

A GLANCE THROUGH THE REVIEWS

The XIIIth International Congress of Hospitals. *International Hospital Federation, Information Bulletin, No. 55.*

This Congress, which was held in Venice between June 5 and 9, 1961, had as its central theme: "The development of the hospital's rôle in a changing world". It thus emphasized the changes which are constantly taking place in the modern world.

In his opening address, Professor Querido referred to the central theme of the Congress, which might give the impression that the world had only just begun to change, when in point of fact it had always been developing since the beginning of time and this was one of the rare constant factors of existence. What is of importance today is the rhythm of this development which has been gathering ever-increasing speed over a number of years. Hospitals are transformed as rapidly as the world which surrounds them, and if solutions which we adopt are to remain valid for as long as possible, we must force ourselves to foresee future developments, not of characteristics which have already been acquired but of new trends which are now making themselves manifest.

The speaker brought out the four trends in hospital development, which he considered to be the most important. In the first place, more and more emphasis was being placed on the medico-technical services and correspondingly less on the hospitalisation services. The amount of accommodation is no longer a criterion in evaluating the importance of a hospital. In the same way, it is no longer an easy matter to determine the bed-population index on account of the various social factors involved. In order to estimate the requirements of the population in the matter of medical services, it would be much more prudent to base oneself on time which was spent, in the number of hours in X-ray examinations, laboratory tests and operating theatres, etc. for a thousand inhabitants. The medico-technical services are more important than the number of beds, since their activity should extend far beyond the confines of the hospital which would thus become a medical centre, or rather the pivot of the whole medical organization.

The second trend in hospital development emphasized by Professor Querido, was the differentiation between the activity of nurses and the medical personnel. One is only now beginning to realise that nurses

have a special rôle to play in the hospital and that it is not a question of it being merely accessory. The new categories of hospital personnel—dietiticians, physiotherapists, laboratory assistants, etc., are no longer regarded as being mere servants of the doctor: they now interpret his orders in the light of their own specialized qualifications. This is a contributory factor which brings out the nurse's special rôle.

Thirdly, the speaker stressed the fact that one was beginning to differentiate between categories of sick people, not according to the medical speciality to which they belong, but in accordance with their needs. With the exception of establishments for children's diseases and for psychiatry, the specialized hospitals are condemned to disappear. On the one hand, they do not answer the need for flexibility, since it is very difficult to adapt them to other purposes, and on the other hand, it is admitted that to isolate a problem from the general stream of medical research, is to hinder scientific progress. Furthermore, any sick person might require the services of a general hospital at any moment. The present tendency is to group the sick according to their needs, not only for medical treatment, but also for nursing care. This implies the idea of progressive treatment, as well as treatment in the home.

Finally, Professor Querido drew attention to a modern trend which seemed to him to be of capital importance for the future rôle of the hospital. There was no longer any social differentiation between the "users" of the hospital. The ill go to hospital, not to ask a favour, but to claim a right. They make use of a hospital, not because it can make a bed available for them, but in order to benefit from the medico-technical action which can be provided. This brings us back to the first trend in hospital development mentioned by the speaker.

According to Professor Querido, all these trends can be summarized as follows: "increased flexibility and efficiency and increased integration in the social scheme, in order to enable the hospital to play an adequate rôle now and in the future." These trends should show themselves in the planning and construction, the financing and administration, in the organization of the hospital services and in the treatment of the ill. The speaker emphasized the present importance of these problems: "The future arrives so rapidly that decisions which are made today are necessarily those for to-morrow."
