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HEALTH.

Medical and Sanitary Report of the Director of Medical Services  
for the year 1940.

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*Laid before the Legislative Council on the  
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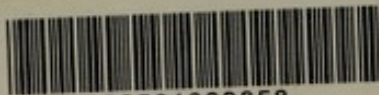
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# HEALTH.

## Medical and Sanitary Report of the Director of Medical Services for the year 1940.

*Council Paper No. 72 of 1940.*

*M.P. No. 57027.*

### HON COLONIAL SECRETARY,

I have the honour to submit, for the information of His Excellency the Governor and Legislative Council, the following report and returns showing the operations of the Health Department for the year ended 31st December, 1940.

### SECTION I—GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

#### General.

1. In the absence of any army medical unit the medical services to the military forces continued to be administered by the Health Department. The rapid increase in strength of the local forces and their dispersal to various parts of the colony brought in their train the usual problems of housing, sanitation and medical care. When account is taken of the fact that many of the troops were perforce stationed in very malarious areas the health of the men may be considered as having been satisfactory.

2. A scheme was prepared for the administration of an internment camp which was constructed in the latter half of the year. The medical and sanitary work of this camp were carried out by the Health Department under the charge of the Senior Medical Officer of Health of the northern division. The health of the interned persons was maintained at a high level.

3. Considerable progress was made in regard to housing for the working classes. Housing schemes were initiated in St. James, Morvant, and at Mon Repos, San Fernando. Two hundred and thirty-three houses were built at Morvant and two hundred at Mon Repos by the close of the year.

4. A report was submitted to Government by a Committee appointed to enquire into the question of factory and workshop legislation and inspection in their relation to modern industrial developments.

5. The hospital consulting architect arrived in the colony early in the year in connection with the planning of the new hospital at San Fernando and the reconstruction of the Colonial Hospital, Port-of-Spain and the Mental Hospital, St. Ann's.

The opportunity was taken to obtain his advice on the question of a site for the Tuberculosis Sanatorium and on the planning of the buildings. An excellent site has been selected and measures are being taken with a view to acquiring it.

6. The arrival in December of Dr. E. Muir, C.I.E., Medical Secretary, of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, as Medical Superintendent of the Leper Settlement at Chacachacare will enable effect to be given in 1941 to the department's proposals to conduct a leprosy survey in the colony and to instruct medical officers in the subject of leprosy by posting each of them for a period of three months at Chacachacare to work under Dr. Muir.

7. Discussions with representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation gave cause to hope that the Foundation will co-operate with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in carrying out a malaria survey commencing in 1941.

8. Trinidad again enjoyed an immunity from serious outbreaks of infectious disease. The outstanding incident in the year was an outbreak of arsenical poisoning due to the use of sugar which on examination was found to be heavily contaminated with sodium arsenite. Owing to a shortage of the local product sugar was imported from British Guiana and immediately distributed throughout the colony during the last few days of 1939. The first cases of arsenical poisoning were reported on the 2nd of January at Arima. Steps were at once taken by the department and the police to seize and impound the whole consignment, a considerable proportion of which had already been distributed. This was completed in a few days. Inevitably, cases of poisoning occurred in various parts of the colony. In all there were 712 cases with 16 deaths.

The limiting of the outbreak to these figures reflects great credit on the personnel of the department and on the police who in the course of a few days seized quantities varying from a few pounds to large numbers of bags from some two thousand warehouses, shops and parlours.

9. The war has already had its effect on personnel. The post of Deputy Director of the department was vacant throughout the year nor was it possible to fill several other vacancies in the medical and nursing establishments.

10. Dr. E. P. L. Masson obtained the Diploma in Psychological Medicine of Dublin University.

11. Twenty-three candidates from Trinidad obtained the Sanitary Inspector's certificate and eighteen the Health Visitor's certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute. In addition nine candidates obtained the Meat Inspector's certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute. Twenty-two student nurses of the department completed their training and qualified as certificated nurses.



12. With a view to considering the possibility of a scheme of affiliation of the nursing services in the British West Indies, a questionnaire was circulated to other Colonial Governments on the subject of qualifications of candidates for the nursing profession, syllabus of training, standard of examinations, &c.

13. Finance:

A. Revenue.

	\$	c.
1. Medical Receipts .. .. .	51,028	68
2. Laboratory Fees .. .. .	1,027	16
3. Examination Fees, Sanitary Inspectors and Nurses .. .. .	1,787	88
4. Fumigation Fees .. .. .	540	03
5. Milk Badges, Vendors' badges, &c. .. .. .	206	13
6. Surplus Stores .. .. .	207	90
	<b>\$54,797</b>	<b>78</b>

B. Expenditure.

	Personal Emoluments.	Transport and Travelling.	Other Charges.	Total.
	\$ c.	\$ c.	\$ c.	\$ c.
General Administration .. .. .	237,394 59(a)	14,871 44	11,855 56(b)	264,121 59
Institutions .. .. .	228,564 08	8,733 84	492,083 73	729,381 65
District Service .. .. .	17,778 36	3,010 56	26,268 20	47,057 12
Public Health and Sanitary Services .. .. .	53,595 68	18,625 49	63,714 26	135,935 43
Laboratory .. .. .	5,986 71	...	2,838 02	8,824 73
Quarantine .. .. .	4,106 40	...	2,941 54	7,047 94
Grants, Corporate Bodies .. .. .	...	...	25,449 00	25,449 00
Dental Service .. .. .	...	...	4,434 20	4,434 20
	<b>\$547,425 82</b>	<b>\$45,241 33</b>	<b>\$629,584 51</b>	<b>\$1,222,251 66</b>

(a) Includes salaries of medical officer in district and Public Health Services.

(b) Includes fees—refunds to dispensing students.

SECTION II—PUBLIC HEALTH.

(a) General Remarks:

The health of the colony was well maintained and, as stated above, there were no major outbreaks of infectious disease. The year 1940 was a particularly dry one and this doubtless accounts for the slight increase in the number of cases of typhoid fever. The incidence of malaria, in so far as this can be judged from cases reported by district medical officers, was more or less stationary although in the northern division it appears to have been higher than in the previous year. In the southern division, on the other hand, the incidence was less. This may be attributable to the anti-malarial measures rendered necessary in endemic foci of the disease by reason of the presence of troops and of labour imported for special industrial projects. Such measures would operate not only in favour of those for whom they were undertaken but also for the normal inhabitants of the areas.

(b) General Diseases:

15. Twenty-one thousand one hundred and forty-five cases of general diseases were treated in the various Government hospitals and there were 1,664 deaths. Table I shows the diseases treated and the deaths under the various heads.

(c) Communicable Diseases:

16. *Typhoid Fever*.—The incidence of this disease showed a slight increase. Four hundred and fifty-two cases with one hundred and thirteen deaths as compared with four hundred cases with one hundred and ten deaths in 1939.

17. *Dysenteric Group*.—The dysenteries on the other hand showed a considerable increase, 620 cases as compared with 394 in 1939. Tobago accounted for 25 per cent. of these cases, a clear indication of the low standard of sanitation in that island. The figures given do not represent the true picture since dysentery is not a notifiable disease.

18. *Rabies*.—Once again it is possible to record no case of this disease in humans nor in cattle. Eight hundred and fifty-seven bats (*Desmodus Rufus*) were captured. Of these 627 were examined for negri bodies. Four were positive.

19. *Diphtheria*.—There were 97 cases notified.

20. *Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis*.—Three cases were notified. There were no deaths.

21. *Pulmonary Tuberculosis*.—There were 451 deaths from this disease as compared with 466 in 1939.



22. *Leprosy*.—The number of patients remaining in the Settlement at Chacachacare from 1939 was 377. There were, during 1940, forty-four new cases admitted and ten re-admissions. The total number treated was 431. There were 19 deaths giving a percentage of 8.57 deaths on the number of persons treated. Eighteen persons were discharged and 11 absconded.

23. *Veneral Diseases*.—The work of the clinic at Port-of-Spain which was opened in 1939 increased so rapidly that it was found necessary to engage the services of a private practitioner on a part-time basis to make it possible to meet the demand.

The total number of cases treated here in 1940 was 4,209. Of these the new cases numbered 2,144 of whom 567 were classified as non-venereal or non-specific venereal disease. Of the others, 919 were syphilis, 570 gonorrhoea, 45 lymphogranuloma venereum, 9 granuloma inguinale and 34 yaws.

The number of attendances for the individual attention of the medical officer was 28,242, whilst the attendances for dressings and irrigations was 19,413. The fall in the latter figure from that of 1939 (27,251) was due in large measure to the use of the sulphanilamide drugs, particularly sulphapyridine (M. & B 693).

In the district clinics at St. Joseph and Tacarigua 672 and 530 cases respectively were under treatment.

24. *Yaws*.—This disease is not notifiable and even approximate figures are not available. The principal foci are in Tobago, St. Joseph, Couva, Gran Couva, Guaracara, Ortoire-Moruga and Nariva-Mayaro.

25. *Ophthalmia Neonatorum*.—One hundred and ten cases were notified.

26. *Malaria* is not a notifiable disease and no reliable statement of incidence can be made. Twenty thousand six hundred and ninety-one cases were reported but only a small proportion of these had microscopical confirmation. The deaths from malaria per 1,000 of the population were 0.89 which is the lowest yet recorded for this disease.

27. The prevalence of notifiable disease in 1940 is given in Table II.

#### (d) Vital Statistics:

28. The estimated population of Trinidad and Tobago as at 31st December, 1940, was 484,900, an increase of 8,566 over that of 1939. The excess of births over deaths was 9,036 while immigration exceeded emigration by 2,409. The rates given below are based on the mean population for the year viz: 479,178.

29. Total live births numbered 16,535 giving a birth rate of 34.51 as compared with 30.96 in 1939. Still births numbered 965.

30. There were 7,499 deaths, the death rate being 15.65 as compared with 15.97 in the previous year.

31. The infantile mortality rate was 106.20. In 1939 it was 103.61.

### SECTION III—HYGIENE AND SANITATION.

#### 1. Preventive Measures.

##### *Mosquito and Insect borne diseases:*

32. The control of *Aedes aegypti* was well maintained in Port-of-Spain and the index in San Fernando was considerably reduced. Control in rural areas is more difficult but some improvement resulted from propaganda work and constant inspections and re-inspections.

33. Although filariasis is not a problem, the control of culex breeding continued to be carried out as a routine measure.

34. *Malaria*.—This disease is one of the most disabling factors in the colony but steady progress is being made in preventive measures. The improvement is already manifesting itself not so much in the steady fall in cases reported in recent years as in the steady reduction from year to year in the deaths from this cause.

35. Considerable improvements were carried out generally in the course of the year. These consisted in the usual anti-larval measures, in cleaning and straightening beds of rivers and streams and in clearing of river mouths. Oiling was carried out where necessary. These works are normally carried out by the department. In addition to this, however, are extensive drainage schemes under the joint control of the Health and Agricultural departments with the co-operation of the Irrigation, Drainage and Sanitation Engineer of the Public Works Department. Figures are not available for the northern division but in the southern division 46,660 lineal feet of new concrete drains were laid and 1,340,507 feet of earth drains were cleared and straightened.

36. Special reference should be made to work done at Point Fortin by the United British Oilfields of Trinidad Limited, in co-operation with the department. This consisted in reclamation of the Crown Swamp (about 10 acres) and the elimination of certain inland swamps by clearing and re-channelling of the Teshier River. Thus extensive areas, previously heavy breeding grounds of anopheline mosquitoes have been reclaimed and are now available for housing and industry.

37. The following prophylactic aids were available for the general population:—

Sale of quinine at Government post offices in rural areas.

Free distribution of quinine in schools, on sugar estates and to members of the local forces and naval ratings.

##### *Health Office and Dispensary treatment:*

38. *Ankylostomiasis*.—The unit operating in the south concluded work in the La Brea-Point Fortin area and moved on to Palo Seco in the Erin-Siparia area. In the former area the infestation rate was reduced from 44.58 to 8.96 per cent, while in the latter the rate, which to begin with was 48.62 had by the end of the year been reduced to 28.42 per cent.

39. A similar unit operated in the northern division as from September. It commenced work in the Tacarigua district where the infestation rate was found to be 56.3 per cent.

40. Latrine construction was carried out simultaneously with the survey and treatment.



## 2. General Measures of Sanitation.

### (a) Water Supplies:

41. *Central Supply*.—The quality of the Central Water Supply was consistently satisfactory.

42. Certain extensions of this supply were made in the districts of Ortoire-Moruga, Erin Siparia and South Naparima.

43. The city of Port-of-Spain which derives part of its supply from the Central Supply and part from other sources experienced a shortage of water during the dry season.

44. Work was commenced on the Granville Springs with a view to providing Cedros with a piped supply and the possibilities of various supplies for other rural areas were investigated.

### (b) Sewage Disposal:

45. A survey of the Borough of San Fernando was commenced in connection with a future sewerage system for the town.

46. In rural areas considerable progress was made in the case of estates and companies in the installation of septic tanks. In suitable districts the bored-hole type of latrine is increasing in popularity.

## 3. School Hygiene.

47. Regular inspection of schools was maintained and a survey was carried out with a view to obtaining an estimate for the general improvement of sanitary conditions in Government schools.

48. Medical inspection of school children in compulsory areas and in certain rural areas disclosed the fact that dental caries continues to occupy first place among defects in school children. Cases of under-nourishment showed some reduction in urban areas but this did not apply in rural schools.

49. Dental treatment continued to be carried out in schools in urban areas and in the Southern Division hookworm treatment of school children was carried out in the urban and in the majority of the rural areas.

## 4. Labour Conditions.

### (a) Agriculture:

50. Increased activities in the oil industry and in works associated directly or indirectly with war conditions produced a notable emigration of labour from the agricultural districts. This led to a certain shortage of labour on sugar and cocoa estates. There is, generally speaking, for the agricultural labourer nothing in his conditions of life to counteract the attraction of higher wages in industry. With one exception sugar estates have suspended building operations so far as estate labour is concerned.

### (b) Industry:

51. A higher standard of living was noticeable. In the petroleum and asphalt industries better wages and better housing resulted in better physical conditions.

## 5. Housing.

### (a) Government schemes:

52. Two hundred and thirty-three houses for the accommodation of working class families were erected in Morvant, near Port-of-Spain and 200 in Mon Repos, San Fernando. These are the first stages of major schemes designed to relieve the housing problem in these towns.

### (b) Private enterprise:

53. There was great building activity during 1940. Plans for 39 parcellations and for 2,988 new buildings in proclaimed areas were approved during the year.

## 6. Food in relation to Health and Disease.

54. Regulations made by the Central Board of Health under Section 87 of the Public Health Ordinance with respect to the Importation of Food were passed during 1940.

55. Markets, dairies and shops were regularly inspected by the staff of the department and of municipal authorities.

56. Reference has been made to an outbreak of arsenical poisoning due to contaminated sugar.

## SECTION IV—PORT HEALTH WORK AND ADMINISTRATION.

57. No case of infectious disease to which the International Sanitary Convention applies occurred during the year.

58. There were 1,182 arrivals as compared with 1,355 in 1939. Of these, 10 steamers and one sailing vessel were from convention ports. The remainder came from non-convention ports. Two thousand seven hundred and fifty-one passengers and 31,252 crew were inspected making a total of 34,003.

59. One hundred and nineteen persons arriving in the colony were placed under surveillance. They arrived from small-pox infected areas.

60. Seven hundred and ninety-one persons arriving in this colony were vaccinated against small-pox.

61. Twenty-two vessels were fumigated. Twelve of these were ships containing cargoes of rice from India. The remainder were done at the request of the owner.

62. Twenty-eight Deratization Exemption Certificates were issued during the year.

63. Regular inspection of aircraft and of passengers arriving by air was maintained.

64. Ten thousand two hundred and seventy-four rats were examined. There was no evidence of *B. pestis*.



### SECTION V—MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

65. Admissions to the maternity department of the Colonial Hospital, Port-of-Spain, were 1,253 and of that at San Fernando 537. The district services associated with these hospitals were in great demand. Maternity beds are also provided at the Colonial Hospital, Tobago, and at the district hospitals at St. Joseph, Arima, Couva and Princes Town.

66. Ante-natal clinics are conducted at the Colonial Hospitals and at the clinics of the Child Welfare League. These clinics become increasingly popular from year to year.

67. The Child Welfare League of Trinidad and Tobago continued its good work. A new clinic was opened at Forest Reserve, financed by Messrs. Trinidad Leaseholds, Ltd. The total attendances of infants at these clinics numbered 79,367 and the League Nurses made 62,981 home visits. Attendances at ante-natal clinics amounted to 4,078.

### SECTION VI—HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES.

68. There are in Trinidad three colonial hospitals, six district and three emergency hospitals.

69. The average daily number of in-patients treated in these hospitals was 948.16.

70. The total admissions were 25,698 and the deaths numbered 2,198.

71. The number of patients treated in the casualty and out-patients' departments of the Colonial Hospitals in Port-of-Spain and San Fernando was 36,963.

72. *Mental Hospital.*—Two hundred and eighty patients were admitted in 1940 of whom 241 were first admissions. One hundred and thirty-nine cases were discharged and 83 died.

### SECTION VII—LABORATORY SERVICES.

73. A total of 50,056 specimens was examined in 1940. In addition to these, 1,515 samples of water were examined, the samples being taken from various parts of the colony. Six hundred and twenty-seven desmodus bats were examined for negri bodies. Four were found to be positive. Nine hundred and twenty-two bats of other species were examined. None was positive.

74. Two hundred and seventy-seven post mortem examinations were performed.

ADAM RANKINE,

*Director of Medical Services.*

December, 1941.



TABLE I.

## General diseases treated in Hospitals—1940.

Diseases.	Admissions.	Deaths.
I. Infectious Endemic and Epidemic Diseases	4,053	534
II. Cancer	267	74
Tumours—Non-malignant	115	3
Rheumatism	65	1
Deficiency Diseases	21	1
Diabetes	162	24
Anaemias	119	12
Diseases of the Ductless Glands	45	7
Alcoholism	42	1
Poisoning	67	2
Other General Diseases	58	18
III. Affections of the Nervous System	1,861	150
IV. Affections of the Circulatory System	1,041	249
V. Affections of the Respiratory System	1,229	199
VI. Diseases of the Digestive System	3,059	230
VII. Diseases of the Genito-Urinary System (non-Venereal)	2,402	206
VIII. Puerperal State	3,510	80
IX. Affections of the Skin and Cellular Tissues	1,717	41
X. Diseases of Bones and Organs of Locomotion (other than Tuberculosis)	311	6
XI. Malformations	37	9
XII. Diseases of Infancy	802	171
XIII. Affections of Old Age	192	16
XIV. Affections produced by external causes	3,563	83
XV. Ill-defined Diseases and Unspecified Causes	411	33
Diseases the total of which have not exceeded 10 deaths	49	0
	<u>25,196</u>	<u>2,198</u>

TABLE II.

## Prevalence of Notifiable Diseases—1940.

Enteric Fever	452
Pneumonia	571
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	523
Tuberculosis (Other Forms)	30
Diphtheria	97
Chicken Pox	155
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	110
Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis	3