

# ANNOTATIONS

## PROFESSIONAL DENTISTRY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

THE importance of dental health to physical welfare has not been recognized to the extent that it should be by individual members of society, by the medical and public health professions, by planners of social legislation, and by the dentists themselves in the opinion of Dr. Alfred J. Asgis. In his book, *PROFESSIONAL DENTISTRY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY*, Dr. Asgis reviews the present status of dentistry, its relation to other health agencies, and the effect on it of socio-economic factors in our national life; discusses educational methods and the need to give students a better understanding of professional dentistry as a public service; and advocates social dental programs which would make it possible for dentistry to function better as a public health service. This book should be of interest not only to members of the dental profession but to all public health and lay persons who are concerned with improving dental health conditions.

The failure of the individual citizen to obtain necessary dental care is well demonstrated by the large number of young men rejected for military service because of dental defects. This failure presents both educational and economic problems, and Dr. Asgis says "it seems that the solution for increased consumption of dental services lies in *some* group method of distribution." Since, in dentistry, "prevention is confined largely to methods of *control*," that is, to early treatment of dental caries and oral diseases, Dr. Asgis recommends that "at least one-third of each medical dollar available for medical and other health services under any form of health insurance should be made available specifically for dentistry." The basis for this proportion is not given. It is also urged that dental service be recognized as a proper and important part of public

<sup>1</sup> *PROFESSIONAL DENTISTRY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY*. Alfred J. Asgis, Ph.D., D.D.S. New York, Clinical Press, 1941.

school health programs. Dentists must recognize and accept their responsibility to dental health planning and programs, and those engaged in public health dentistry should have special graduate training in this field.

Only a small portion of the book is devoted specifically to dentistry in public health. A large share of Part One traces the history and development of dentistry from a skilled or technical vocation one hundred years ago to its present status of a professional specialty. Dental education has been the keystone of progress and the methods and curricula of dental education, past, present, and future, are fully discussed by Dr. Asgis with emphasis on their relation to the ethical, scientific, and social standards of the profession. In Part Two, included only in the limited edition, the author reviews the findings of a teacher education study which he conducted in 1939 and suggests "an approach to a program of educating dentists and teachers of dentistry in line with the aims of functional dental education."

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