

CAMPAIGN CALENDAR OF A PUBLIC HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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THE Bellevue-Yorkville Health Demonstration in the City of New York has carried on since its inception, and is carrying on now, general campaigns to popularize knowledge regarding such subjects in the general health field as child hygiene, diphtheria, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, periodic health examinations, and safety.

By considering the results of these campaigns in a metropolitan area of 150,000 population (which extends from 14th to 64th Streets on the east side of Manhattan with Fourth Avenue as a western boundary below 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue above), certain light may be thrown on and certain general conclusions drawn, regarding the value of similar projects in other parts of the country. This article deals mainly with the public propaganda campaigns; individual health education carried on by physicians, nurses, and teachers is considered only insofar as it was a part of the general publicity campaign.

The most intensive drives have been carried on in the fields of diphtheria, venereal disease, tuberculosis, and periodic health examination. While an appropriate month was selected for beginning the campaigns they have generally been continued for longer periods and have often stretched over several months. It is very important to select the proper month for a campaign on a particular subject and also, if possible, to arrange a time when other organizations are not planning campaigns which may compete for popular interest.

A campaign calendar must vary somewhat from year to

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year, just as the subjects vary, for certain work can be stressed more effectively during certain seasons of the year. Intensive work on diphtheria immunization yields better results after the winter months when the epidemic of colds has somewhat abated; early diagnosis of tuberculosis during April, to correspond with similar efforts of the national and city organizations; child hygiene in general, nutrition, or dental hygiene during May to fit in with Child Health Day, or during the summer months; periodic health examinations in June or January, keeping in mind that it is more effective to remind people of this subject before vacation time or at the beginning of the new year; safety for children in July and August when schools are closed and the children are more apt to be on the streets; health examination of children in the latter part of August and in September, before they enter school. Campaigns along all these lines have not been carried on in the Bellevue-Yorkville district on an intensive basis every year, although once a subject has been stressed on a large scale the educational work continues.

Of course methods have differed somewhat with each campaign. But in all cooperation was sought and secured from the physicians of the district, from the medical societies, and the local health and social agencies.

In the Bellevue-Yorkville district in the course of the last two years alone (1929-1930) over one million pieces of literature and about 30,000 posters were distributed, mainly to residents, but also to doctors and dentists, and to schools, welfare and health agencies, stores, industrial plants, banks, motion picture theaters, clubs, and restaurants. For reaching the people in their homes, house-to-house delivery by a commercial firm and the mails were generally used as the most effective methods of distribution. Although much of the material was prepared and printed by the demonstration,

sometimes in cooperation with other agencies, a large amount was supplied by other health and welfare organizations.

The *Health News*, a popular picture tabloid newspaper, was employed by the demonstration during various campaigns in 1929. Six issues were printed; four in editions of 40,000 each, one of 50,000, and one of 10,000 copies. The first issue was devoted to diphtheria, and the April, May, and June issues were given over respectively to early diagnosis of tuberculosis; nutrition, teeth, and other health problems of school children; and periodic health examinations, with special messages on this subject from Governor Roosevelt and prominent religious leaders. In November the services at the Health Center were described, and the December issue dealt mainly with colds and children's diseases.

Of course during all the campaigns we tried to secure the cooperation of the important metropolitan newspapers and especially of the tabloids, which are read by a great many of the tenement house dwellers of the district. While it was possible to secure stories on such subjects as diphtheria, tuberculosis, and periodic health examination, it was most difficult to have any mention of venereal disease. But in the Bellevue-Yorkville venereal disease campaign our various efforts resulted in the breaking down of this taboo and the New York papers, as well as papers throughout the country, carried news on this campaign.

In campaigns like those on tuberculosis and venereal disease, special lectures were arranged for physicians, nurses, teachers, and social workers, in order that these individuals in turn might use their influence with their patients, clients, and pupils—the general public. During others, special courses were scheduled for physicians. The public forum was utilized in all, but in the venereal disease campaign separate meetings were arranged for men and women with talks of a general

nature for mixed audiences. The radio was used repeatedly. The cardboard poster was found valuable as an advertisement to be displayed in local stores of the neighborhood, but according to our experience the paper poster is of no use for this purpose.

Special exhibitions were prepared during some campaigns, as were window displays for drug stores and empty stores during others. Arrangements were made with the motion picture houses of the district to show certain short silent reels on the subject of the campaign, but films other than "talkies" would be impractical now as most of the theaters no longer show silent pictures.

Diphtheria Immunization Campaigns

An illustration of popular health education work in which results can actually be measured is the diphtheria drive. Campaigns for immunization against diphtheria have been conducted by the demonstration since its organization, but especially intensive work was begun in March, 1929, and carried over into 1930 and 1931.

It is gratifying to note that there were no deaths from diphtheria in the district from August, 1929, until the first of March, 1931. There were 9 deaths during the first seven months of 1929, and 28 in the year 1928. In 1922, when local records for the district were first available, there were 50 deaths. There was a corresponding decrease in the number of cases reported from addresses in Bellevue-Yorkville—94 in 1930 as against 267 in 1929 (a decrease of 65 per cent) and 405 in 1928.

The campaign was conducted with the help of volunteer health and welfare agencies and benefited greatly from the very effective city-wide health education work on this subject. The most intensive effort was made during the two



years, 1929 and 1930. About 160,000 leaflets and 15,000 posters were distributed during this period, and each issue of the tabloid, a total of 220,000 copies, carried pictures and appeals on this subject. A diphtheria film was shown in various motion picture houses to a total attendance of 14,000. The ministers of the district cooperated by printing the campaign message in their church bulletins or posting it.

Questionnaires were distributed to 20,000 school children during April, 1929, and returned to the demonstration a few days later, where the replies were classified. To parents who refused to have their children immunized, the Department of Health sent letters suggesting that they consider the matter further, in consultation with their family doctor or with doctors in attendance at one of the public clinics. To those who were willing to have their children immunized, letters were sent reminding them of their consent and asking them to take the children to their family doctor or to the nearest baby health station. All those parents whose children were not immunized were visited by the Department of Health nurses, and as a result a great many mothers who would not otherwise have done so brought their children to the baby health stations or took them to their doctors. From March, 1929, to the end of December, 2,632 such visits were made by the Health Department field nurses.

In 1930, an experienced nurse was engaged to visit all the families in the most congested blocks of the district. This nurse visited 253 families, of whom only nine had never heard of toxin-antitoxin. In these families were 502 children between nine months and ten years of age of whom 283 had had the three inoculations and 219 had not.

Many reasons were given by the parents who had not had their children immunized. The most frequent was disbelief in the efficacy of immunization and next came fear of subse-

quent ill effects. Some said that their private physicians did not think it was necessary, and others that it would be time enough to consider immunization when the children went to school. Some mothers were working and could not take the children to a clinic; others said it was too hot; others were not willing to go to a free clinic and could not afford to go to a private physician because their husbands were out of work. In many cases, especially among the Italians, the mothers were willing to have the children immunized, but their husbands would not consent. A number of fathers would not allow it because of their own experience with injections in the army, or because of articles against immunization they had read in certain newspapers. But nearly all the families knew "Thirty-eighth Street," as they called the Health Center, and many of the women got out with much pride their pictures which had been in the Bellevue-Yorkville *Health News* some time ago.

The Venereal Disease Campaign

One of the most interesting and intensive campaigns, which attracted nation-wide attention, was on venereal disease, carried on in the Bellevue-Yorkville district during October, November, and December, 1930. It was undertaken by the demonstration in cooperation with the Department of Health, the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association, and the American Social Hygiene Association. The endorsement of the Medical Society of the County of New York was secured, and the support of physicians, nurses, social workers, religious leaders, and heads of industries, as well as of clinics and hospitals, was enlisted.

The purpose of the campaign was to familiarize the adult population of the district with the essential facts concerning syphilis and gonorrhoea, and to induce as many infected per-

sons as possible to seek medical advice and treatment. Incidentally we were interested in determining whether methods of health education used in other preventable diseases could be used in campaigns against venereal diseases.

In planning this campaign, the demonstration found that it was touching unploughed ground. It discovered, for instance, that among the available literature there was nothing suitable to send to every family of the district, nor was there experience on hand which might indicate the reaction of people towards public meetings on venereal disease. One of the first jobs was to prepare a set of pamphlets in simple and direct language dealing strictly with scientific information on syphilis and gonorrhoea, and not with problems of social hygiene in general.

The literature prepared was of two types—that for widespread distribution written in general terms, and that in which symptoms were described in greater detail and which was sent upon request only. In connection with this educational work 100,000 pamphlets were sent out, 15,000 letters on syphilis and gonorrhoea were mailed to the families of the district, 70,000 post cards and letters were sent in connection with the various meetings, and 6,000 window display posters, 48,000 fliers announcing meetings, 1,100 health flashes for bulletin boards, and 1,100 washroom posters were distributed.

The letter and leaflet going to 15,000 families resulted in requests to the demonstration for over 2,000 pamphlets giving more detailed information on syphilis and gonorrhoea. Not only was there not a single complaint from those who received this literature but many sent letters of thanks and requests that this educational work be continued.

During November an exhibit was installed in a temporarily vacant shop on one of the business thoroughfares, where the ravages of syphilis and gonorrhoea were shown by means of

posters, slides, wax models, and statistical charts. No medical questions involving diagnosis or treatment were dealt with, but qualified persons were in attendance to answer questions concerning private and public treatment facilities in the district.

Altogether forty-five meetings were held at the Health Center, and at other places, such as settlement houses and industrial plants, and four radio talks were given. All the meetings attracted large and keenly interested audiences. Movies were shown at most of the popular meetings except those held in industrial establishments. A special course of lectures for physicians was arranged and other meetings were held for nurses, social workers, ministers, and teachers.

Of special interest is the fact that the press was actually induced to carry publicity on the subject, a circumstance which gives hope for similar work in the future. The results were highly satisfactory. It was definitely demonstrated that there are certain methods of health instruction which are as applicable to syphilis and gonorrhea as they are to other preventable diseases. The requests which continue to come in from various parts of the country testify to the interest in this work and the great need for it. A similar campaign is now in preparation in another district of New York City, and a movement is on foot to have social hygiene associations set aside a month each year for carrying on this type of popular education.

Other Health Educational Campaigns

Our first periodic health examination campaign was started in 1927, but the most intensive work was done in January, February, and June, 1929. We have no way of ascertaining how many people, as a result of this stimulus, have gone to private physicians for a health examination, but

one known tangible outcome during the 1929 campaign has been the examination of over 3,000 school children. This was the result of the distribution of 30,000 cards to school children urging an examination, and containing the phrase, "If you cannot consult your family doctor, go to a clinic." An emergency service was maintained in the Bellevue-Yorkville Health Center from February 20 to May 21, 1929, and 1,171 children were examined—a larger number were sent to other clinics and to private doctors. Records of the examination were transferred to the children's school records for appropriate attention.

A graduate course for physicians of the district in the technique of making a general periodic examination was given at the Health Center as a part of this campaign. Twenty-six physicians completed the course which included 39 sessions and at which 281 persons were examined.

The total literature distributed or mailed amounted to over 300,000 pieces and about 5,000 posters were displayed. Physicians were supplied with examination forms issued by the American Medical Association, white record cards and blue application cards, and with literature for distribution to their patients.

The special projects in the tuberculosis program carried on by the demonstration included a study of the examination of 1,000 school children of 13 and 14 years of age and the organization of a consultation chest service for the use of private physicians, both suggested by Commissioner Wynne.

The first project was a pioneer study in its field. It was made to contribute still further to the existing knowledge of the prevalence of tuberculosis among boys and girls of this age, to serve as an effective and practical method of health education, to secure the correction of defects before children leave school, to find out the kind and amount of tuberculous

infection in a cross section of our child population, and to study the factors influencing its prevalence. A full report of the result of this project, by Drs. Barnard, Amberson, and Loew, appeared in the *American Review of Tuberculosis* for May, 1931.

The consultation chest service is for patients who can afford to pay their physician's fee, but who are unable to meet the cost of X-ray diagnosis and a specialist's examination. The attendance at this clinic increased from 14 in January, 1929, and 88 in January, 1930, to 239 in January, 1931. During 1930, in the second year of its operation, it proved of increasing value, 1,674 patients being examined as compared with only 437 for 1929. The work of this clinic was so successful that the Health Department now operates similar services in five additional stations throughout the City.

Other features of the antituberculosis program of the demonstration consisted in the distribution of about 250,000 pieces of literature during the past three years and the organization of meetings and lectures for nurses, physicians, teachers, social workers, and the general public.

An opportunity for urging on parents healthful living and preventive measures for their children is given by Child Health Day on May first. One feature of this celebration which does much to foster a friendly attitude of the community towards the work of the demonstration is the keeping of open house on this day. Through children in the schools and the contacts of the various clinics, invitations are sent to the parents of the children in the district to come to the Center either in the afternoon or in the evening. During 1930 more than 1,000 of the demonstration neighbors responded, many bringing babies and small children and listening to illustrated lectures on various phases of public health work.

Safety campaigns for school and preschool children were

conducted for four successive years in the twenty-five summer playgrounds and playschools. The recreation consultant visited these centers and distributed printed material. It is estimated that about 2,500 children were reached daily. Literature was also distributed widely to school children and to homes in the neighborhood, and posters were displayed in stores in the district.

During 1930 safety patrols for children were organized and emphasis was placed on safety programs for the homes. The duties of the patrol included such features as giving traffic cautions and rules, helping smaller children to cross streets, preventing children from climbing on roofs and gates, and helping them to play safely.

The demonstration has a nutrition worker on its staff and has in the past engaged in a certain amount of popular education in this field, but the food health shows and yearly window display contests have been largely under the direction of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, which has a branch office in the building of the demonstration.

This same situation applies somewhat to the dental campaigns. The dental clinic at the Health Center is financed jointly by the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and the demonstration, and although our school health instruction consultants in the public and parochial schools have done a great deal of work along this line, the work of the dental clinic is under the direction of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and the educational campaigns have been carried on largely by this organization—chiefly through the distribution of leaflets, fliers and posters made by school children, talks, and plays. A special drive is carried on during summer months to get as many children as possible to have their dental work completed during vacation.

In considering the projects reviewed here the question may arise whether it is best to carry on health education through general public propaganda—meetings, literature, lectures, radio talks, exhibitions—or whether it may not be more worth while to devote the money and effort employed in this work towards securing special training for nurses, teachers, public health and social workers who come in direct contact with those who may need health services. Past experiences suggest that it is important to do both. For measures of prevention and control of preventable disease can be put into practice only as rapidly as public opinion is ready to support them, and general campaigns help educate public opinion. Provided that the direct approach is not neglected and the publicity is not indiscriminate, the popular public health campaigns carried out along the lines described in this article can really be an important, effective, and constructive factor in public health work.



