. On the one hand, the hospital is pleased to be able to stress the willing spirit of the fourteen applicants,

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their discipline and skill in nursing ; the volunteers themselves, on the other hand, take pleasure in the valuable contact they make with the hospital, the patients and particularly the hospital staff who have shown themselves so efficient and willing in initiating volunteers into the routine hospital tasks. The same experiment should be repeated with other groups.

Such a fine example is worth praising, encouraging and extending. This mutual assistance between graduate nurses—who pass on their knowledge—and these assistants—who offer their willingness—gives renewed lustre to the emblem of the hospitals which in former times were founded on the charity flowing from the hearts of such people as Fabiola in Rome, St.Hildegarde in Germany, St.Elizabeth in Hungary, St.Louise-de-Marillac in France, the Duchess d'Aiguillon—founder of the Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec, and Jeanne Mance to whom we owe the Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal.

The examples given by these voluntary hospital workers prove that, in spite of the cybernetic trends in our hospitals, altruism still flourishes.

Problems of waste disposal, *WHO Chronicle—World Health Organization, Geneva, No. 5.*

Sanitary engineering is constantly evolving. Not only are new methods being developed for tackling old problems but the growing size and improving living standards of communities and the appearance of new industries are continually changing the nature and the volume of waste products, such as fertilizers drained from the land, the waste from manufacturing processes, or the garbage deposited in household dustbins . . .

. . . It can be claimed with some justification that the immense improvement in health and well-being in industrial countries during the past century has been due more to improved sanitation than to any other single factor. But continued alertness and above all continued research are needed to maintain a reasonably healthy environment in face of the growth of populations and the ever-increasing industrialization of the countryside, and to improve the standard by eliminating the foulness of many rivers, the pollution of the atmosphere, and the spoiling of beaches. The efforts made in the past will need to be redoubled in the future.