

## THE SYRACUSE HEALTH DEMONSTRATION

### *Résumé of Recent Progress*

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that the work of organizing the services planned in connection with the health demonstration in Syracuse is far from complete, the project here shows definite and gratifying progress at the end of its second year. There has been improvement and extension which seems proportionate to the increased resources made available from demonstration funds. With the thirty-two employees added from this source to the city's health service, the combined personnel of the official agencies cooperating in the demonstration is now 106. The contribution from demonstration funds of \$71,426.00 to the city's budget for the year 1924 provided a total of \$254,210.00 for health activities through official agencies, or \$1.35 per capita of the city's population.

Records indicate that a satisfactory control of tuberculosis has been established here. The number of new cases reported during 1924 is slightly larger than in 1923. The far and moderately advanced cases examined at the clinics number practically the same as in the year preceding, but there is a definite increase in the incipient and suspected cases examined. Tuberculosis clinics have been increased from three to six. The number of home visits made by nurses and the re-visits of patients to clinics was distinctly larger in 1924 than heretofore. An additional clinic station has been established in a densely populated Polish district in the western part of the city. This is also being used for an enlarged child welfare service.

The thoroughness of the follow-up of reported cases of tuberculosis is shown by the fact that out of a total of 243 cases

classified as "whereabouts unknown" when the demonstration was begun, all but eighteen have been accounted for. During 1924, there had been located in Syracuse approximately seven and a half cases for each death from tuberculosis among residents of the city.

Inspections made by nurses in the Bureau of School Inspection appear to be increased threefold. Corrections were secured in 300 cases of defective vision; and in 241 cases, either tonsillectomy or adenectomy, or both, were undertaken. Through the influence of the health teacher attached to the service, every parochial school but one has provided itself with scales for weighing and measuring children, and with the co-operation of the Knights of Columbus, funds have been secured to provide necessary care of the eyes of indigent children in the schools. The oral hygienist examined over 2,000 children, giving prophylactic treatment to 888 of them. A total of 1,645 were referred elsewhere for dental service.

The Well Baby Clinics show an increase in attendance of 1,870 over 1923 and home visits by nurses increased by 10,000.

Infant mortality shows a lowering from 83.4 per thousand living births in 1923 to 69.6 in 1924, the lowest infant mortality rate on record in the city thus far. The death rate of infants under one month, however, remains practically the same and will require special attention. The reduction of infant mortality from gastro-intestinal diseases from 13.3 in 1923 to 6.7 for 1924, is, no doubt, due essentially to the pasteurization of the city's milk supply, put into effect early in 1924, as well as in part to the special attention given the subject of diarrheal diseases by the Bureau of Child Hygiene.

There were 140 cases of infantile paralysis reported during 1924. With the additional personnel in the Bureau of Com-

municable Diseases, provided from demonstration funds, it was possible to investigate suspected cases promptly, to diagnose and to institute treatment earlier. There is no doubt but that this has been a factor in the saving of lives and in reducing the incidence of graver paralysis. There were twelve deaths from this disease during the year. It is significant that five out of every six cases treated with serum escaped paralysis.

The incidence of diphtheria during 1924 has been about one-half the norm of cases reported during the preceding five-year period. The work of immunizing against this disease is being carried forward in the infant welfare clinics and in both the public and parochial schools.

Work was begun recently in the field of venereal disease prevention.

A wide public interest in the demonstration has been developed in Syracuse. Local newspapers, including *The Catholic Sun*, have devoted considerable space to keeping their readers informed about the activities of the Health Department—as for example, the diphtheria immunization campaign, the opening of a new health center, and the control of the infantile paralysis outbreak. Feature stories on health appear in the Sunday papers. These are supplemented by similar stories for children presented by the health teachers in the public and parochial schools. The health education program is being carried out by the Health Department's Bureau of Health Education. This bureau publishes *Better Health*, a magazine popular in tone which goes bi-monthly to a mailing list of approximately 3,000. Its special publications descriptive of the demonstration, "This Means Dollars to You" and "For Syracuse and For You," have been widely distributed in the city.

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*Health Work in the Syracuse Schools*

The rapid development of health work in the public schools of Syracuse during the last year and a half may be regarded



As a means of impressing health facts upon the minds of children, dramatics are being effectively used in the Syracuse schools. Here, pupils in the Porter School are rehearsing a scene from "Mr. Cold, You Can't Catch Me," which was first published in a recent issue of *Better Health*, and first presented in the schools of Syracuse.

as the result of a widespread realization on the part of the people of this city of the importance of preventive measures in the conservation of the health of the school child. *Non scolae sed vitae* (knowledge without health cannot profit us) is becoming an accepted precept among parents. For many years the public schools have desired to extend their health work. The inauguration in May, 1923, of the Syracuse Health Demonstration, and the co-operation therein of the Milbank Memorial Fund, have made this possible and have done much to aid the schools in awakening public opinion in the city to the importance of the health of the school child.

As the school health work progresses, increased in scope and effectiveness by the addition to the school staff of a full-time school physician, six additional school nurses, three dental hygienists and a director of health education, increasing evidence is available to show that the enlarged program is resulting in the improvement of the general health of Syracuse children of school age. The medical inspection given every child on the opening of school in September, 1924, for example, showed the children to be in better physical condition than at any previous school opening since such examinations were started.

Medical and physical examinations are made of each pupil at the beginning of each school term. In addition, the medical inspectors and nurses make a weekly inspection in each class-room in order to prevent the spread of disease.

Although recent records do not show a marked growth in the numbers of such examinations, which the increase in the number of examined might lead one to expect, there has been a decided improvement in the character of these inspections. They are now being conducted more slowly, and with greater attention to detail. A report to the parent or guardian is made covering the health and physical development of each child. When defects are found, remedial suggestions are given. If the child is discovered to be suffering from adenoids, diseased tonsils, defective teeth, vision or hearing, parents are given advice as to how to proceed in having the condition remedied. The nurses follow up these suggestions in the home and often assist parents in carrying them out.

That this effort is resulting in the correction of the defects found, is indicated by the records. In the year 1922-1923, a total of 5,325 children had defects corrected which had been discovered at school. In 1923-1924, a total of 7,195 children had defects corrected. In other words, in the earlier period, 55 per cent of the children whose parents' attention was



called to their defects had them corrected; while in the latter 91 per cent of the children were interested in having their defects corrected.

It has long been known that diseased teeth were responsible for a great amount of ill health among school children, including anemia, nervous troubles, rheumatism, heart disease, chorea and numerous other acute infectious diseases. It has been estimated that about four-fifths of all school children need dental attention. Funds from the health demonstration have made it possible to carry out an oral hygiene program in the Syracuse schools. As a result, during the year 1923-1924, the dental hygienists have examined the teeth of 8,356 school children, charted the teeth of 3,267 and cleaned the teeth of 1,962. During this period 2,597 children have been recommended to family dentists. In 797 classes, children have been given lessons on the care of the teeth and taught to regard the toothbrush as a friend.

As a child grows, every advance in inches calls for a corresponding advance in pounds. With this idea in mind all the children are weighed and measured in the Syracuse schools. In 1922-1923, there were 18,097 children weighed in the schools, and in 1923-1924 there were 22,359. In the first period of examination, 16 per cent of the children were found underweight, and in the last, 14 per cent. It is expected that as the school health work progresses this percentage will be further reduced.

There is no part of the program more important than that of health education. Funds made available through the Syracuse Health Demonstration, have made possible the employment of a Director of Health Education who exercises general supervision over health work in the various schools, going from room to room instructing the pupils in health lessons. The Director has made use of numerous ingenious and attractive methods to gain and hold the in-

terest of the children. Among some of the interesting features she has established are health clubs where groups of undernourished children are brought once a week for a period of forty-five minutes. During this period, the children are weighed and measured and given special instruction in health habits. Parents are invited to attend these sessions and their co-operation is sought in enlisting the child's interest in his personal health and hygiene. There has been a marked improvement in the general health of the children in these classes. School health clubs, in which classes compete for banners given for the highest degree of excellence in health work, have also proven a valuable part of the health education program.

The treatment and examination for goiter, which during 1923-1924 was made the subject of a special survey by ten school physicians assisted by nurses, is being continued during 1924-1925. All of the children registered in the public schools in 1923-1924 were examined, there being a total of 25,875. About 16 per cent of the total school population were found to have demonstrable goiter, the condition being about three and one-half times as prevalent in girls as in boys. The nurses and doctors report that in 423 of the cases treated the goiters have disappeared, and in a still larger group there has been improvement.

The school health work is administered by the Division of Health Supervision of the Public Schools. In working to preserve the health of the Syracuse school child, to repair his existing deformities and to render him in every way possible physically and mentally fit for the struggles of life, the Division is co-operating in putting into effect one of the major clauses of the local health demonstration program.

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