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COLONY OF MAURITIUS

Annual Report
on the
Medical and Health Department
1944

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Annual Report on the Medical and Health Department, 1944

I.—Administration

The retirement for reasons of health of the Senior Medical Officer of the Hookworm and Malaria Branch reported in 1943 further depleted the already meagre number of Health Officers in the department. The duties were taken over by the Acting Health Officer, Plaines Wilhems and, for the latter post, it has been possible to obtain only the services of a part time officer in the person of a private practitioner residing in the district. In consequence of this, supervision of sanitary personnel has been quite inadequate and conditions have deteriorated considerably.

Mr. C. R. Harrison, F.R.I., who arrived in the Colony in September 1943, left for England after a stay of nine months during which he made an extensive survey of the island in connection with the control of malaria. He visited all Estates and advised managers on measures which could be undertaken with this object in view and many of these have already begun to apply these measures. Mr. Harrison did much towards making the population "malaria conscious" and his advice and assistance have been invaluable.

During 1944, seven male and four female hospital students qualified as dressers and nurses.

Twelve male and seventeen female hospital students were enlisted for training.

Nine sanitary cadets were also enlisted for training. †

II.—Legal

The following legislation was passed during 1944—

Government Notice No. 80.—Public Health Ordinance, 1925: Regulations made under Section V of Article 193 of the Public Health Ordinance, 1925, amending the Regulations published under *Government Notice No. 42* of 1934.

Government Notice No. 187.—The Food and Drugs Ordinance, 1940: Regulations made under Article 10 of the Food and Drugs Ordinance, 1940.

Government Notice No. 302.—Public Health Ordinance, 1925: Regulations made under paragraph (15) of Section V of Article 193 of the Public Health Ordinance, 1925, amending the Regulations published under *Government Notice No. 22* of the 24th June, 1939.

III.—Financial

The revenue of the Colony for the financial year 1943-44 was Rs. 37,578,894, of which Rs. 154,234 was received through the Medical and Health Department.

The expenditure on Medical and Sanitary Services was Rs. 1,738,612.

IV.—Public Health

1. The number of patients treated in the hospitals was 28,042 as compared with 29,182 for the previous year, and the number of attendances at dispensaries and out-patient departments of the hospitals was 298,791.

The number of cases of malignant disease admitted to the public hospitals was 421.

The total number of deaths in the Colony from cancer and other tumours is reported by the Registrar General to be 57.

There were no major epidemics but malaria was more prevalent in the early months of the year than in the corresponding period of the previous year. This is reflected in the increased number of attendances at dispensaries and out-patient departments.

2. *Malaria.*—(a) The total number of patients suffering from malaria admitted to the hospitals was 3,512, an increase of 297 over the figure for the previous year. The case mortality was 2.96 per cent.

The total number of deaths in the Colony from malaria and malarial cachexia, 2,917, is equivalent to a death rate of 6.95 per 1,000 living. The rate for 1943 was 5.87 per 1,000.

(b) The routine activities of the department have been maintained throughout the year.

Antimalarial work in the neighbourhood of Beau Bassin was continued. A large area of marsh on the northern side of Grand Malabar Hill caused by seepage was drained by a total of 9,305 feet of main and lateral drains which together with the cost of clearing and bridging, cost in all Rs. 22,956. Much of this work involved cutting through solid rock. In addition, 3,710 feet of River Plaines Wilhems were canalised and a further 10,610 feet were cleared and repaired after the damage caused by the floods in March of 1944. The cost of the latter was Rs. 3,722 and of the former Rs. 8,288.

The effect of these works on the general population of Beau Bassin cannot be accurately assessed, but the health of the Detainment Camp in that town affords a useful index. During the last six months of 1944 there was no new case of malaria among the detainees.

Marked improvements have been made in the Bambous area. The work here however has been more in the nature of mosquito reduction since the main source of trouble has proved to be seepage from La Ferme Reservoir.

Work was also started on the River Citron in the Pamplémousses District. 4,000 feet of this river was canalised at a cost of Rs. 2,350 and the work is proceeding.

Maintenance of works carried out by the Military Authorities in Port Louis and Mahebourg was taken over by the Department at the end of the year.

Apart from Government measures, a considerable amount of antimalaria work has been performed by a number of estates and by a few village communities which have formed self appointed committees with a view to doing what they can for themselves. These receive every possible assistance from the Department.

(c) A Committee was set up in the end of 1943 to advise on the subject of Malaria control. The Committee's Report was submitted in March 1944. Schemes and Estimates were drawn up and, since then, draft legislation has been prepared and submitted to Government.

3. *Filariasis*.—39 and 74 cases of filariasis were treated in hospitals and dispensaries respectively in 1944.

4. *Plague*.—No case of plague occurred during the year.

5. *Small pox*.—There has been no indigenous small pox since 1913. 11,779 children were vaccinated during 1944 by the public vaccinators.

The statistics are as follows—

Successful vaccinations on first attendances	...	...	9,956	
Successful vaccinations on second and subsequent attendances	...	...	1,258	
				11,214
Unsuccessful vaccinations	...	...	...	526
Vaccinations in which results could not be obtained	...	...	...	39
				11,779
		TOTAL	...	11,779

The proportion of children vaccinated by Government vaccinators to live births is 64.51 per cent.

With reference to this it should be borne in mind that an appreciable number of infants are vaccinated by private practitioners and are not included in the above mentioned figures.

6. *Enteric Fever*.—There were 368 cases of enteric fever notified in the Colony during 1944. January and May were the months of highest incidence.

7. *Diphtheria*.—103 cases of diphtheria were notified in 1944. The disease occurs sporadically; no epidemic outbreaks have been recorded for years. It is generally mild.

8. *Diseases and Accidents associated with the Puerperal state*.—Though various non-communicable conditions are included in these statistics it is convenient to group them under one head since their significance lies in revealing certain causes of maternal and infantile mortality.

171 deaths were registered as being due to the puerperal state.

10 cases of puerperal septicaemia, of which 5 proved fatal, were treated in hospitals, a case mortality of 50 per cent.

The maternal mortality rate (the ratio of the number of deaths ascribed to the puerperal state to the total number of births including still-births) was 8.73 per 1,000 in 1944 as compared with a rate of 5.14 per 1,000 for the previous year.

9. *Erysipelas*.—44 cases were notified, compared with 51 in 1943. 11 deaths were registered.

10. *Tuberculosis*.—Of the 11,355 deaths of 1944, 234 were due to tuberculosis.

11. *Leprosy*.—The disease is well under control and appears to be in regression.

Three meetings of the Leprosy Board were held during the year. Eleven patients were admitted to the Leper Hospital, of which six were re-admissions.

12. *Veneral Diseases*.—428 cases of admission for syphilis and 11 deaths from this disease were recorded from the hospitals during the year. 147 cases of gonorrhœa were treated, and 177 cases of soft chancre.

13. *Ankylostomiasis*.—10,261 cases were treated in hospitals and dispensaries, and the number of deaths in hospitals ascribed to that disease was 35.

The work of the Hookworm Unit continued to be limited to the districts of Plaines Wilhems and Moka and the more important sections of Grand Port, Savanne, Flacq and Black River districts.

Treatments were carried out in villages, schools and sugar estates on three days per week and once weekly at Curepipe. An average of 4,750 persons were treated per month, a total increase of 5,000 persons treated as compared with 1943.

There can however be little improvement in the situation until houses are provided with latrines and the population learns to make use of them.

14. *Schistosomiasis*.—27 cases were treated in the hospitals during the year and 384 at the dispensaries.

V.—Deficiency Diseases

The following deficiency diseases were recorded during the year.

Total cases of Deficiency Diseases treated in hospitals—

Béri-béri	8	Avitaminosis "B" (7 Detainment Camp) ...	65
Rickets	4	Avitaminosis undetermined	124
Avitaminosis "A" ...	23	Pellagra (2 Detainment Camp)	64
		Scurvy	1

Total number of attendances at Dispensaries for Deficiency Diseases—

Rickets	32	Pellagra	199
Béri-béri	100	Avitaminosis "A"	105
		Avitaminosis undetermined	382

289

686
132
818

The food situation showed no great material improvement and deficiency diseases are more in evidence. Pellagra and Avitaminosis B show the greatest increase among the general population. In the Detainment Camp however there were only 9 admissions to hospital on this count as compared with 13 in 1943.

The General nutritional level of the population has deteriorated and the risks of outbreaks of epidemic disease have increased accordingly.

The Nutrition Unit consisting of three travelling vans continued its work of education by means of personal contact with and practical demonstration to the villages in various districts. In addition to the subject of nutrition, those of the principles of hygiene and mother-craft were included in the programme. Results indicate that the travelling unit system of propaganda may prove of considerable value in this Colony.

At the same time an investigation was undertaken to ascertain the nutritional state of children in rural villages and estates, to discover which deficiency diseases if any predominate, to inquire into the diets of the labouring and artisan classes and the availability of certain essential foodstuffs.

The investigation showed an intimate relationship between malnutrition, malaria and anaemia. Vitamin A deficiency is probably rare, while evidence of lack of Vitamin D was found to a slight degree. The Vitamin B₂ complex on the other hand is definitely lacking.

VI—Vital Statistics

1. Estimated population of Mauritius on the 30th June, 1944, 419,473. Area in square miles is 720; and the density of population per square mile is 582·60.

2. *Marriages*.—2,737 marriages were celebrated in 1944, as compared with 3,087 in 1943; showing a decrease of 350. This is equivalent to a marriage rate (number of persons married to every thousand of population) of 13·05 per 1,000 against 15·05 per 1,000 in 1943.

3. *Births*.—The total number of births for the year was 18,258 (males 9,080, and females 9,178). 4,828 of these occurred in the General and 13,430 in the Indian population. The birth rate was 43·52 against 33·1 per 1,000 in 1943.

4. *Deaths*.—During the year 1944 the total number of deaths was 11,355 (males 6,105, and females 5,250); 3,708 in the General and 7,647 in the Indian population. The number is an increase of 713 over the total deaths of 1943.

The death rate for the Colony was 27·07 compared with 25·9 for 1943, and with 26·84 per 1,000 for the quinquennial period preceding 1944. The month of maximum mortality was May, whilst in 1943 it was September.

5. The following table exhibits the causes of deaths and rates classified according to the "Manual of international List of Causes of Death" adopted by the Registrar General of England (based on the Fifth Decennial Commission, Paris, 1938)—

<i>Group</i>	<i>No. of deaths</i>	<i>Rate per 1,000</i>
1. Infective and parasitic diseases	3,807	9.07
2. Cancer and other tumours	57	1.14
3. Rheumatism, diseases of nutrition, etc.	123	2.29
4. Diseases of the blood and bloodforming organs... ..	255	5.61
5. Chronic poisoning and intoxication	2	0.00
6. Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	412	9.98
7. Diseases of the circulatory system	249	5.59
8. Diseases of the respiratory system... ..	1,166	27.78
9. Diseases of the digestive system	1,344	32.20
10. Diseases of the urinary and genital system (not venereal or connected with pregnancy or the puerperium)	470	11.12
11. Diseases of pregnancy and childbirth and the puer- peral state	171	4.41
12. Diseases of the skin and cellular tissue	70	1.71
13. Diseases of bones and organs of movement	5	0.11
14. Congenital malformations	7	0.17
15. Diseases peculiar to the first year of life	1,207	28.88
16. Senility, old age	533	12.27
17. Death from violence... ..	204	4.99
18. Ill-defined causes of death	1,273	30.04
TOTAL	11,355	

6. The infantile mortality rate is the number of deaths of infants under one year of age occurring in any year for every thousand live births registered during the year.

The infantile rate for 1944 was 141.0 per 1,000 as compared with 141.5 per 1,000 for 1943.

7. A still-birth is defined by the Registrar General as "a child born dead at or after the seventh month of pregnancy".

The number of still-births registered during 1944 is as under—

Males	722
Females	597
TOTAL	1,319

It is equivalent to 7.2 per cent. of live births for the same period, as compared with 7.3 per cent. for 1943.

VII.—Food and Drugs in Relation to Health and Disease

There are six public and three private abattoirs in the Colony. The public abattoirs administered by the Municipality of Port Louis, the Boards of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, and Curepipe, are each controlled by a veterinary officer. The other abattoirs are conducted under the supervision of the sanitary staff.

It may be said that on the whole the foodstuffs marketed are wholesome and of good quality. The only condition found with any frequency in the meat trade is tuberculosis. Cestode infection is uncommon among cattle, and it is very rare in human beings.

Milk on the other hand is seldom purchasable in its normal state and, despite measures of control, sophistication is widespread.

Delay in receipt of orders placed in the United Kingdom continued to cause embarrassment and in the early months of the year the situation as regards anti-malarial drugs was most serious. While this was in part due to enemy action, black marketing activities contributed largely to the difficulties experienced.

VIII.—Port Health Work and Administration

The following table summarises the work done by the Port Sanitary Authority—

	<i>Sailing craft</i>	<i>Steamers</i>	<i>Air crafts</i>
Vessels arriving	18	145	...
Crews examined	—	3,660	...
Passengers examined	—	132	...
Vessels given pratique on arrival ...	18	118	...
Vessels given pratique after disinfection of the linen and effects of the passengers, crew, fumigation and disinfection of the fore-castle ...	—	11	...
Vessels given pratique after disinfection of linen, etc., and claytonisation of cargo	—	16	...
Vessels arriving from infected ports ...	—	55	...
Vessels detained for purposes of disinfection and fumigation on account of plague, cholera or smallpox ...	—	—	...

Under Military Control

IX.—Hospitals

There has been a decrease in the number of patients treated in the hospitals of the Colony: 28,042 against 29,182 for the previous year. The number of confinements conducted in hospitals was 1,164 against 1,040 for 1943.

The number of estate hospitals at the end of the year was 40.

2. The professional work of the hospitals is summarised in the table at the end. In the rural districts the principal causes of admission to hospitals are malaria, ankylostomiasis and respiratory diseases. It will be noted that pneumonia and malaria are noteworthy causes of death in hospitals.

X.—Dispensary Returns

The dispensaries and the hospital out-patient departments were consulted by male patients 155,015 times and by female patients 143,776 times: total 298,791.

The number of new cases amounted during the year to 219,468. In 1943, 202,225 were recorded.

The statistics of the number of new cases seen at hospital out-patient departments and at dispensaries are not accurate owing to the difficulty frequently experienced in deciding whether a case should be registered as a new case or as a reappearance. The most reliable figures are those of attendances.

XI.—Maternity and Child Welfare

As in the case of Government Institutions, shortage of nursing staff is a severe handicap. Mothercraft training and home visiting are reported to have suffered and the latter is probably largely responsible for the falling off of attendance at the clinics by mothers and infants.

Locally produced yeast and shark liver oil continue to be issued through the auspices of the Society and, in collaboration with the Poor Law Authorities, a large number of needy infants and toddlers has been receiving milk.

Three qualified midwives are employed by Government. They made 2,586 visits and attended 475 confinements.

XII.—Detainment Camp

Health conditions in the Camp have been satisfactory during the year. There has been no epidemic.

Anti-malarial measures in and around the Camp have markedly reduced the number of cases of malaria. In 1944 there were 57 new cases as compared with 75 in 1943, 91 in 1942 and 566 (the first year in Mauritius) in 1941. The numbers of admissions to hospital on account of relapses in these four years were 421, 476, 670 and 1,172.

Dysentery accounted for 81 admissions to hospital. Of these, 57 were amoebic, 18 bacillary and 6 undefined.

Signs of deficiency of the vitamin B₂ complex are still noted. Seven inmates presenting them in a more severe degree had to be admitted into hospital. In two other patients who showed a typical dermatitis, the condition was definitely pellagra.

XIII.—Emergency Medical Service

The emergency hospitals were closed down in November 1944.

XIV.—General

Bacteriological Laboratory.—Good work was performed at this institution.

The number of specimen examined were—

Medical division	...	...	...	17,067
Chemical division	...	...	...	3,751

Prisons.—The general hygiene in the prisons has been maintained at its usual satisfactory standard.

CONCLUSION

My thanks are due to individual officers of the Department for their kind and active co-operation and assistance throughout the year.

1st June, 1945.

A. RANKINE, *Director,*
Medical and Health Department.

MAIN CAUSES OF MORBIDITY IN RELATION TO IN-PATIENTS AT HOSPITALS

<i>Diseases</i>	1944	<i>Diseases</i>	1944
✓ Malaria	3,512	Bronchitis	496 ✓
✓ Injuries	2,817	Tuberculosis	441 ✓
✓ Abscesses	2,281	Influenza	432
Diseases of teeth and gums ...	932	Syphilis	428 ✓
✓ Ankylostomiasis	840	Dyspepsia	381 ✓
✓ Diarrhoea and enteritis	832	Pneumonia	346 ✓
Anæmia	663	Rheumatism	228
✓ Dysentery	661	Soft chancre... ..	177
✓ Diseases of the eye... ..	574	Gonorrhœa	147 ✓

MAIN CAUSES OF MORBIDITY IN RELATION TO OUT-PATIENTS AT DISPENSARIES (1ST ATTENDANCES ONLY)

<i>Diseases</i>	1944	<i>Diseases</i>	1944
✓ Malaria	59,107	Other skin diseases	5,092
Diseases teeth and gums	26,839	Diarrhoea and enteritis	4,494 ✓
Influenza	16,045	Dysentery	4,224 ✓
✓ Abscesses	9,615	Bronchitis	2,785 ✓
✓ Ankylostomiasis	9,421	Eye diseases	2,671 ✓
Anæmia	7,882	Asthma	2,310
Ascariasis	7,699	Syphilis	1,140 ✓
✓ Dyspepsia	6,434	Tuberculosis	626 ✓
Scabies	6,117	Gonorrhœa	466 ✓
✓ Rheumatism	5,842	Schistosomiasis	384 ✓
✓ Injuries	5,139	Soft chancre... ..	304 ✓

REPORT ON HOSPITALS FOR THE YEAR 1944

Hospital	Patients remaining on 31.12.43		Deaths	Patients remaining on 31.12.44		No. of beds	No. of operations	Particular diseases causing largest number of admissions		Particular diseases causing largest number of deaths	

Civil	143	...	534	178	323	4,747	Malaria, pulmonary tuberculosis, anaemia, pneumonia, enteritis, dyspepsia, ankylostomiasis, bronchitis, skin diseases.	Malaria, influenza, enteritis, pneumonia, abscesses.	Malaria, pulmonary tuberculosis, heart diseases, pneumonia, diarrhoea and enteritis, injuries.	Pneumonia.	
Port Louis Prison...	9	...	6	11	24	34	Malaria, influenza, enteritis, pneumonia, abscesses.	Malaria, influenza, diarrhoea and enteritis.	Pneumonia.	.....
Grand River North-West Prison	10	...	—	9	16	10	Malaria, influenza, diarrhoea and enteritis.	Malaria, influenza, diarrhoea and enteritis.	.....	.....
Mental	16	...	75	13	64	20	Dysentery, pellagra, abscesses.	Malaria, abscesses, intestinal diseases, injuries, eye diseases, skin diseases.	Pellagra, pulmonary tuberculosis, dysentery.	Malaria, pneumonia, diseases of early infancy, diseases of heart and circulation, typhoid fever, tetanus.	
Victoria	167	...	404	151	269	1,475	Malaria, abscesses, intestinal diseases, injuries, eye diseases, skin diseases.	Malaria, anaemia, injuries, abscesses.	Malaria, pneumonia, diseases of early infancy, diseases of heart and circulation, typhoid fever, tetanus.	Pneumonia, tuberculosis, bronchitis, anaemia.	
Long Mountain	16	...	71	25	65	148	Malaria, anaemia, injuries, abscesses.	Malaria, anaemia, injuries, abscesses.	Tuberculosis, typhoid fever.	Chronic nephritis, lobar pneumonia, injuries, diseases of the heart.	
Poudre d'Or Flacq	25 13	...	30 60	36 6	70 86	139 700	Ankylostomiasis, Malaria. Malaria, influenza, bronchitis, skin diseases, injuries, ankylostomiasis.	Malaria, skin diseases, injuries, abscesses.	Diarrhoea, anaemia, debility.	Pneumonia, malaria, typhoid fever, congenital debility, diarrhoea and enteritis.	
Moka	19	...	91	22	83	1,209	Malaria, skin diseases, injuries, abscesses.	Malaria, abscesses, influenza, injuries, pneumonia.	Anaemia, diarrhoea.	Heart diseases and cancer.	
Mahebourg	43	...	175	24	106	398	Malaria, abscesses, influenza, injuries, pneumonia.	Malaria, ankylostomiasis, anaemia.	.....	.....
Souillac	49	...	107	22	103	332	Malaria, ankylostomiasis, anaemia.	Malaria, influenza, skin diseases.	.....	.....
Industrial School	1	...	—	1	17	—	Malaria, influenza, skin diseases.	Malaria, diseases of circulatory system, intestinal diseases.	.....	.....
Detainment Camp	152	...	24	133	200	—	Malaria, diseases of circulatory system, intestinal diseases.	.....	.....	.....
TOTALS	663	...	1,577	631	1,426	9,212					



