

I SOCIAL PART (B).

PUBLIC DENTAL CARE.

APPENDIX TO MEMORANDUM OF THE BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION,

showing: —

1. The constitutional diseases and defects associated with bad dental conditions;
2. The beneficial effects of dental treatment;
3. Recommendations.

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1. The Constitutional Diseases and Defects associated with Bad Dental conditions.

Extracts from the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Dentists Act (Cmd. 33), Section V. Dental Disease in Relation to the Health of the People.

Para. 55. The British Medical Association: „...a considerable economic loss arises from the effect of dental disease owing mainly to the reflex influence thereof on the general bodily health, particularly through digestive trouble and resulting anaemia. The effect is most noteworthy in women”.

Para. 56. Report of Departmental Committee on Sickness Benefit Claims: „It is stated that the absence of any provision for dental treatment — which, it may be observed, is a possible additional benefit in the event of a society realising a surplus — has produced much sickness of various kinds resulting in a drain on the sickness benefit funds, which would have been avoided had there been provision for the treatment of teeth. Inattention to teeth results in certain cases in prolonged gastric illnesses, and in a very large group of cases, on which benefit is being paid, no permanent cure is possible until the teeth have been attended to. Even in the event of decayed teeth being removed, there is ground for believing that there is no sufficient means by which artificial dentures can be supplied to insured persons, either gratuitously or at a reduced cost.”

Para. 57. Questionnaire issued to approved societies: „(1) Have you had cases brought to your notice in which neglect of teeth trouble has led to ill health? (2) In particular has your attention been directed to the following diseases being attributed to or aggravated by defective teeth? (a) Anaemia. (b) Gastric Troubles. (c) Debility. (d) Tonsillitis. (e) Neurasthenia. (f) Rheumatism.”

Para. 58. Replies from approved societies: —

Prudential Approved Societies (membership 3.000.000): „Neglect of teeth trouble is the cause of quite half of the ill-health found among the industrial classes, and of these a large majority in young women.

MEMORANDUM OF THE BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION.

„The chief sequelae of dental caries and oral sepsis are found to be (in the following order of importance); (a) General debility (the starting point); (b) anaemia (especially in young women); (c) rheumatism, including premature senility, myocardiac and arterial degeneration (in older people, especially men); (d) Gastric troubles, including chronic gastritis and ulcer, appendicitis and chronic constipation; (e) neurasthenia.”

National Federation of Women Workers (membership 20.000): „The absence of provision for dental treatment under the National Health Insurance Act has resulted in many claims upon the Sickness Benefit Funds of the Society. Many claims would never have been made, while a still larger percentage have been prolonged in duration by the fact that the member has been unable to obtain dental treatment prescribed as necessary by the panel doctors.”

Para. 59. Replies from Insurance Committees under the National Insurance Act, 1911: „I am directed to state that there is a definite relation between 'uncared for' mouths and pulmonary tuberculosis. Unsound teeth and septic conditions of the mouth predispose to tuberculous infection and render recovery more difficult when the disease exists. The experience of the Sanatorium Benefit Sub-Committee is that very many consumptives recommended for benefit have need of dental treatment.”

Replies to the like effect were received from the Aberdeenshire Panel Committee, the County of Durham Insurance Committee, the Birmingham Panel Committee, the Edinburgh Insurance Committee, and the Manchester Insurance Committee.

Para. 65. Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education: „The gravamen of dental defect is its secondary result. Dental sepsis is associated with four effects — (I) tooth caries, (II) periodontal inflammation (pyorrhoea), (III) conditions due to dead teeth or irregularities or abnormalities of denture, (IV) the collection of tartar and muco-purulent matter in the denture. Obviously, these conditions vary widely in degree and prevalence. Here, too, the gravity of the condition is its secondary result, the absorption of toxine and so forth.

The principal secondary results of dental disease in children often appearing subsequently, are as follows: —

- a. The inflammation, pyorrhoea, and ulceration of the gums, leading to diseased conditions of the mouth and to glandular infection. Many medical and dental authorities hold that even tuberculous infection may be established in this way.
- b. General malaise of the child, tiredness, lassitude, depression — in fact, a toxic neurasthenia.

I SOCIAL PART (B).**PUBLIC DENTAL CARE.**

- c. A group of microbic intoxications which in some cases lead to joint affections simulating rheumatism in its symptoms.
- d. Various forms of anaemia.
- e. There is a group of somewhat mysterious and remote results of dental disease which leave their mark on the skin (acne, urticaria, eczema, etc.), affect the eyes (recurring iritis) or ears and dispose to nervous disorders.
- f. There is a large group of alimentary toxæmia or gastro-intestinal conditions traceable to continued dental sepsis.

Further it must not be forgotten that many cases of adolescent and adult mal-nutrition or dyspepsia are due to loss of teeth in childhood.

Para. 67. Memorandum received from the Army Council: „The loss of man power to the State owing to defective dentition can best be gauged from a comparison of medical and surgical cases in hospital. It will be noticed that men returning sick show 25'4 carious teeth, as compared with 6'4 only of wounded, and 4 sound teeth only as compared with 17'6. Of the 304 medical cases examined, 160 are according to the medical officers suffering from troubles directly attributable to defective teeth; e.g., gastritis and indigestion, and from 60 to 70 from troubles indirectly so attributable; e.g., rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatism, etc.”

Extract from the Report of the School Medical Officer to the London County Council for 1923.

Page 5. Teeth. „The grave amount of oral disease in the eight-year-old children appears to account for the poorer figures for nutrition which that group invariably yields in comparison with the others.”

2. The Beneficial Effects of Dental Treatment.

Extract from the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Dentists Act (Cmd. 33): Section V.— Dental Disease in Relation to the Health of the People.

Para. 58. Domestic Workers' Friendly Society (Membership — women only—63,000): „A number of patients, after the completion of dental treatment, have stated that they have been much improved in health thereby. Many of these had been undergoing medical treatment for various complaints, but stated that this only gave temporary relief.”

MEMORANDUM OF THE BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION.

Extract from the Report of the School Medical Officer to the London County Council for 1923 on the results of dental treatment.

Page 6. „Between 1913 and 1923 the proportion of twelve year-old boys with apparently sound teeth had increased from 50 per cent. to 67·7 per cent, while that of those with extensive caries has diminished from 10 per cent, to 2·7 percent. A corresponding improvement is shown by the girls.”

3. Recommendations.

Extract from the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Dentists Act (Cmd. 33): Section X.— Dental Treatment under the National Health Insurance Act, 1911.

Para. 126. Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Association of Approved Societies representing over 2,000,000 insured persons. „In view of the fact that much of the sickness for which approved societies are called upon to pay sickness benefit arises directly or indirectly from dental trouble and of the report of the Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education, that a very large proportion of children leaving school need dental treatment, this Association of Approved Societies considers it of the utmost importance that a Public Dental Service should be instituted in every locality, adequate treatment being available for all who need it, irrespective of their financial position.”

Section XII. — A Public Dental Service.

Para. 142. Recommendation of the Departmental Committee: „The provision of an adequate dental service to meet the existing needs is impossible at present owing to the shortage of dentists, but your Committee are strongly of opinion that, simultaneously with the enforcement of prohibition of unqualified practice, the nucleus of a public dental service should be set up in populous areas for the treatment of dental disease, and that dental treatment by such a service should be available for persons needing it free of charge. We think that the service should be established as a definite branch of public health work and should be entrusted to public health authorities.”