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Contributors

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BRITISH HONDURAS
MEDICAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR
1942

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British Honduras Annual Medical Report for the year ending 31st December, 1942.

ADMINISTRATIVE.

Staff.

The Medical Establishment, which is ideally of nine medical officers including the Senior Medical Officer, but which has never at any time reached that figure was depleted by the secondment of one medical officer to the Indian Medical Service, again by the granting of vacation leave to another medical officer previous to the relinquishment of his services, and finally by the transfer of the Senior Medical Officer to Cyprus.

2. A private practitioner was employed in Belize to work three hours daily in the Out Patients' Department Clinic of the Belize Hospital.

3. During the latter part of the year two medical officers arrived and assumed duty, and the medical officer who had been seconded to the Forestry Unit for work in Scotland returned and resumed duty.

4. A European Nursing Sister arrived and assumed duty.

5. Two Nurses who had been training in Panama to fill the posts of Health Visitors returned on completion of their training. It is regretted that owing to circumstances created by current events those schemes for which the nurses were specially trained have not been put into effect and the nurses have been temporarily absorbed in the Hospital Staff.

Legislation.

6. Public Health Ordinance No. 26/1942 has been passed to replace obsolete Legislation and now awaits the drafting of the Regulations before the Ordinance is brought into effect by Proclamation.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Forestry Unit, &c.

7. During the early part of the year the Ministry of Supply called for a second Forestry Unit. About 800 men were examined. Of this number only 469 were x-rayed because of scarcity of films, and of this number 356 were accepted.

8. The Unit was ready several months before it sailed, but owing to the uncertainty of the date of sailing many men had to be kept in Belize, some of them for months. This enforced period of suspense caused great concern. Several times these men were examined for Venereal Disease, and those found infected were treated. These abnormal conditions would cause a Venereal Disease rate amongst them which would have no relation to the rate discovered when the men were first engaged.

9. Of 34 applicants sent for examination for the Royal Air Force by the Selection Committee, 20 were passed as fit. These were assessed as if they were to be employed on flying duty and not on ground duty.

10. Of 11 skilled tradesmen examined for work in England 10 were passed as physically fit and of 52 who were examined as Munitions Workers, 27 were passed as fit.

11. The British Honduras Defence Force was increased in strength and in October it became a part of the Imperial Forces. A small Hospital with eight beds, technically a camp Reception Station, was opened for the Military. It was for mild and convalescent cases, who would otherwise fill beds in the Belize Hospital which as was mentioned last year, cannot now accommodate the present civilian needs. The camp Recreation Station has now proved its value for the matter of Venereal Disease amongst the Troops assumed formidable proportions.

12. But for the efflorescence of Venereal Disease due to the delayed exit of the Forestry Unit and the enlarged military Unit there has been no striking change in the incidence of these diseases in that part of the population not directly exposed to the attentions of these two bodies of men.

13. All Medical Work in the military forces is undertaken by the Medical Staff (i.e. the Civilian Staff) of the Belize Hospital.

Hurricane.

14. A Hurricane struck the Colony on November 8th, the second in two successive years. The Cayes and Northern Districts suffered severely. The town of Corozal was devastated. Eighty per cent of the houses in the Cayes were destroyed. There were eight fatalities. The effects were widespread. A swathe of forest country, 30 miles wide was destroyed with resulting hardships to the forest workers and their dependents.

15. Floods in some rivers, the highest and most persistent in living memory preceded and followed the Hurricane. The effect on foodcrops was in some cases complete destruction. This catastrophe, the third in three years - the first, Locust, the second, Hurricane, the third, Hurricane accompanied by Floods - caused aggravated hardships and destruction. An organization for Hurricane Relief was promptly organized.

Infantile Mortality.

16. This figure was increased to 158 per thousand from last year's figure of 124 per thousand. This increase is particularly noticed in the Northern and Western Districts which had suffered proportionately more by those catastrophies enumerated above.

17. The Infantile Mortality in the town of Belize, as distinct from the rest of the Colony, was 100 per thousand.

18. The Infantile Mortality amongst the Maya Indians was increased by 5.9 per centum from the previous year to reach a figure of 268 per thousand. The continuation of this appalling infantile mortality amongst the Maya Indians shows that present arrangements are not satisfactory; but the problem is not simple, it is complicated by many factors e.g. Racial Traditions, Stone Age Antipathy to modern ideas, and difficulty of access. It may be that the approach is wrong and that Anthropological Study is as necessary as sanitary fervour.

Communicable Disease.

19. There were no significant epidemics of infectious diseases during the year.

Tuberculosis.

20. No surcease from the anxiety this disease occasions can be reported. The number of registered deaths from Tuberculosis was 35, i. e., 6 per thousand population, but as only 43 per centum of all the deaths all over the Colony was certified by Medical Practitioners, the death rate from this must be much higher than the figures given.

21. The following shows the death rate from tuberculosis for the last three years—

	Certified Deaths	Other Forms of T. B.	Per cent. of deaths of living Population
1940	34	6	.05 per cent.
1941	38	1	.06 " "
1942	31	4	.05 " "

22. The Birth rate was 30 per thousand as compared with 35 per thousand last year, while the death rate was 20 per thousand compared with 17 per thousand last year.

Conclusions.

23. While it cannot be said that one single absolute necessity in either food, clothing or drugs has been totally lacking due to the War, yet the effects of world wide conditions are evident.

24. The cost of living for food was indexed 156, for clothing 200, for lighting and washing 141. The figures of the cost of living index of September, 1939, in these three categories are taken as 100 in each case.

25. The direct and indirect effects of locust, floods and Hurricanes for from a period of three years are reflecting in the Mortality Statistics.

26. Wages have not increased *pari-passu* with the cost of living.

Finance.

Receipts	—	Hospital and Mental Hospital	—	—	\$6,798.75
		Expenditure —			
	(1)	Personal Emoluments	..	..	\$55,075.04
	(2)	Other Charges	..	..	67,743.24
	(3)	Other Charges, Health Services	..	..	19,926.79
					142,745.07

The expenditure of the department was 8.7% of the total expenditure of the Colony.

27. The following shows details of Dieting in respect of the Institutions during the year under review:-

Institution	Total Expenditure in Dollars	Average daily number of Patients	Cost per Head per diem in Cents
Belize Hospital	7,619.37	81.00	25
Mental Hospital & Poor House	8,231.14	120.00	20
Corozal Hospital	1,480.12	14.90	27
Orange Walk Hospital	964.30	7.50	35
Cayo Hospital	941.34	8.76	29
Stann Creek Hospital	1,564.31	17.50	25
Toledo Hospital	1,475.60	13.66	29

28. There was a sharp rise in the cost of living which was reflected in the increased attention to the effects of under-nutrition to the prevalent diseases.

29. The Outdoor Relief Committee under the chairmanship of the Senior Medical Officer, expended \$17,915.89 on 731 persons, an increase of 91 cents over the previous year.

General Diseases.

30. The following diseases were reported from various parts of the Colony:— Cancer 69, Diabetes 11, Pneumonia 140, Tetanus 3, Deficiency Diseases 124.

Communicable Diseases.

31. (a) *Mosquito or Insect-borne. Malaria:* Malaria continued to be high throughout the Colony and while there was a decrease in the Cayo District, there was increase in the Corozal District following the hurricane of November.

32. There were 26 deaths.

33. The number of cases of clinically diagnosed Malaria admitted into the various hospitals for three years were as follows:—

	1940	1941	1942
Belize	216	705	231
Corozal	42	76	181
Cayo	79	59	58
Stann Creek	186	151	149
Orange Walk	24	42	51
Punta Gorda	155	167	94
	702	1,200	764

34. (b) *Epidemic and Infectious Diseases. Dysenteries:* The total number of both types of dysentery treated during the year was 171 cases. Amoebic Dysentery was high during the latter part of the year, due probably to the hurricane.

35. *Pneumonias:* There were 140 cases reported from the hospitals and 23 certified deaths from this disease.

VITAL STATISTICS.

36. The population at the end of the year was estimated at 61,723. The average Birth Rate of the Colony is 30.8 per thousand of the estimated population. The Birth Rate is the highest in the Toledo District and lowest in the Stann Creek District. The Death Rate for the whole Colony is 20.2 per thousand—highest in the Toledo District and lowest in the Stann Creek District.

Infantile Mortality.

37. The figure for the whole Colony is 15.89 per hundred, Toledo had the highest mortality rate of 23.25 per hundred and Belize the lowest with 10.03 per hundred.

38. There were 61 Still Births registered during the year. Of the 1250 deaths registered 718 were not certified by the medical practitioners, that is to say 57.44% deaths were uncertified.

SANITATION AND HYGIENE.

(PREVENTIVE MEASURES).

Notification of Infectious Diseases (by districts).

39. The following shows the number of cases of infectious diseases notified by Districts:—

Disease	Belize	Stann Creek	Toledo	Cayo	Benque Viejo	Corozal	Orange Walk	Total
Tuberculosis	28	18	1	3	3	1	2	56
Dysentery	3	22	29	—	—	—	—	54
Diphtheria	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Chicken Pox	9	—	—	10	2	—	1	22
Whooping Cough ..	96	1	—	59	2	—	—	158
Typhoid	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2

GENERAL MEASURES.

Training of Auxiliary Personnel.

40. Despite the shortage of Medical Officers, the Sanitary Inspectors received lectures during the year.

41. Two of the nurses who were sent to Panama for training returned after completing their course in the Nursing School attached to the Santo Tomas Hospital. On their arrival they were appointed Staff Nurses and posted to the staff of the Belize Hospital.

42. One Sanitary Inspector was sent to Jamaica to pursue a four month course of training in sanitation leading to the Royal Sanitary Institute Certificate. The course was conducted by the Jamaica Medical Service.

43. Upon the advice of Sir Rupert Briercliffe, and through the courtesy of the Sanitary Department of Guatemala, another Sanitary Inspector was sent to Guatemala for six weeks to study health problems and the methods of coping with them in that country.

44. The department conducted a course of lectures in First Aid to a selected number of persons who volunteered to render service in case of emergency. All Sanitary Inspectors took the course. The scheme was in connection with Air Raid Precautionary Measures.

45. *Water Supplies:* Two more wells were constructed during the year - one at Barranco in the Toledo District and one at San Antonio in the Cayo District.

46. *Food Handlers:* Strict supervision continued over food handlers and 1,633 certificates were issued in Belize and the districts.

HOSPITAL AND DISPENSARIES

BELIZE HOSPITAL

47. *Out-Patients Department:* The following shows the figures in connection with this department for the years 1940-1942; these do not include various other treatments and examinations:—

	Dressings	Attendances at V. D. Clinics	Dental Treatment
1940	1,518	3,941	1,268
1941	13,426	2,198	1,614
1942	7,426	1,998	1,807

A total of 58,354 cases were seen in 1942; 29,456 and 36,866 having been seen in 1940 and 1941, respectively.

48. *In-Patients:* 1,985 patients were admitted to the wards of whom 121 died.

49. *Maternity Ward:* As in 1941, the number of admissions was 614. There were 277 deliveries as compared with 257 of the previous year. Infantile deaths were 10, Still Births 10, maternal deaths 1, which did not receive antenatal care. There were 3 cases of eclampsia and 5 of Albuminuria.

50. *Venereal Diseases Clinic*: There were 1,758 attendances; 230 patients attended. There were 55 new patients. The injections given were 1,758 NAB and 1,655 Bismostal.

51. *Ophthalmic Clinic*: Owing to the unavoidable transfer to the out-district of the Medical Officer who carried out this work, the eye clinic was closed during the greater part of the year.

52. *Dental Clinic*: During the year 19,462 treatments were given in the Hospital, Prisons, Lunatic Asylum and up to November members of the Defence Force. The average attendance at each Hospital Clinic was 50 patients as compared with 62 in the previous year.

53. *Surgical Work*: during the year 541 operations were performed as follows:—

Abdominal	190	
Gynaecological	48	
Genito Urinary	43	
Ano Rectal	3	
Orthopaedic	67	
Oto Rhinolarynocal	36	
Ophthalmic	27	
General	72	
Miscellaneous	55	541

54. The following are details of the District Hospitals:—

	Toledo	Stann Creek	Cayo	Orange Walk	Corozal
Number of beds	18	20	14	10	19
Admissions	345	533	325	187	469
Daily Average	11.66	15.41	6.76	5.5	12.9
Deaths	9	34	13	19	28
Percentage Deaths	2.61	6.3	5.77	11	5.9
Operations	35	19	151	17	16
Out Patient Attendances and District Cases	3560	3256	2007	742	1064

55. *Maternity Work in District Hospitals*: *Stann Creek*: 26 cases were delivered and 11 outside the hospital precincts. There were 3 abortions.

56. Although no antenatal clinic actually exists in Corozal, expectant mothers are encouraged to attend at the Hospital. The number of mothers delivered were only seven, but there is reason to believe that as soon as a maternity ward is erected the maximum use will be made of it.

57. *Branch Dispensaries*: The Dispensary at Benque Viejo in the Cayo District continued to function and 2,129 cases were treated as compared with 1,215 in the previous year.

58. Clinics were held at San Antonio and Columbia in the Toledo District. Unfortunately, owing to difficulty of transportation, and the state of the roads, it was found necessary to reduce the number of clinics.

59. PRISONS, MENTAL HOSPITAL AND POOR HOUSES.

Belize Prison: The Medical Officer visited daily and inspected the sanitary arrangements of the institution monthly. 1,593 cases were treated in the course of the year, including those in the following classified list:—

Malaria	33
Syphilis	5
Gonorrhoea	28
Lymphopathia Venereum	8

Dysentery	4
Diseases of Nervous System	32
Alimentary System	81
Respiratory System	58
Skin	85
Joints	39
Eye	29
Ear, Nose & Throat	21
Minor Injuries	36
Unspecified Diseases	26
Unspecified Complaints	78
Unspecified Requests	25
Visits to Prisoners in cell Punishment	138
Visits to Prisoners on capital charges	53
Attendance at floggings	2
Medical observations for suspected insanity	4
Examinations of prisoners	
On Admission	105
On Discharge	94 199

60. Mental Asylum.

	Admissions	Discharges	Deaths
Males	15	5	9
Females	11	5	6
	<u>26</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>

61. Poor Houses.

	Admissions	Discharges	Deaths
Males	35	7	16
Females	13	3	14
	<u>48</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>30</u>

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62. I wish to acknowledge the reports of Drs. D. W. A. Degazon; W. A. S. George; T. Patterson; S. H. Wharton; C. H. B. Sparrow; Miss L. M. Roberts, M. B. E., Matron, Belize Hospital; Mr. H. L. Bennett, Laboratory Technician and Mr. L. E. Cervantes, Acting Senior Sanitary Inspector.

D. W. DEGAZON,

For Vernon F. Anderson,

Senior Medical Officer.



