

SYMPOSIUM ON VENEREAL DISEASE STRESSES ROLE OF PHYSICIAN IN ERADICATING VD

The increased contribution that the private physician can make to the VD control program was a major emphasis of the National Symposium on VD conducted by the American Medical Association, November 20th, in Chicago, Illinois. The Symposium, which brought together leadership representatives of the AMA, voluntary organizations, public health, and civic, educational and communications groups, was another step in the broad campaign of the American Medical Association to curb the rising incidence of venereal diseases.

The importance of the private physician in the VD control effort was highlighted by Dr. William L. Fleming, Chairman, Department of Preventative Medicine, University of North Carolina, who said a National Study of VD Incidence made in 1962 indicated that private physicians were now treating nearly threefourths of all VD cases. Dr. Fleming stated, "The private physician holds the key to syphilis control and until access can be gained to his substantial majority of infectious syphilis cases and their sex contacts and associates rendered non-infectious or prevented from becoming infectious, it is difficult to see how syphilis can be controlled."

Dr. William J. Brown, Chief, VD Division, Public Health Service, said, "Only when private medicine does its part by reporting each case and allowing a trained health department representative to interview his patient for sex contacts can we hope to control and eradicate syphilis." Dr. Brown stressed that in these interviews doctor-patient relationships are always considered and maintained and that all information concerning diagnosis and admitted sex relations between patients and contacts is held in the strictest confidence." In his address, Dr. Brown outlined the Federal VD control program.

George E. Hall, J. D., Staff Associate, AMA Law Department, spoke to Symposium participants on "Present Legal Aspects of Reporting and Treatment of Syphilis and Gonorrhoea". Mr. Hall said that in his opinion laws requiring the reporting of the venereal diseases protected the doctor from any possible law suits stemming from the reporting of a case.

M. D. PROBLEMS

While encouraging full cooperation between private practitioners and health department epidemiologists, Dr. Joseph L. Logan, Warren, Ohio, said, "Let no one be fooled into thinking that the problem with the private physician reporting and cooperating in epidemiological follow-up is an easy one. Most physicians are conservative individuals. Many doctors fear, and in some cases rightly so, various types of repercussions from reporting or intimating that someone's child has or has been exposed to venereal disease. It may be difficult to imagine the task of a doctor in a small community to have to tell the town's leading citizen that his son has syphilis and not only that, but his suspected contact is another boy."

THE AMA PROGRAM

Fred V. Hein, Ph. D., Director, AMA Department of Community Health and Education, told Symposium participants that the AMA VD project will be a continuing campaign. The campaign, Dr. Hein said, will involve four principal types of activities:

1. Development of pamphlets, radio short, TV announcements, posters, and other visual aids on venereal disease for wide distribution and promotion throughout the United States.
2. Publication of announcements, articles, and editorials relative to the campaign against Venereal disease in **Journal of American Medical Association**, **AMA News**, **Today's Health Magazine** and other appropriate periodicals of the American Medical Association.
3. Communication with state and local medical societies, state departments of health, state departments of education, and national health agencies which might be interested in cooperating in the campaign.
4. Communication with appropriate news media, including newspaper, popular magazines, and radio and TV stations encouraging the use of appropriate educational materials and articles on the subject of venereal disease.

Eleven major speeches were featured at the AMA VD Symposium.

[Editor's note: Some Symposium papers were not available when this issue of the Social Health News went to press. Important comments from these papers will be reviewed as they become available.]—Social Health News, Vol. 41, ASHA, New York, N. Y.: 10019, No. 1, January 1966.

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